

Information about Card Daubing in Mississippi Stud Poker

By Bill Zender

Mississippi Stud Poker is a very popular game throughout North America. Players seem to enjoy the game's simplistic nature, and are attracted by the game's multiple raises feature. The game is becoming an immediate and steady money maker practically every time it is introduced on the casino floor. However, the features that have led to the game's success are also attractions for the knowledgeable advantage player and the professional card cheater. In the last several months there have been a number of cheating incidents involving the marking of the playing cards. These cards are being marked on the table during play with a coloring substance known as "daub". There are a number of questions passing along the Internet regarding the use of daub in the casinos. Following is a short white paper concerning my knowledge of daub and how it is being used to bet Mississippi Stud Poker.

What is daubing?

The cheating technique of card daubing involves the use of a substance that can be lightly applied or "daubed" on to the back of any playing card. This daub marking can later be seen on the back of the playing card and used by the cheater to identify the value of that card. The daub is usually applied in such a small portion that the average person cannot see the mark. Cheaters using a daub technique will train for hours and hours to read the cards, both laying on the table, and in motion, spinning across the layout. Daub has an unusual characteristic; it's extremely difficult to see up close. The farther you are away from the playing card, the easier it is to spot the daub smudge. Since daub is applied by the cheater while on the gaming table, the placement on the back of the cards is not very precise. In most case the daub is applied while the person daubing is making eye contact with the dealer. Once the cheater spies the value of the card, the daub is applied generally in the center of the card for most casino games, but sometimes in a number of specific regions of the card back when several different values need to be known.

Usually, the cards are marked to indicate a specific card or a group of cards. However; in the case of some of the poker style bank table games, several specific values need to be identified requiring the dauber to be more exact with the daub placement. Generally speaking, it takes a good deal of time to mark the required cards in the deck. If one player is applying the daub, it could take over an hour to mark the necessary cards. In Mississippi Stud poker, a game where the player touches two cards at a time, it would take a minimum of 26 rounds for him to handle all 52 cards. The problem that exists for the dauber is that he isn't guaranteed to pick up unmarked cards he needs to mark with every new round. If the cheater, working alone, intended to mark at least 90% of the target cards, it will take approximately 58 rounds of play of marking cards regardless whether he wishes to mark 52 cards or only 4. Chances are the dauber would never be able to mark every intended card during the daubing process.

Once the necessary cards are marked, the cheater has to get rid of the daub container, also known as a "cup" or "button". If alone, he will need to leave the table and go outside the building to his car, or to his hotel room, or to the nearest trash can. The dauber does not want the daub cup in his possession

when he starts playing cards using the daub information. If he is caught with the daub cup in his possession, he can be charged with possession of a cheating device. Once the necessary cards are daubed, the cheater uses the information to vary his hand/betting strategy (Mississippi Stud).

In many cases, the cheater will daub the required cards, leave the game and dispose of the daub cup, and return without increasing his betting level. The cheater waits for accomplices to join him at the table, and his new duty (in Mississippi Stud) is to read the cards and signal his accomplices the location of any marked key card revealed in the dealer's three card community hand. The accomplices will be tasked with wagering the higher limits, and making the require fold/raise deviations.

Regular daub vs. luminescent daub

Regular daub is a substance that has the feel and original appearance of a women's lipstick. However, once it's applied to the playing card back, it appears more of a powder. Daubs come in a variety of colors and shades. The primary colors are red, blue, gold, silver, green, and dark grey or off black. Blue daub works the best with blue backed cards since it blends in with the card's primary color. It stands to reason that red daub is used on red backed cards. The other colors can be used with a variety of back colors with the lighter daub used in conjunction with lighter back designs. As stated previously, regular daub is usually applied by the cheater so that persons with untrained eyes don't pick up the marks. In most cases, the cheater is not required to use any optical enhancements to view the daub.

