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21: Bringing Down The House: The Inside Story Of Six M.I.T. Students Who Took Vegas For Millions



Synopsis

The #1 national bestseller, now a major motion picture, 21 is the amazing inside story about a gambling ring of M.I.T. students who beat the system in Vegas and lived to tell how. Robin Hood meets the Rat Pack when the best and the brightest of M.I.T.'s math students and engineers take up blackjack under the guidance of an eccentric mastermind. Their small blackjack club develops from an experiment in counting cards on M.I.T.'s campus into a ring of card savants with a system for playing large and winning big. In less than two years they take some of the world's most sophisticated casinos for more than three million dollars. But their success also brings with it the formidable ire of casino owners and launches them into the seedy underworld of corporate Vegas with its private investigators and other violent heavies. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm a huge math geek myself, so I really wanted to read this story and learn how these guys did what they did. The story definitely held my attention from start to finish, but it wasn't emotionally gripping. It's written with a fair amount of flowery language (more than necessary, I'd say), but lacks a human element. I never felt like I *knew* any of the characters or really cared about them, but from a purely informational standpoint, yes, it's all there: what they did, how they did it, how and when it all happened. Personally, I think the author could have done a lot more with it, and really brought the reader into the story, let him *feel* the tension, the nerves, the thrill of victory, and the

agony of defeat, but if you just want to know the facts and events of what happened, this book will work for you.

One can hardly deny that making money runs the world today. There are the specialists in making easy money. These are broadly characterized as speculators and gamblers. Speculation and gambling have several differences. Speculation involves increasing one's chances to profit by various means such as news study, pondering, technical analysis, margin trading, hedging, options, and some have used psychics all with the aim of gaming profit from short or medium term market value fluctuations. Gambling is wagering by means of an uncertain event with the aim of gaining additional assets. It requires consideration, chance, and a prize. The striking feature is that a small fee or amount is required with a chancy large return within a short time. *Bringing Down the House* is the true story of how six MIT students turned gambling into speculation to fleece Las Vegas for millions. The best and brightest students are recruited by an eccentric former teacher with teeth like a picket fence of spades, diamonds, clubs and hearts to practice in a college backroom as the MIT Blackjack Team before invading the strip. The nice thing about the book is that the secrets of card counting, shuffle study, ace cutting, hi-low counting, group spotters, third base coaches, card count code words, statistic indexes, and other tips the students used and the casinos don't want you to know are revealed. Of course, one wonders the secret they did not reveal to win. MIT proved blackjack is beatable and Ben Mezrich tells it with a suitable degree of suspense. Speculation and gambling are similar in the manner in which they can acquire profit in a short time. Both methods involve risk but a speculator may learn more skills than a gambler's plain luck to lower his risk. One may invest his hard earned money in intelligence such as *Bringing Down the House*.

After reading *Bringing Down the House*, I was excited and fascinated by the luxury life in Las Vegas and the world of card counting. This is a story that's told through the eyes of the author about a group of math geniuses, who used the techniques of card counting. They worked as teams and legally won millions of dollars over just a few years by spending their weekends down in Vegas. The author, Ben Mezrich, wrote the book based a real life story that is almost too incredible to believe. Therefore, even though it's a real story, it's written like a realistic fiction novel. All the events that happened in the whole story were so intense that I felt like I was thrust into a roller coaster ride. Moreover, Mezrich visualized most of his sentences and sometimes made it melodramatic. He used lots of visual metaphors and descriptions of characters' inside thoughts. Overall, this is a

thrilling book that can be finished in a short amount of time but the scenes in the book might last forever in your head. From the book, I've learnt a lot about the world of casinos and card counting, the job of the spotters, who cover as many tables as possible and keep running card-counts at their location and help the big player to count cards and the usage of hand signals. For example, a spotter would signal the count of +11 by saying "I wonder if there is a football game today." (in reference of there are eleven players on a football team). Or he might say "I really suck at bowling" to indicate the count of +10 because in bowling, strike is ten pins. There are also lots of other techniques that the team invented. They had their own system. They also learned about the dark side of the casino world, how greedy people are and how the Vegas corporations work. Furthermore, Mezrich always leaves suspense to the readers and stimulates readers' desire to read more about the story. At the end of all the chapters, you won't know what's coming up next. Mezrich is capable of keeping the readers' eyes glued to the pages. In the book, the MIT team strapped thousands of dollars to their bodies to get the cash onto planes. They used false names, always have limos waiting for them at the airports, always having personal host to escort them everywhere. Reading about their incredibly rich life and their dangerous situation of being caught by the casinos, you will never know what they are going to do next. Even though the book is a quick read, it interests a wide variety of people, from who wants to feel the thrills and adventure the gambling world to the ones that never gambled before but curious about it. However, the book doesn't relate to any big history themes. From the book, it seems like over the course of a few years, gambling is all they do. I couldn't tell how was it like in the 1990s except for the casinos. The author also has too much detail about the card counting techniques and it got repetitive to create the tension between characters and a card counter's life. It seems like readers can just skim through some parts that is obviously meant to stretch out the book. Moreover, there are lots of details in the book that doesn't seem real. Some of the events doesn't make any sense. For example, why would they hide their cash in all kinds of ways and trying to get through the airport security when they can just use a bank box or a debit card. Moreover, the team always stays at fancy hotels with suites, champagne, limos waiting on arrival, 24-hour open swimming pool just for them. Doesn't it seem too conspicuous to the casinos? Since they want to keep it low, they shouldn't take risks like that. Also, according to Wikipedia, some of the exciting events didn't occur. All these over dramatic scenes seem too unrealistic. However, they can really interest the readers. After all, this is one of the cheapest Vegas fantasy people can buy. Overall, this book contains interesting and exciting stories that keep the readers' eyes on the pages. The plot goes quick enough that you won't find it long or boring.

Yet, it's not the best book to read if you are looking for a historically informative book.

The book was fantastic, read it in two sittings. It was hard to put down. Got an added treat when the movie came out this weekend and I went to see it. Both are very good and highly recommended. This inside look at casino security and card-counting was very exciting. Seeing how a group of regular kids (well, genius regular kids) could learn to exploit an edge and take the big casinos for money, makes for a great story. I am not a gambler. Well not a gambler in the sense of giving my money away to the casinos, because I know the odds are rigged to the benefit of the house. I did like reading details about how these MIT students found a very slight probabilistic edge and then built a team to exploit that edge. Pretty much the same way traders and hedge funds make money every single day. But the house, like the market, figures these things out and changes the game. The only difference is the market will not "take you for a one way ride into the desert" I highly recommend the book or the movie.

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