

Gambling a Loser, But Spreading

OPENING of casino resorts in decadent Atlantic City, N.J., is being saluted as marking a nationwide boom for games of chance.

Other cities, including New Orleans and Miami Beach, are watching and may follow the same pattern if Atlantic City can be turned into "Las Vegas East" without being taken over by organized crime and syndicates.

It is axiomatic that if a "sucker" plays a repetitive game, such as slot machines, dice or roulette, long enough, no matter what the house percentage might be, the outsider will lose all his money.

Yet, the hope of getting something for nothing is a persistent illusion, and the gambling fever seems to be spreading. State legislatures have caught it, hoping lotteries will prove to be a painless way of collecting revenue. Results have fallen short.

Gambling got a setback last month when Texas voters turned down a proposition to legalize local option for gambling on horse races. The theory was that it wouldn't hurt to have gambling in a few counties.

That's all they would have if Texas was "wide open."

Nevertheless, new gamblers are being recruited and encouraged to bring money to have fun at glamorous establishments. Nothing is said about losing, but the possibility is a probability.

The promise of big winnings is the come-on. Within recent days this writer has received through the mail these items:

A flier headlined "Strike it rich in many casinos in the world," touting a blackjack system that is claimed to be a winner. A postscript warns, "This is a limited offer which may be withdrawn if too many copies are sold!"

Another mailing piece offers secrets of winning at horse racing — flat and harness — and at dice and roulette. "An old pro teaches you how he earned over \$50,000 from gambling last year," it proclaims, adding, "Now you can use the same methods."

A third proposition offered the bearer three days and two nights of

free lodging for two people in Las Vegas, "plus a generous gambling package from two casinos." No doubt the casinos expected to get the "package" back, plus funds from their guests.

Most forms of gambling are illegal in Oklahoma, but five years ago, the legislature legalized gambling on bingo games, claiming they are a harmless form of entertainment.

Professional gamblers favor this approach. Like the schoolboy who starts by smoking "pot" or sniffing paint and drifts into harder drugs, where he is hooked, bingo players may get the gambling fever and start looking for faster games.

Gambling on ball games and card games reportedly is widespread in the state, and many Oklahomans frequent horse and dog racetracks in other states. Some may be "compulsive" gamblers.

A few might become sharp enough to "fleece the sheep," but for many, history shows they are more likely to keep on trying to win a big pot until they lose everything they have.