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BUSINESS

New Software Replaces Crystal Ball Gazing

Creators say it helps players pick lottery numbers

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You're thinking of a number and you feel like a winner; are you a lottery champ or just dreaming of a cash rich future? Now you can test your hunches against a new computer program.

Called Psychic Jackpot, the new software is the latest of number-generating computer programs for lottery players who seek extra help in choosing winning numbers. But this program has a new twist: it claims to help users sharpen their psychic abilities.

"This program trains the hidden capacities of your brain through highly sensitive feedback so that you use more of your core intuitive ability in real life," said Ryan Wood, a Foster City entrepreneur who created the program with Jack Houck, a psychic researcher who is also a systems engineer with McDonnell Douglas in Huntington Beach. In his off hours, Houck claims to have trained more than 12,000 people to bend spoons using only mental powers.

The duo's Lotto program asks a player to guess which letter it will choose. With every correct guess, the computer generates a number. While players are told on the spot whether their guesses are correct, typically they would not see the numbers generated until they have played for about 30 minutes or about 600 guesses. Users can ask the program to generate the appropriate set of numbers for every government-sponsored lottery in the world, ranging from lotteries in Florida or California to those in Canada and even Japan.

If this $89.95 program is so great, why aren't Wood and Houck millionaires? Wood, who so far has won only $60 using the method, says it is a matter of practice. "It's like learning to play the piano," he said. "Once in a while you'll find a Mozart who has a natural gift for picking winning numbers, but mostly it's practice."

While few winners of the California lottery admit to using number generating programs, a few admit that they have long tracked winning numbers and use those that appear most often, according to a lottery spokeswoman. She adds that lottery administrators never worry that computer programs will ruin their business by producing too many winners.

"When people ask me what is the secret to winning," she said. "I suggest they throw a dart and see where it lands. We're in the business of randomness."