

Sunday, March 16. 2008

Strike it

So you wait weeks for Sporting Index to do another promotion, and then two come along at once. It's back to back weekends of bet refunds, this time with losses up to £30 given back so you can try out their latest "why wouldn't it be random when nobody knows how it works anyway?" novelty game - Top, Middle or (you guessed it) Bottom. Would the real Michael Barrymore please stand up. And now, hopefully, I'm not the only one with that theme music stuck in my head. Dooo do-doo do-doo do-doo do-doo dooo. Do do de do. "The principal of this game", the instructions began - pushing my pedantry meter into overdrive after just two words: it's principle goddammit. What's that, you used the spell checker? Plstryharderthx. Shall we continue? ... "is very easy". Actually it's not very easy. It took me at least a dozen goes using play money to even start to understand what was going on, so I'll try my best to explain it but can't guarantee it'll be great. Picking top, middle or bottom reveals a symbol. You advance to the next column if you pick either a single arrow or you move across two columns with a double arrow. To get the maximum score you have to pick arrows all the way to the other side of the board and your current score is determined by the number shown at the top of that column. If you reveal a question mark you then have to pick one of four boxes. Three boxes contain your current score value and selecting one of these awards you that score and the game is over. The fourth box contains a green arrow and you move to the next column and continue. What is a Hot Spot? Not a good spot, of course. But in this game it's a red cross. Just different enough to avoid a lawsuit I expect. If you reveal a Hot Cross (not a good cross) the game ends with zero points no matter how far you got across the board. So far that actually sounds quite simple, but it's complicated no end by the fact that it's a spread betting game, and once you move across the board you are offered the opportunity to quit the game and take the new price offered, but that price is not going to be the same as your score because you haven't actually finished the game until you get all the way across or end it with a red cross or question mark. Very easy, yes? Assuming that you are at least 1-in-3 to hit some kind of arrow and proceed is one thing (all the games I played did reveal at least one arrow in every column) but knowing what advancing one step is worth versus how much you're risking to get there is a totally different matter. To be honest, I just didn't care enough about this game to work it out. If it wasn't for the £30 free bet I'd have been long gone. I guess there must be demand for this kind of thing among spread betting degenerates for whom there just isn't enough sport to bet on, but I don't see the appeal. First they have to get me to understand how the game works (in this case they didn't do a great job) and then they have to get me to trust it, and if it's not based on something that's random in real life that's usually tough. TV game shows are random? I think not, and nor does the chap from the video above if you check the comments on YouTube. Anyway, after a few play money games with the minimum stake, I noticed that if I hit a double arrow the first time or two single arrows I could then take the offer for a £1.50 profit, whereas a cross was a £2.00 loss. To avoid thinking any longer, this was good enough to start playing a few minimum bets to qualify for the refund - I needed ten bets at this level and finished up £7 down on the deal. So with a further £23 that could be refunded it was time for one larger bet to try to find a profit. This worked out at betting £1.15 per point, a maximum loss of £23 and a maximum win of £1160. Of course, I wasn't going anywhere near far enough across the board to win a grand and decided that a tenner profit or more would do. I went "middle" and got a green arrow. The game offered me £5.75 profit - not enough to get me back into profit overall so I would carry on, right after I took a screen grab. See that timer in the bottom right corner? 9 seconds it says. Well it took me a bit longer than that to paste and save the screenshot and while I was finishing up I heard a ding and some cheering from the other window. With my back turned, apparently I had gone "middle" again. Whether this is a random choice or just a repeat of my last selection I have no idea. Can't say I was pleased about it making the decision for me. Surely if it looks like I can't be bothered to play any more, it should hit the "take profit" button and cash me out rather than gambling it up on my behalf? And really, 15 seconds in total to act? Why? What damage, exactly, am I doing to your bottom line by not gambling any faster than that? Fortunately it was a winner, or I'd really be ranting about it. The new offer: £17.25, which just pushed me into enough profit to make my target. A total win of £10.25. Good game good game? No. A

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