

Casino revenues inch upward in September

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Year-over-year revenues for Northwest Indiana's five casinos were relatively flat in September, having received a boost from the Labor Day weekend but being hurt by having one less weekend than in the previous September.

"September was pretty similar to the rest of the year, going back and forth," said Dan Nita, general manager and senior vice president of Horseshoe Hammond Casino.

"This was a month where the Indiana side of the border was able to grow while the Illinois side was down by 1.7 percent," Nita said Thursday.

He said Northwest Indiana's five casinos collectively had a .5 percent increase in revenues.

According to monthly revenue numbers released Thursday by the Indiana Gaming Commission, the region's five casinos together had revenues of \$75.4 million last month compared to \$75.76 million the previous September. Broken down by casino, Ameristar Casino in East Chicago took in \$17.82 million compared to \$16.59 million, Blue Chip Casino in Michigan City raked in \$13.09 million last month compared to \$12.44 million the previous September, Horseshoe Hammond took in \$32.45 million compared to \$33.86 million, Majestic Star I Casino in Gary took in \$6.86 million compared to \$7.92 million and Majestic Star II brought in \$5.18 million compared to \$5.5 million. Nita said Horseshoe's numbers would have been stronger if one client hadn't hit an \$800,000 jackpot. Nita said sports fans don't normally come to the casinos to watch the games like they do to a bar, but Horseshoe tries to add "a little sizzle" to pique fans' interest by adding some celebrity players from the past. On Sunday, for instance, former Chicago Bears great Dick Butkus will be at the Hammond casino to provide commentary during the Bears game. Nita said the event is free and anyone can attend provided they have a Total Rewards card or sign up for one before or during the game. *Karen Caffarini is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.*

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