

Top Ten Mississippi Gaming Stories of 2017

Article By:

Thomas B. Shepherd III

It is that time of the year when we take a look back and review the top stories of 2017 concerning the Mississippi gaming industry.

1. **Want to Take Any Bets?** With the United States Supreme Court considering New Jersey's appeal regarding the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, the Mississippi Gaming Commission considers preparations for legal sports books in Mississippi. If the Supreme Court rules in New Jersey's favor, sports betting could become the top story for Mississippi gaming in 2018.
2. **Is This Real Life or Is This Just Fantasy?** In its 2017 session, the Mississippi Legislature approved a bill that legalized Daily Fantasy Sports. While this development in itself was interesting, the most important aspect of the bill was buried deep inside—a slight amendment to the Mississippi Gaming Control Act to revise a provision that the Mississippi Supreme Court ruled long ago would prohibit sports betting at Mississippi casinos. See No. 1 above.
3. **And the Powerball Number Is...** In 2017, the Mississippi Legislature authorized a commission to study the pros and cons of a potential lottery in Mississippi. The commission's report did not recommend for or against a lottery for the Magnolia State, but with tighter state budgets, the lottery issue is not going away anytime soon.
4. **Silver Anniversary.** On August 1, 1992, the Isle of Capri opened in Biloxi the first legal Mississippi casino. The industry celebrated its 25th anniversary this year at the Southern Gaming Summit with a panel presentation by the early pioneers of gaming in the state—Lyle Berman of Grand Casinos, Tim Hinkley of Isle of Capri, Jack Binion of Horseshoe, and State Senator Tommy Gollott.
5. **Third Time's the Charm?** RW Development brought forward for a second and a third time its proposed gaming site in Biloxi, which had previously been denied by the Mississippi Gaming Commission. The second and third applications met with a similar fate, and the actions by the Commission are on appeal to the Mississippi courts. Similarly, Diamondhead Real Estate filed another application for approval of its previously denied site in Hancock County, which was also denied again by the Commission. This decision is also on appeal to the courts.

6. **Bigger is Better.** Penn National Gaming became the operator of the greatest number of casinos in Mississippi (total of five properties) with its purchase of Resorts Tunica and Bally's Tunica (renamed 1st Jackpot Casino) for \$44 million.
7. **Under Construction.** Island View Casino in Gulfport announced a huge expansion of its existing casino project onto property located south of Highway 90. The \$75 million Beach Casino at Island View is scheduled to open in the summer of 2018.
8. **Upping the Ante.** Penn National Gaming announced at the end of the year that it was acquiring Pinnacle Entertainment, which also owns Ameristar Casino in Vicksburg. Closing on this acquisition will mean that Penn would own six Mississippi casinos.
9. **Minnow Swallows the Whale.** In 2017, Eldorado Resorts, Inc., a family owned Nevada company, dramatically increased the size of the company, acquiring Isle of Capri Casinos, Inc. and its casinos in Vicksburg and Lula, Mississippi.
10. **Back in the Black.** In 2017, Caesars Entertainment emerged from bankruptcy, putting the company and its three Mississippi casinos in position to return to profitability and strength.