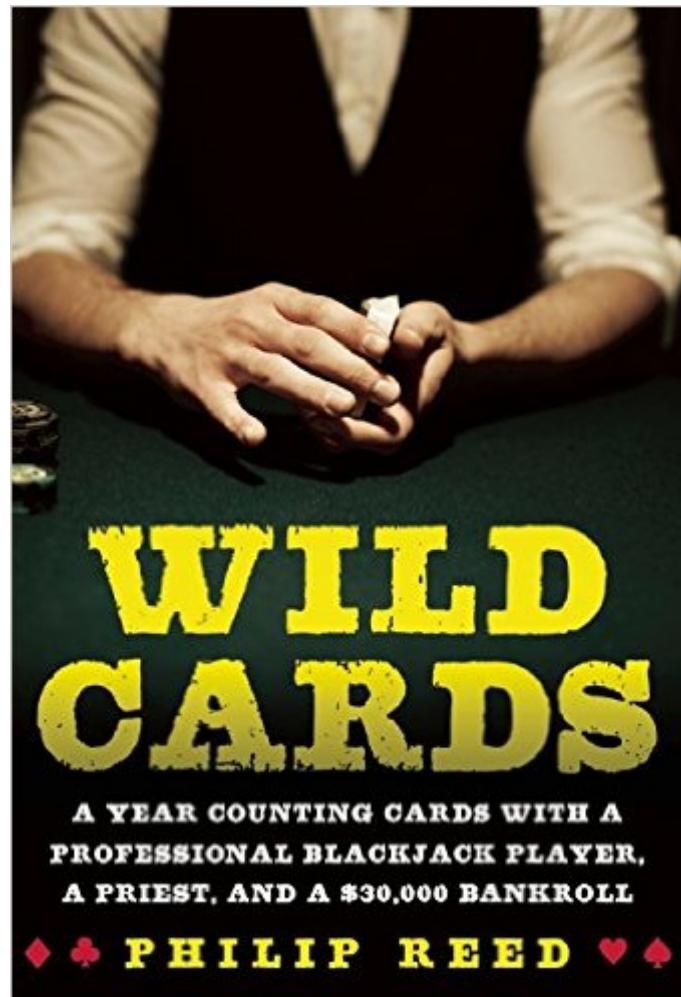


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Wild Cards: A Year Counting Cards With A Professional Blackjack Player, A Priest, And A \$30,000 Bankroll



Synopsis

Philip Reed is coasting toward retirement, looking for one last adventure, when he meets Bill Palis, a professional blackjack player and former member of the legendary MIT team that took the casinos for millions. At a blackjack table in a strip casino, Phil sees Bill win \$1,600 in 20 minutes of play—and he's intrigued. Initially, he plans to write the book as a spectator, but Bill encourages him to overcome his fears, learn to count cards, and get a piece of the action for himself. The two men form a friendship and begin traveling and playing blackjack together, often with Father Andy, who kicks in money so they can play out of a \$30,000 bankroll. Phil, who has adult ADD, and flunked math in high school, adopts the challenge of card counting as a way to banish the old ghosts of his poor self-image and build new synapses in his aging brain. With Bill as his tough mentor, Phil struggles to learn the game and secretly track the cards. As Phil's play improves, Bill teaches him to disguise his wins and avoid scrutiny from casino security and the Orwellian "eye-in-the-sky" security cameras. Philip Reed punctuates *My Piece of the Action* with short, funny, informational sections on various gambling-related subjects. These sections step outside the main story and add depth by investigating different card counting systems, the danger of gambling addiction, interviews with memory experts, and secrets of dealers, pit bosses, and casino surveillance specialists. Throughout, he takes a humorous look at casino characters, even as he begins to sink into the gambling world himself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Philip Reed's autobiographical account of his firsthand experiences learning how to count cards

exceeds expectations because it isn't just an instructional book with colorful and often hilariously spot-on descriptions of Las Vegas, but also a deeply engaging memoir in which blackjack becomes a kind of metaphor for life's challenges. Reed demonstrates a keen ability to seamlessly blend personal anecdotes with the nuts-and-bolts of card-counting, and to bring not just Vegas, but many different gambling venues -- both national and international -- vividly to life. His self-deprecating sense of humor immediately draws the reader in, as do the clever quotes and proverbs at the beginning of each chapter. This works well on so many different levels.

This is a great read for someone who already has a fairly good foundation in counting, but is still starting off. The realistic insight to what it takes to make you in a small amount of money is very worth the read. All in all well worth it

How many authors would risk so much dough to write a book? Phillip Reed wasn't a gambler but he went for it and put his money on the line. Oh yea he wrote a book too. This isn't a how-to, though you'll learn some techniques if that's what you want, it's an adventure of someone stepping into a world unknown to most of us. It's pretty scary to put up this kind of dough but Reed does it. I highly recommend this book.

A very candid look into the world of card counting complete with the ups AND downs of the trade and what it takes to really succeed. A well written book that I wanted to keep reading. Phil Reed gives his personal account of trying to learn from a diligent master of the trade. Read this book to see if he succeeds or fails with his goal.

Dangerously enticing in that it teaches us that MIT Undergraduate entry is not essential to the makeup of a card counter. An honest and exciting book that lets the reader know that card counting is not dead and that it can be learned. Thrilling in that it is written in the first person in near real time and covering the learning process as opposed to merely looking back from lofty heights over a successful and romanticized experience. I read this book in two sittings - would have been a single straight sitting if I could read while driving but my wife and the Irish police force take issue with such practices. I highly recommend this book and am hoping that the author will at some point reveal what happened in his second year counting cards. If that book is ever published, I will be first in line to buy it.

if you are looking for a, "how to" primer this is not it. What it is is an amazing true story of how a novice card player learned to count cards and come away a winner. You really can't go wrong with this uniquely well written take on the way black jack games are played. You will want to read it a second time!

Is Wild Cards a beginner's guide to winning at blackjack? Or a personal journey of discovery, reflection and self-realization? In fact, it's both, and Reed weaves these two strands together with an experienced writer's deftness and flair. Wild Cards works as well on your bedside table as it does in a Vegas casino before you hit the tables. Just a great read with unusually broad appeal for what initially looks like "just" a gambling book.

I'm a professional golfer and I had the good fortune of having the book's card-counting character "Bill Palis" contact me about coming out to Las Vegas to give him several days worth of golf lessons. Since we weren't going to be doing golf all the time and we were also in Las Vegas, Bill invited me out to ride shotgun with him as he went around from casino to casino winning money at the black jack tables. It was such an interesting experience because the way a professional card counter goes about playing blackjack and spending his time in the land of casinos is so different than what a normal person would do visiting for fun, vacation, etc. I also happen to be friends with the author, Philip Reed. After my golf/blackjack trip with Bill, I mentioned to Phil that Bill would make a great subject for a future book. A couple years later, the result was this book. There's no shortage of books out there about learning basic blackjack strategy and card counting. What's interesting to me about this book is that it gives you that inside look that I was talking about as to how a real professional "plays" the casino. I can attest from personal experience with Bill that Phil does a fantastic job capturing all the little subtleties and nuances for success and "beating the house" that you just wouldn't find in a typical book about blackjack. But the book is also a great read for more than just the insider look at a professional black jack player. Phil also interweaves other things in to the story like challenging yourself and what you believe in, dealing with your own internal fears, personal growth, etc. I think it's a must read for anyone interested in blackjack...but it's also a fun and easy read if you don't play blackjack because of the tie-ins to self and real life.

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