

TIME TO REVISIT MCCAIN'S LOVE OF CRAPS


✖ Given events of the last few days, I thought it was time to revisit one of the most interesting articles of this election season, comparing McCain's big money, showy love of craps with Obama's cerebral love of poker.

The casino craps player is a social animal, a thrill seeker who wants not just to win but to win with a crowd. Unlike cards or a roulette wheel, well-thrown dice reward most everyone on the rail, yielding a collective yawp that drowns out the slots. **It is a game for showmen**, Hollywood stars and basketball legends with girls on their arms. It is also a favorite pastime of the presumptive Republican nominee for President, John McCain.

The backroom poker player, on the other hand, is more cautious and self-absorbed. Card games may be social, but they are played in solitude. **No need for drama**. The quiet card counter is king, and **only a novice banks on luck**. In this game, a good bluff trumps blind faith, and the studied observer beats the showman. So it is fitting that the presumptive Democratic nominee, Barack Obama, raked in so many pots in his late-night games with political friends.
[my emphasis]

Mostly, though, I'm amused by reading about McCain's staffers' desperate attempts to prevent McCain from caving to his addiction to gambling.

Only recently have McCain's aides urged him to pull back from the pastime. In the heat of the G.O.P. primary fight



last spring, he announced on a visit to the Vegas Strip that he was going to the casino floor. When his aides stopped him, fearing a public relations disaster, McCain suggested that they ask the casino to take a craps table to a private room, a high-roller privilege McCain had indulged in before. His aides, with alarm bells ringing, refused again, according to two accounts of the discussion.

"He clearly knows that this is on the borderline of what is acceptable for him to be doing," says a Republican who has watched McCain play. "And he just sort of revels in it."

Maybe if McCain's staffers had just allowed him to enjoy that private room high-roller game he wanted, McCain wouldn't be gambling the US economy along with his buddies from the hard right.

Photo by Phil Romans.