

A Glimpse of Pull Tab Games in Washington State

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Introduction

This report provides a short analysis of pull tab games sold at one location in Washington state. The specific location is the Triangle Bowl, a 32-lane bowling center in Longview, Washington. It is the only bowling center serving an area of about 50,000 residents. Triangle Bowl sells pull tabs through electronic ticket dispensers and also as “jar tab” tickets sold from baskets behind the bowling center’s control counter.

As its name implies, this report is not meant to be a comprehensive analysis of pull tab gaming in Washington state, but rather presents observational analysis and research for one specific location. Any brand names mentioned in this report are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective companies.

Electronic Dispenser Sales

Triangle Bowl has two electronic pull tab ticket dispensers, one a \$1 denomination with a game offering a maximum jackpot of \$599, and the other a 50¢ denomination with game offering a maximum jackpot of \$300. These dispensers are shown in Figure 1, with the \$1 denomination game on the left.



Figure 1 - Electronic Ticket Dispensers

Both dispensers operate identically and sell pull tab tickets from a company named Trade Products of Lynnwood, Washington. Each dispenser has a bill acceptor that takes \$1, \$5, \$10, and \$20 bills and displays the credit amount once money is accepted. Each has four stacks of pull tab tickets and four buttons numbered 1 through 4, one for each ticket stack. When the

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player presses one of the four buttons, a pull tab ticket is dispensed from that stack, and the ticket cost is deducted from the remaining credit. It is not clear if the four stacks initially contain identical ticket distributions, or if the ticket distribution is randomly split among the four stacks.

The 50¢ dispenser sells tickets for a game called *Red White & Win*. This game offers six prizes ranging from \$1 to \$300, with the number of winning tickets for each prize (but not the total number of tickets) printed on each ticket. The player opens three tabs, and if the tabs match one of the winning “slot machine” combinations shown on the ticket, he wins the associated prize. The manufacturer’s website reveals that this variation of *Red White & Win* uses a pool of 4,200 tickets, so using the prize distribution printed on the ticket, we can derive a hit frequency of 11.26% and a return to player (RTP) of 68.57%. The front and back of a pull tab ticket for *Red White & Win* is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2 - Red White & Win Pull Tab Ticket

Counter Sales

Triangle Bowl also sells “jar tab” pull tab tickets from the bowling center’s control counter. They offer eleven different pull tab games, with denominations ranging from 10¢ to \$1, with 25¢ being the most prevalent. This setup is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3 - Counter Sales Setup

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The over the counter pull tab ticket games come from multiple vendors, including Bingo King, Bonanza Press, Paramount Games, and Specialty Manufacturing. Information gleaned from manufacturer and distributor websites provides additional insight into six of the eleven games. Each of those six games uses a pool of 6,000 tickets; RTP values range from 67.0% to 89.9%, with an average of 74.4%.

The pull tab tickets for each game are separated into eleven baskets numbered 1 through 11. To purchase tickets, the player tells the counter clerk how many tickets he wants to purchase and from what basket(s). The clerk then enters the selected games and ticket quantities into a computer system (shown in the center of the bottom shelf in Figure 3), the system calculates the total cost of tickets purchased, and then the clerk randomly retrieves the requested number of tickets from each basket. I suspect most players purchase multiple tickets for one specific game, as when I purchased one ticket for each game, the clerk seemed surprised. Figure 4 shows example tickets for the games sold in this manner.



Figure 4 - Example Pull Tab Tickets from Counter Sales Games

Conclusions

Based on the number of losing tickets seen in trash receptacles at Triangle Bowl, the pull tab games are quite popular (assuming they dump the trash receptacles at normal intervals). No dumpster diving was performed for this report, so it is currently not known which games are the most and least popular, or how many tickets are sold over a given period. However, observing ticket sales off and on during a four-hour period would indicate that sales from the electronic ticket dispensers are somewhat more popular than the over the counter sales, but that should only be considered an observation due to the small sample size.

About the Author

Ted Gruber is president and co-founder of Ted Gruber Software, Inc., (TGS) a Nevada corporation specializing in the design and development of mathematical models for the gaming industry. TGS specializes in math for slot machines, bingo, keno, video poker, scratch cards, pull tabs, table games, side bets, skill games, gaming promotions, new games – you name it.

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