

Borgata fined over underage patrons

Atlantic City, New Jersey (AP) – February 20, 2008 – For more than a year, the teenager lived the life of a high roller at the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, buying tens of thousands of dollars worth of gambling chips, and earning more than USD 1,000 worth of free merchandise and services for the level of his Blackjack and poker play.

But what the casino didn't know – and didn't ask about for more than a year – was that he was only 19, two years below the legal gambling age in Atlantic City.

For that reason, the state Casino Control Commission on Wednesday hit the Borgata with the largest fine it has ever levied for underage gambling: USD 105,000. The Borgata also was fined an additional USD 75,000 for allowing six underage patrons to drink in a casino bar, and a security manager there was fined USD 1,000 for not immediately reporting them to state gambling regulators.

All told, the commission handed out USD 231,000 in fines to three casinos for letting underage patrons gamble or drink on their premises.

Joe Corbo, general counsel for the Borgata, said these two cases represent the first time the casino has ever run afoul of New Jersey's age restrictions since opening in 2003.

„We've demonstrated how seriously we take these matters," he said. „It's important for underage individuals to know how seriously we take this.“

The gambler, who was 19 at the time he applied for and got a Borgata player's club card on Aug. 26, 2005, was identified only by his initials, „A.P.“ He was stripped of his driver's

license for six months and fined USD 500.

Visiting the casino 10 times, he bought more than USD 34,000 worth of chips and lost about USD 9,000 over 24 days from August 2005 until September 2006.

Corbo said the casino finally caught the teen gambler when a dealer who recognized him from a previous visit thought he looked too young, and asked him to show some identification.

The Borgata, like many other casinos in Atlantic City, requires its employees to undergo training to spot underage customers, and offers cash rewards to workers who catch underage gamblers or drinkers. The Borgata offers USD 50 per detection, while Trump Entertainment Resorts gives out USD 100 per detection.

The Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort was fined USD 40,000 on Wednesday for allowing four underage customers to gamble there last August. And the Tropicana Casino and Resort was fined USD 10,000 for allowing an underage gambler to play slot machines last August.

The commission postponed a decision on whether to delay a USD 750,000 penalty that casino regulators imposed on the Tropicana's former owners until after the property is sold.

The fine – the largest cash penalty ever imposed by the commission – would be paid from the proceeds of a sale, which is expected to be completed this spring.

The commission stripped the Tropicana's former owners of their license and imposed the fine last December after a year of poor performance and violations of state casino law.