Luminescent daubs are more of a very faint shaded paint that is applied to the playing cards. This type of marking is read with the use of glasses or contact lens. Steve Forte's book, *Casino Game Protection*, states that there are primarily two types of luminescent daub; emerald green and yellow. The emerald green daub is used in conjunction with red backed cards. The green daub is applied to the card and read through a red lens. The red lens blocks the red color of the card brings out the dark contrast of the green on the back of the card. The yellow daub is applied to blue backed cards. It is read using a blue lens (Forte 2004). The problem that occurs for the cheater using luminescent daub is that the contact lenses make the cheaters eyes appear like dark marbles. I've heard it explained as "Orphan Annie" eyes, from the popular cartoon character. In order to disguise the dark eyeballs, the cheater may resort to wearing lightly tinted glasses like those worn by competitive shooters or airplane pilots. None of these daubs require a special light source to see; however black light and infer-red light sources have been used to detect the presents of daub on the cards.

Recently, I engaged a retired "cross roader" (cheater) in a conversation on daub cards. He was regarded to be one of the better "paper" cheaters back in his day. He told me that the ability to read good daub work requires a lot of time to train your eye to see the daub. It took him almost a year before he could apply and read daub that was light enough for him to read, but the average casino executive could not. He also mentioned that the reason a person used contact lenses or glasses is so they did not have to practice as much to see the same lightly applied daub. Anyone who could see daub with a lens could also see the daub with the naked eye if they trained long enough. He stated that good "paper" is all but invisible to most people, and the best method for detecting it was through understand and seeing daub being applied to the back of the card, and through the dauber's hand playing strategy.

Spotting daub on the cards

Cheaters use daub because it is difficult to spot by the untrained eye. Following are some suggestions to help you to spot daub;

- Don't hold the suspect card close to your face. The best method is to place the card on a surface with a contrasting color. I've found that placing a card on a yellow legal pad works well. Next, take several steps back from the card. What you are looking for is a slight darker discoloration on the back of the card. It should appear as a dark smudge or finger print.
- Another good method for finding daub is to hold the suspected playing card at arm's length, and tilt the card backwards until you're looking down the length of the card at an angle. By looking at the card back at an angle, you are not viewing the daub straight on. This is the same effect as stepping back from the card to look at it.
- In some situations the use of a black light will show the daub. By holding the suspect card under a black light, the daub may appear, especially if it is oil based. Again, the daub will appear as a smudge or smear.
- Darrin Hoke, Director of Surveillance at the L'auberge Resort in Lake Charles, Louisiana, suggested using a surveillance camera with the night vision function enabled. I understand this method was successful in discovering the daub used in August at a Baton Rouge Casino.

Question: Why are discard holder constructed from a translucent ruby red plastic? Because peering through a translucent ruby red plastic discard holder acts in the same manner as looking through red colored lenses. If red back cards are marked with daub, the markings will be visible as dark marks when looking through the discard holder.

Detecting the daubing technique

A primary method for spotting a daub cheating scam is to actually watch the cards being marked. Daub is usually applied by the cheater using his index finger. The cheater will look at the card in his hand, and if it is of a value that needs to be daubed, he will draw the tip of his index finger lightly across the area of the card back he intends to mark. When handling cards, not intended to be marked, the cheater will intentionally keep his index finger off the backs of the cards. Looking for both index finger motions during suspicious play is a superior detection tool.

The cheater may need to position cards in his hand so he has access to the target card's back. One common move for positioning key cards to be daubed is known as "card shuffling". The cheater can be seen to "shuffle" one card behind the other with one hand when holding more than one card. This shuffling move is very common in cases of card marking and also in situations where a cheater is switching, or hand mucking cards. Remember, if a player is seen shuffling cards in his hand, it doesn't always mean the player is cheating, but it is a considerable "tell", and needs to be investigated.

The dauber is also required to put more daub on his finger tip when he runs out. This is known as "going to the well". The cheater will conceal the daub button somewhere on his body, or under the gaming table. Watch a person making repetitive moves to his lap, pocket, sleeve, or back of his glasses with the

hand that has been seen daubing the backs of the cards. This is another indication that a player may be marking cards.

