

The Invisible Ink That Wasn't: A Player Pleads Guilty to Marking Cards at a Casino

Written by Administrator

Saturday, 23 August 2014 02:10 -

Bruce Koloshi's strategy for cheating at poker at the Mohegan Sun casino in Connecticut one night last September was, the authorities said, unusual. He marked the cards with ink that he believed only he could see with the special contact lenses he was wearing.

His reason for doing so was even more unusual. He said he was trying to win enough to make bail in Louisiana, where he was facing felony charges for doing the same thing.

It turned out that others could see his supposedly invisible ink — casino surveillance operators, if they played the video from their cameras in black-and-white rather than color. A surveillance operator at Mohegan Sun did and called in the state police, who arrested Mr. Koloshi.

Mr. Koloshi, 55, pleaded guilty to cheating in New London Superior Court and was sentenced on Wednesday to the 10 months he had served in prison since his arrest. Judge Hillary B. Strackbein also barred him from all casinos in Connecticut. Court papers indicate that he promised to surrender in Louisiana.

Photo



Bruce Koloshi

The proliferation of casino gambling across the Northeast has prompted casino operators and gambling enforcement agencies to be more vigilant and to share information about cheaters. Casinos have dozens of cameras that keep watch on gambling tables, and many casinos use the same surveillance software, making it easier to share images of people they suspect are cheating.

A bulletin on Mr. Koloshi had been circulated by Delaware's Division of Gaming Enforcement after an episode there in February 2013, and the surveillance operator at Mohegan Sun recognized him from a photo on the Delaware flier. Daniel Kelly, the director of the division, said that besides sending fliers to other enforcement agencies, his division holds conferences every three months and invites gambling enforcement officials from other states.

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But for all the swindles that casinos can spot, Mr. Koloshi's invisible ink was unusual.

Mr. Koloshi entered a poker tournament in February 2013 at the Delaware Park Casino in Wilmington, where there was a \$50,000 maximum on the pot at his table, according to Lt. Marshall Craft of the Delaware State Police.

"We think that he messed up by winning the pot," Lieutenant Craft said. "What Koloshi's M.O. was, he would win smaller pots so he didn't bring attention to himself or have to provide identification," as required of winners who take home more than \$10,000. "He was playing Mississippi stud. On the video you could see him making movements under the table while he was playing."

Lieutenant Craft said Mr. Koloshi left without claiming any of his prize money or providing his name. The casino alerted the Delaware authorities, who identified Mr. Koloshi after scanning video from the casino with facial-recognition software. He was not charged in Delaware but Mr. Kelly's agency issued its alert.

Seven months later at Mohegan Sun, the surveillance operator recognized Mr. Koloshi on the monitor. Detective Patrick Collins of the Connecticut State Police, who eventually arrested him, noticed that he was wearing contact lenses as well as glasses, and asked why.

Detective Collins wrote in a report for prosecutors that Mr. Koloshi "admitted to me that the contacts were designed to see things that you normally wouldn't be able to see" and that Mr. Koloshi acknowledged "that he was in fact marking the cards and he has done this at several casinos."

A woman who answered the telephone at Mr. Koloshi's home in Summit, N.J., on Thursday said he was not there. Mr. Koloshi's lawyer, Martin J. Minnella, did not return a call seeking comment.

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