

# Three casinos booming

The three casinos that have reopened in Biloxi made USD 58.9 million in February compared to USD 64.2 million in January, but business was actually better.

When the numbers are broken down on a daily basis, the casinos averaged USD 2.1 million compared to USD 2.07 million in January. February has three fewer days than January.

„With the lesser days of the month coupled with the fact that January had New Year’s Eve, the busiest gaming weekend of the year, I’d read these as being very good numbers,“ said Beverly Martin, the executive director of the Mississippi Casino Operators Association.

The Mississippi State Tax Commission released the monthly gross gambling revenue report on Friday.

Mississippi River casinos earned USD 139.2 million in February compared to USD 159.7 million in January. The February revenue was up USD 3.2 million from a year ago, but the increase would probably have been more with better weather.

„Tunica had a big ice storm,“ Martin said. „It hurt their business for seven or eight days.“

Brian Richard, research director at the University of Southern Mississippi’s Economic Development Resource Center, noted that the three casinos accounted for more than half of the USD 109 million that the 12 Coast casinos earned last February.

„I’ve been in the casinos on a couple of Saturday nights where people were waiting in line to get to a slot machine,“ Richard said. „That’s something we haven’t seen since the first two opened here in 1992. There’s certainly still a big demand. I think on the Coast, gaming revenue is going to be driven by capacity. We’re not going to see any growth until more

temporary casinos get open and we get more gaming space.”

Casinos are planning on bringing in more slot machines, Martin said.

The IP, the Palace and the Isle of Capri have reopened. The next property to reopen could be Beau Rivage on Aug. 29 or a yet-to-be-named casino inside the Oasis Hotel. Rick Carter and Terry Green, who bought the property this week from Harrah's, said they plan to open on or before Sept. 1.