If someone observing a card game sees a player who (1) shuffles the cards in his hand, (2) draws his index finger across the backs of specific value cards, and (3) makes repetitive hand moves to a specific location of his body or under the table, they are a strong indicator that the player is daubing cards, and the that person's play needs to be analyzed.

Identifying the daub play at Mississippi Stud Poker

Mississippi Stud Poker is a poker style banked table game. Generally speaking, poker style bank games are not open to traditional card marking due to the need to mark both rank and suit of the cards. Mississippi Stud poker however, has a number of features that make it extremely vulnerable to card marking. First, a player is not required to beat the dealer's hand. The player only needs to use his two cards and the three community cards to make a pair of Jacks or better (pair of sevens through tens are a "push"). Second, the player has the option to fold his hand, bet his hand, and bet his hand in multiples of his original ante bet. He has three opportunities to make these decisions with his hand, all with the option of wagering 3X his ante when holding a strong hand. Under normal playing conditions, the player uses the information gained from seeing the two cards in his hand, and the information he receives as the dealer turns up the three community cards (one at a time) in which to make folding/wagering decisions.

Armed with marked card information, the cheater will know in advance whether or not he will win, push, or lose, based on the value of any marked community cards. In situations where he knows he has a guaranteed winning hand (pair of Jacks or better), he will raise his bet to the maximum multiplier of 3X. Because of the multiplier of 3X that can be exercised three different times during the hand, the cheater has an extremely high advantage. Advantage Player and author James Grosjean indicated that a cheater or advantage player (hole-carding) who see the value of all three community cards, and uses that information to fold, call, or raise 3X, can achieve a 279% edge over the casino (Grosjean 2009). The expected return for the cheater on a \$100 ante bet would be \$279 if he knows the rank and suit of all 3 cards. Based on a simulation run by Eliot Jacobson, if the cheater only marked the four Jacks of the deck, this information would provide the cheater with a return of approximately 30% (Jacobson 2013).

Knowing that the cheater must alter his hand/betting strategy, is there any possibility that a person observing the game could detect this cheating scam? Yes, but they need to know two vital pieces of information regarding the game of Mississippi Stud. First, it is important that anyone observing the game for cheating (or advantage play) know the hand/betting strategy for the game. The best source for this information is found on the Wizard of Odds website (Shackleford 2013)

<http://wizardofodds.com/games/mississippi-stud/>.

Second, after a person has an understanding of how the hands should be played, the observer needs to look for situations where the hands that should not be raised based on the information available to the player at the time of that betting decision. There is no reason for a player raises his bet 3X with a 3-King in his hand. However, if another king (or more) is reveal as one of the community cards, the observer

should ask himself “why” would the player made that decision? Was it based on advanced knowledge of a subsequent King in the community cards? One strange play does not indicate a problem; however a number of strange plays require investigation. Other indications of daub card play (or advantage play) in Mississippi Stud is the appearance of previously unknown players who are wagering near the table maximum. Most casino supervisors and surveillance operators know their players. The appearance of strange faces wagering higher than average bets should be investigated immediately.

Following are indicators that players may be daubing cards on your Mississippi Stud Poker game;

- A player is seen drawing or “wiggling” his index finger across certain key cards (Jack, Queen, King, and Aces).
- The player is seen making repetitive hand moves to a specific area of his body or underneath the gaming table.
- The player is seen shuffling his cards into position.
- Unknown players are wagering at or close to table limits
- Players are making strange 3X their ante wagering decisions that are not based on the available information at the time of the decision.

Famous Quote: “Chance favors the prepared mind” – Louis Pasteur, Scientist (1822-1895)

Here is a link to a website that produces daubs and paints to mark cards. The products are out there and have been for quite some time <http://marked-cards.com/>.

Reference

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