

## Frank Floor Talk

# Frank Floor Talk: Book Review – Learning To Win

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Learning To Win

By Jon H. Friedl, Jr., Ph.D.

191 pp., \$18



I generally review books that I think are informative, important for business/ personal development for gaming and books that I really like. This review is different. I hate this book, “Learning To Win” by Jon H. Friedl, Jr. Perhaps more specifically, I hate this type of book, especially with subtitles like “How to Make a Profit at Slot Machine Gambling.” I think this book is better than many others of this genre since it scatters some useful information and historical background amidst the many myths and falsehoods it also shares.

As a retired operator, I also love this type of book. What?!? Why the dichotomy? Gambling has always been a two-faced mistress. Everyone talks about their winning experiences, while knowing full well that our beautiful casinos were not built on the losses from all the winners. So, while books like this are full of conspiracy theories and gaming’s version of ‘Wives’ Tales,” they also encourage our

customers to keep on playing.

I'm not immune myself. I have always prided myself as a student of analytics, game math and probability (probably because of a few misspent years of my college career studying electrical engineering, before getting a Journalism degree). Given that background, why do I spend most of my personal gaming budget on IGT's Megabucks and the national Powerball lottery? They both feature some of the worst odds in all of gaming (CLARIFICATION: the lottery at 55% overall payback makes Megabucks, in comparison, seem like the loosest game ever). The answer is that there is no rational reason. Maybe it's because early in my career, I couldn't dislodge the earworm of IGT's ad slogan: "One Pull Could Change Your Life" or my mom's refrain, "You can't win if you don't play." Of course, both sayings are as non-sensible as half of the material in Friedl's book. But all this collectively is what encourages me to pull that handle and buy those tickets again and again. This type of non-logic does the same for all our wonderful players who keep us employed.

Everyone wants to believe that they are a winner. If there are any shortcuts to get in the good graces of Lady Luck, they take it. Unfortunately, reality is not like that. These books propagate false promises. But I love that they spread hope eternal to players everywhere.

Friedl is not shy in proclaiming that he holds a doctorate, and he inserts the Ph.D. acronym wherever he can. He also lists eight higher education degrees, mostly in physics. I think the Ph.D. must stand for "piled higher and deeper" when he dispenses some of his slot machine advice. Here's an example where he says, "*my best advice on how to improve our odds to win:*

- *Note the specific slot machine, time, and weekday of a jackpot.*
- *Come back one week later, about 10 minutes earlier.*
- *Play the same machine through the time of the previous jackpot.*
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There is not any factual basis whatsoever for this claim, but it will most likely be celebrated by everyone in the Marketing and Slot Performance. The book creates even greater sins by promoting some common myths that are both false and harmful to future play. Friedl recounts a time when he first started gambling and had a six-day run of good luck on a particular machine. Then he suddenly stopped winning on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. His explanation, "*I now understand this is precisely what had happened. A slot attendant had deliberately adjusted a physical setting of that specific slot machine which resulted in a planned and significantly lower odds of winning.*"

Unless in the highly unlikely event that there had been a major error in the original game setup, the scenario he described never happened to him or any other player. But every slot director in every casino everywhere has heard this complaint repeated over and

over and over.

It's is a variant on the story that every slot director has a dial in his office to tighten and loosen every machine, especially yours when you are winning. It's also similar to the myth that if you use your players' loyalty card, we'll know it's you and give the knob a tighter twist. Pleeeeeaaase!!!

Friedl does do a decent job in compiling some of his background material on slot development. He clearly did a bit of research and, in academic style, he documents his sources well. This material contains some minor errors, but overall is useful and mostly accurate. It's when he recounts his own experiences gambling that reality goes off the rails.

I'll also give credit to Friedl for marketing himself. He's uses the nickname "Professor Slots" on his blog work and website online ([www.professorslots.com](http://www.professorslots.com) ) and has produced several videos, most recounting material from this book. He also maintains an active email update list for his subscribers.

Bottom line: if you are in Operations, there's very little worth your time in books like this one. However, if you want to know what many of your players are thinking, and where they get some of their crazy ideas, this is a book for you. It's not a bad idea to encourage your players to buy a copy too. Indeed, they may keep coming back every week within 10 minutes of their last big win!!