

Lottery guides aim toward winning tips

By ANITA McDIVITT
Times Correspondent

ORLANDO — Ever since lottery fever hit the state, the check-out lines in grocery stores and retail outlets have been stacked up with them — people who can't decide what numbers to play in the weekly Lotto or Fantasy 5 games.

Some players come up with systems for choosing numbers, such as combining the numbers in birthdays and ages. But everyone is looking for that edge, for that something extra to insure a win. And with the stakes set at several million dollars each week — including \$30-million this week — many are willing to try just about anything to come up with a winning combination, including lottery guides.

"There are guides that have you use astrology and the stars for picking numbers, or the times of fishing tides," said Stan Podlaseck, an engineer for Martin-Marietta.

He plays the lottery every week and claims he wins enough to stay in the black. "Other guides use scientific methods, but they're so complicated most people can't understand them," he said. "I tried to make it as easy as possible to continue playing the game."

His lottery guide, *Otto's What's Hot, What's Not*, looks at Lotto and Fantasy 5 as "a board game with 49 numbers and no rules, except that everything is random," he said. "Like any other game, I enjoy playing it. But I don't like games that don't have any strategy or rules. Then I can't play competitively."

So he studied the lottery, compiled statistics and came up with his own rules. "They're not unique. The game truly is a random game, and contrary to popular myth, the amount of ink on the balls does not influence how they come up," he said.

Out of the apparent confusion of complete randomness Podlaseck discovered that patterns do emerge.

"Mathematically, probability says all the numbers should be picked the same number of times,"

he said. "But that isn't so. Certain numbers have hot streaks and others disappear for periods of time."

"There will be times when lady luck won't shine on anybody for four or five weeks, and that's just the nature of the game," Podlaseck said. "But if you look over the past 10 to 12 weeks, there does appear to be a trend. They're random — they last for four to five weeks and then disappear, but you try to catch them when they're there."

At first Podlaseck compiled the numbers and studied the game for himself. "I'm an engineer, I like to manipulate numbers," he said.

But when he started sharing his results with friends, "enough people were asking me for copies of it that I thought people might really be able to use it."

Podlaseck gives trends and statistics only for the Lotto and Fantasy 5 games. "Cash 3 has little appeal for me," he said. "It's not as easy to predict, and it jumbles up the other statistics. It overwhelms the reader and the player. The statistics get to be burdensome."

Otto's guide made its debut in September 1989 and is published monthly and distributed in about 600 retail stores throughout the state, Podlaseck said.

"It's only for people who have a little bit of a sense of competitiveness and who don't want to devote a lot of time to the game," he said. "The whole subject of the game is to stay alive until you get to the next win."

"Everybody to varying degrees has got caught up in the attraction," he said. "This is not a serious endeavor on anybody's part. I make no claims that this system will allow you to hit the big one. It makes the games more fun and puts some science and math into it, but the odds of hitting the big jackpot are astronomical."

Otto's What's Hot, What's Not: Lotto and Fantasy 5 Results and Selection Guide is printed monthly and is available in retail stores throughout Florida. Cost is \$1.39.



PODLASECK

LETTERS

ST. PETERSBURG TIMES ■ THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 1990

Lottery guide hit

Re: *Lottery guides aim toward winning tips*, March 31.

During the weekend that this misleading article appeared, I was in Washington, D.C. attending the annual conference of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP, publishers of the *Skeptical Inquirer*). This year's theme was "Critical Thinking and Scientific Literacy." One of the speakers was John Paulos, professor of mathematics at Temple University, and author of the book *Innumeracy*. Although the pervasiveness of *illiteracy* in this country is well documented, the problem of *innumeracy* (even among the literate, including reporters and their editors) is largely unappreciated and unaddressed.

In your article, Stan Podlaseck, self-described as "an engineer (who likes) to manipulate numbers," incorrectly implies that by looking back at a series of randomly selected lottery numbers "over the past 10 to 12 weeks" and noting that some numbers may appear more frequently during this brief period than some others, one may then declare "a trend" in which "certain numbers have hot streaks," and that "you (can) try to catch them when they're there." In actuality, retroactively spotting such a "trend" is of absolutely no value in predicting future numbers, as any mathematically inclined engineer would surely confirm. Podlaseck disclaimers seem to indicate his own awareness of this ("The game truly is a random game . . . This is not a serious endeavor . . . I make no claims that this system will allow you to hit the big one . . .").

Rather than printing a free advertisement for Podlaseck's lottery guide, in bold lettering, at the conclusion of the article, your readers would have been much better served had they been directed to a book such as Professor Paulos' *Innumeracy*.

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