

Las Vegas fun moves to heartland

By **Connie L. Sheehan**
Senior Editor

Win millions in prize money; join gamblers from across the nation; play poker, Keno, dice and bingo -- all promises from a travel advertisement brochure for Las Vegas, Nevada, right? Wrong.

Would you believe Macy, Neb.?

Except for the obvious lack of glitzy neon, the Omaha Nation High Stakes Bingo and Casino has brought Las Vegas-style gambling to the plains of Nebraska.

Although only one building occupies the new unlandscaped site, two distinct varieties of chance take place under the one-acre roof.

Players can choose between the high-stakes bingo hall or the newest addition, the Omaha Casino Room, according to Tom Kuehl, casino consultant.

Kuehl, who supervised and trained casino dealers in Reno, said he would be glad to give anyone playing instructions for the

variety of games offered in the casino room.

"The casino games and odds are those found in Las Vegas or Reno," Kuehl said. Games include Keno, Red Dog poker, a money wheel, an Oriental dice game similar to craps, called Sic Bo, and blackjack.

But onlookers will notice some slight differences from other casinos -- blackjack dealers who call numbers from bingo balls rather than deal playing cards -- because state statutes don't allow for the use of playing cards to gamble.

Even though gambling is permitted on federal Indian reservations, organizations still must abide by state statutes.

Such restrictions created a few problems but the casino temporarily has worked around these, he said. A good example is substituting ball numbers comparable to the same cards used in a normal game of blackjack.

Kuehl said a compact presented to the legislature has requested allowances in the gambling stat-

utes to include the use of playing cards and video gambling.

The casino has video gambling games sitting in storage since the state outlawed the video gambling, Kuehl explained.

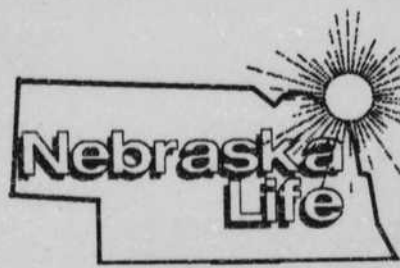
Outlawed video gambling "hurt us revenue-wise, because it's revenue we anticipated having," he said.

Revenue should pick up soon with the addition of private parties in the Omaha Casino Room, he said. The casino will be available for outside bookings any night of the week.

On Fridays through Sundays, the casino crowd contains bingo widowers, husbands who bring their wives to play but don't play bingo themselves.

But the casino also fills during the bingo hall break with dedicated fans rushing in to play Speed Bingo, a quick form of three-number bingo, he said. Quick is the word, since bingo numbers come flying at the player every ten seconds until bingo is called.

The numbers don't come as



quickly in the main bingo hall, but it took this bingo-illiterate reporter about two games to catch on to all tricks in keeping up with the number callers.

Beginners should arrive early (check for starting times by calling 1-800-544-8954) to purchase bingo packets.

The main bingo hall holds 1800 players, so find a seat. A seat close to one of the many number boards might help the beginner. The boards not only list the bingo numbers but big red blocks show the winning bingo pattern for that game.

A regular evening includes 15 bingo games plus three to four bonus games for cars or vacations. But the game that creates the most excitement is MegaBingo, a half million dollar bingo game transmitted live via satellite from Tulsa, Okla. to 17 bingo halls across the country.

Approximately 10,000 people throughout the United States play the MegaBingo satellite game according to Bill Gerstner, manager of the Omaha Nation Bingo and Casino.

But the bingo hall pulls its own international bingo crowd with a long-haul bus program that is growing and brings bingo players from as far away as Canada and Houston, Gerstner said.

On "Super" weekends, the bus crowd literally takes over because of the huge jackpots and additional chances to win big prizes, like cars, he said.

The next "Super" weekend will be July 8 and 9, Gerstner said, with prizes totaling more than a million dollars.

But like my mom always said, "You can't win if you don't play," and this reporter has caught the bingo bug.



Connie Sheehan/Daily Nebraskan

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