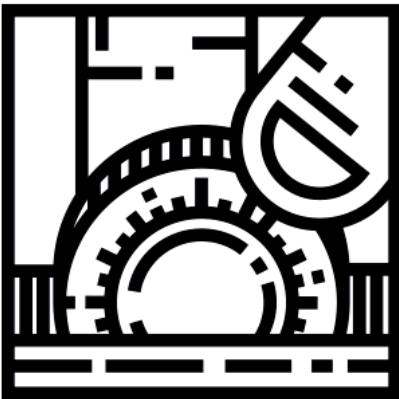


1. Locate a Game King video poker machine configured for multi-denomination play. If you're in Las Vegas, you're probably already standing next to one.



2. Flag down a slot attendant and ask them to enable the Double Up option. Say thank you and smile until they walk away.



3. Insert money or a voucher and select the lowest denomination level offered by the machine—for example, \$1 per credit on a \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10 machine.



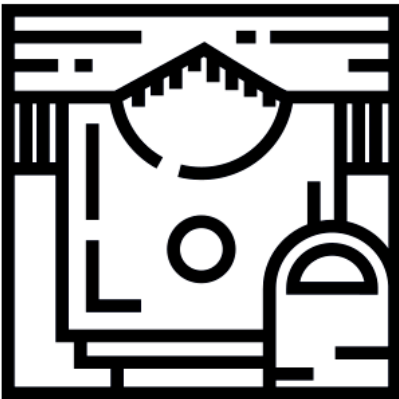
4. Choose your favorite game variant—Triple Double Bonus Poker is fun—and start playing.



5. Keep playing at the \$1 level until you win a big hand. An \$800 royal flush is perfect.



6. With your royal flush showing but not yet cashed out, hit the More Games button on the touchscreen and select a different game variation. Play it until you score a win.



7. Insert more money or a voucher into the machine.



8. Touch the More Games button again, and change to the maximum denomination—in this case, \$10 per credit. Then return to your original \$800 royal flush.



9. Press the Cash Out button. “Jackpot! \$8,000” will appear on the screen and the light on the top of the machine will illuminate. Congratulations!



10. Wait for the slot attendant to show up with an IRS form W-2G (“certain gambling winnings”). Once you’ve signed it, they’ll get the machine to spit out a jackpot ticket.



BRATISLAV MILENKOVIC

That stain on the board’s integrity haunts the division to this day. But by all evidence, the division’s paranoia, coupled with the game industry’s self-interest, have kept video gambling code clean and mostly free of exploitable bugs. That made the Game King case an intriguing puzzle for Lastusky. Armed with the surveillance footage of Kane in action, Lastusky sat at one of the Game Kings in the lab and began experimenting. Within a few days he was able to reliably reproduce the exploit himself. He gave his findings to IGT, which rushed out a warning to its customers advising them to immediately disable the Double Up option. “Replacement programs are being expedited,” the company explained.

Every Game King on the planet running a vulnerable version would need a patch. The upgrade process would be grueling. When an operating system like Windows or OS X has a security bug, customers can download the patch in a few minutes over the Internet. Slot machines aren’t online. New programs are burned onto EPROMs by the manufacturer and shipped in the mail in plastic tubes.

Blind to the firestorm erupting in Vegas, Nestor spent the rest of July and most of August playing at the Meadows, until August 31, when the casino finally got suspicious and refused to pay Nestor on a four of a kind. Nestor protested but walked away, breaking into a run as he reached the parking garage.

Nestor was up more than \$480,000. The Game King ride was over, but he had enough money to last him forever.

**At 1:30 pm** on October 6, 2009, a dozen state and local police converged on Andre Nestor’s split-level condo on a quiet, tree-lined street in Swissvale. He was dozing on his living room couch when the banging started. “State police! Open up!” The battering ram hit the door seconds later, splintering the frame and admitting a flood of cops into the house.

Nestor says he started toward the stairs, his hands over his head, when he came face-to-face with a trooper in full riot gear. “Get on the floor!” yelled the trooper, leveling his AR-15 at Nestor’s face. Nestor complied. The cop ratcheted the handcuffs on Nestor’s wrists, yanked him to his feet, and marched him into the kitchen.

For the next two hours, Nestor watched helplessly, handcuffed to a kitchen chair, while the police ransacked his neat home. They flipped over his mattress, ripped insulation from his ceiling, rifled his PC. At about 4 pm, Nestor’s roommate, Laverde, arrived home and was arrested on the spot as an accomplice to Nestor’s crimes.

It was the first major gambling scandal in Pennsylvania since the state had legalized slots in 2004. The media portrayed Nestor as a real-life Danny Ocean, and prosecutors hit him with 698 felony counts, ranging from theft to criminal conspiracy. The district attorney seized every penny of Nestor’s winnings and gave it back to the Meadows. Nestor and Laverde spent about 10 days in the county jail before making bail.

A defiant Nestor vowed to fight the case—no jury would convict a gambler, he was certain, for beating a slot machine at its own game. But on January 3, 2011, when it was time for jury selection, Nestor was hit with another surprise. Two FBI agents showed up and pulled him from the Washington County courthouse. The Justice Department had taken over the case. Nestor and Kane had both been charged federally in Las Vegas.

As the agents walked him to their car, Nestor stopped in front of a television camera and let loose. “I’m being arrested federally now—for winning at a slot machine!” he shouted in disbelief. “This is what they do to people! They put a machine on the floor, and if it has programming that doesn’t *take* your money and you win on their machine, they will throw you in jail!”

The Las Vegas prosecutors charged Nestor and Kane with conspiracy and violations of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. Passed in 1986, the CFAA was enacted to punish hackers who remotely crack computers related to national defense or banking. But in the Internet age the government had been steadily testing the limits of the law