

Skill, superstition: no effect on luck

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Research by Drake University psychology professors suggests the more mental mistakes gamblers make, the more they bet.

Professors W. Scott Wood and Maria Clapham say the two most common incorrect beliefs are that the player possesses some sort of control over games of chance by their game-playing skills or through magical or superstitious influence.

"Gamblers often display what psychologists call 'cognitive errors,'" said Wood. "The first belief is an illusion of control. For example, they may believe that if they watch slots closely and see one lose over and over then the machine is 'due' for a payout.

"The second cognitive error is superstition," Wood said. "This is a belief that has do with how lucky you are."

Wood comments: "The odds always favor the house. The more you play, the more likely you are to lose -- and there is no skill, insight, or lucky charm that can change that."

The study appears in the December issue of the Journal of Gambling Studies.

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