

Those elusive numbers

Lure of instant money bucks up state lottery

By C.J. RISAK

Instant millionaires.

That's the hope behind every lottery ticket — that it might be the lucky one that will bring a small fortune to the holder.

Never mind the astronomical odds against it happening. It might. And that's good enough for any gambler.

The Michigan Lottery got its start on Nov. 13, 1972, when the first ticket was sold. Since then, the state has peddled more than \$1 billion worth of tickets.

Over half a billion dollars (\$563,372,000 to be exact) has been returned in prizes, while an almost equal amount (\$549,353,159) has been added to the state's general fund.

That was the big selling point when the public voted it in by a two-to-one margin in 1972.

"If we didn't have the lottery, the average increase per tax return filed in the state would be \$47," said Roger Clough, spokesman for the state lottery office.

So why not risk that \$47 on the off chance that it might make a million? Especially since the alternative is losing it in taxes.

The catch behind the Michigan Lot-

tery is the same as it is in any betting scheme. The house can't lose. The state is always going to come out ahead as long as people are convinced the more tickets they buy, the lower their taxes will be.

BUT THE LOTTERY is not without its problems. One might be trying to convince store owners to sell tickets and to cash in the winners. But that has proved to be no problem in recent years in Southfield.

"It's no problem," said Doug Graat, manager of the Cold Spot party store on Evergreen in Southfield. "In fact, it helps generate business. People come in to buy tickets and purchase other things as well."

Nancy Luffy, who works at the Cloverleaf Market on Telegraph and 12 Mile, echoed Graat's feelings.

"The daily game helps us," Luffy said. "Not everyone has it, so people stop by to buy them."

"It's exciting to watch, too. People scratching them off (the surfaces of the Instant Game cards), trading them. We had a \$10,000 winner here a couple of years ago, and he still stops by every once in a while."

But while the lottery generates busi-

ness for smaller stores, grocers have a different outlook. People seldom walk into a grocery store just to buy a lottery ticket.

"I look at it as a way to pick up a six percent profit (all lottery ticket agents receive six percent of amount earned from tickets they have sold)," said Al Slonim, manager of the Great Scott at 12 Mile and Evergreen.

"Our cashiers handle it as a part of their regular work load, so there is no extra cost for us. It's straight profit."

FINDING SELLERS is no problem. But finding buyers could be, if the game becomes boring.

Loss of popularity is the big fear of the lottery commission. They battle that with new games, hoping to keep their customers' interest and possibly attract a few more to spend their money.

In the beginning, there was only one lottery game. It was a simple numbers contest, with weekly drawings that could lead up to the big money. The father of all lottery games is still in effect and is now called Michigan.

But its popularity has dropped off considerably in the face of competition from its offspring. It now makes up

only 10 percent of the total of lottery tickets sold.

The second generation in the lottery family is the Instant Games. It remains the most popular of the group, with 49 percent of all tickets sold belonging to one of a series of no-waiting money-winners.

The appeal of the Instant Games lies in their variety, quickness, and number of payoffs. Last year, six games were offered at different times. All offered the no-waiting approach. Just rub off the front of the card and see if you win.

The number of prizes also helped its popularity, with winners getting anything from a free card to \$10,000 and a shot at a million.

THE NEWEST ADDITION to the family is a throwback to his grandfather. It, too, is a numbers game, called the Daily. But, while it may seem similar to Michigan, it really is much more sophisticated.

The Daily operates through a computer that will give the better any combination of numbers he wishes to play. If the number is drawn at the end of the day, he or she wins.

There are a number of different ways to play the Daily. The wager may be anywhere from 50 cents to \$6, and it

can be made in any one of three ways: Straight, three-way, or box.

The attraction is simple — draw the skilled better by making the game complicated. How do I bet? How

much? Do I box it or play it straight? Payoffs come at the end of every day but Sunday. Last year, the biggest winner came on June 20, when the number 222 was worth \$620,250.

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