

Inside Gaming: Return to glory goal for Binion's

Operators of a historic casino in the sagging downtown Las Vegas gambling market say they'd like to restore at least some of their property's former glory.

William Robinson Jr. told the Gaming Control Board last week that remodeling and increased marketing will improve the bottom line at Binion's.

„We're currently remodeling the first floor of the casino,“ said Robinson, vice president and chief operating officer of Speakeasy Gaming of Las Vegas, the casino's owner. „We want to get Binion's back to where it used to be.“

The 56-year-old casino, founded by Nevada gaming pioneer Benny Binion, fell on hard times in recent years.

Binion's Horseshoe was once a favorite destination for hardcore gamblers. The casino had a reputation for being willing to cover any bet and for offering low minimums and generous comps.

Harrah's Entertainment bought the casino in 2004, primarily for the Horseshoe name and the lucrative World Series of Poker, then sold it to Chester, W.Va.-based MTR Gaming Group. Speakeasy is an MTR Gaming subsidiary.

„I don't know if we'll get back to where it was when Jack Binion (Benny's son) ran it, but we're going to try,“ said Robinson, who was approved for licensing as a key employee.

Meanwhile, one analyst who covers MTR Gaming believes the company should sell the downtown Binion's casino rather than investing more money in it.

Stifel Nicolaus' Steven Wieczynski said a traditional Las

Vegas property doesn't fit MTR Gaming's portfolio of eastern racetrack casinos.

MTR Gaming just sold its other Southern Nevada property, the Speedway Casino in North Las Vegas, for \$ 18.2 million.

„I don't think (Binion's) does fit in with their plans,“ Wieczynski said. „Honestly, I think they should sell the property.“

Las Vegas has been the setting for several TV series, including „Vega\$,“ which aired during the late 1970s on ABC, and the current series „CSI“ on CBS and „Las Vegas“ on NBC.

Atlantic City wants its turn.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, Oscar-winning director Martin Scorsese and „Departed“ co-star Mark Wahlberg are teaming up to produce a drama series for Home Box Office about Atlantic City.

The project is in conjunction with the book „Boardwalk Empire: The Birth, High Times, and Corruption of Atlantic City“ by Nelson Johnson, which HBO has optioned.

The book chronicles Atlantic City's rise from a seaside resort, through its rebirth in the 1980s as a gambling destination.