Can a ‘Formula’ Beat Blackjack?

A Casino Dares Professor to Try

By Ralph Chapman

The question is whether you "hit" thirteen.

The answer is that you do on a fresh deal because there are only twenty cards that can beat you and thirty that can improve your hand.

This has to do with blackjack (twenty-one), a mathematics instructor by the name of Dr. Edward O. Thorp at M.I.T., and another professional mathematician by the name of Edward Levinson, who runs the Hotel Fremont and its casino in Las Vegas.

Dr. Thorp is under the impression that, as a result of feeding data into an IBM-704 computer, it is possible to beat the game 99 per cent of the time.

“We will welcome him with open arms if he wants to come out here," said Mr. Levinson in a telephone interview yesterday. He was unimpressed with any theories about cards which suggest that it is possible to beat the percentage.

Blackjack is one of the simplest games dealt in casinos where gambling is legal. Each player must make his bet before he gets any cards. Then he is dealt two cards face down. The dealer’s first card is down.

Can BEAT THE ODDS—Dr. Edward O. Thorp, mathematics instructor at M.I.T., with electric computers (background) he would like to test at Las Vegas gambling casinos.