

# THE NEWS-PRESS

## Patrons seek winnings as arcade closes

By Mark S. Krzos

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But when the couple tried to collect their winnings in the form of a gift card, they were given excuse after excuse.

Now Vegas Games IV is closed and the Browns aren't sure if they'll ever see the \$100 owed to them.

"We've been in there 20 to 30 times. We went in for an hour or two," said Ralph Brown. "We'd spend \$5 and play for a few hours."

The last time the couple was in the adult gaming center, they tried to collect their winnings.

"They told us they ran out of cards and told us to come back on Friday," said Brown, adding that he told the clerk he couldn't make it on Friday and would pick up the gift cards on Saturday. "Then we went over there on Saturday and there was a sign that said the air-conditioning was broken and that they would reopen on Monday."

Jim Donker, one of Vegas Games IV's owners, said from Wisconsin that everyone will be paid.

"We closed the place because it was losing money. The people who are owed money will get a refund within two or three weeks after we hear from them. Everyone will get paid."

Vegas Games IV was closed on Monday and a sign was posted stating that cards could be mailed to an address in Wisconsin for a refund.

"It burns me a little bit," Brown said. "They walked off with our winnings."

And they weren't the only ones either.

Bonita Springs resident Betty Phillips is also owed money by Vegas Games IV.

"They owe me \$260," said an angry Phillips. "I worked for them for three days last week. They owe me \$120 as an employee and the rest are winnings."

Phillips tried to collect on Saturday, but it was closed due to a lack of air-conditioning - an excuse she said she didn't believe.

"They were in there taking the games out," she said. "On Monday there was a sign in front telling people how they could get their money, but it's not there anymore ... It was always a problem for people trying to get their gift cards there. People had to beg them for it."

Another former employee Loretta Burgart, who now works at the unaffiliated Vegas Games in North Naples, said a number of people have come to the North Naples location looking for ways to collect.

"I have about 20 of these cards, but we can't do anything about it," she said.

Burgart worked at Vegas Games IV for three months and said the problems with payouts extend back to January.

"(Management) told me to tell the people to come back tomorrow for their cards - but they never had them," she said.

Vegas Games IV, which is located on U.S. 41 and inside the Pelican Village strip center, was in the process of being evicted, said landlord Paul Mitchell.

"They abandoned their spot," he said. "It's dark in there and I'm not sure if even the machines are still in there."

Other adult gaming owners said increased competition could have played a role.

"When we opened three years ago, we were the only one around," said Nancy Kelly, the owner of Palace Games in the Bernwood Design Center. "Now there's way too many of them. There's about a dozen of them between North Naples and south Fort Myers."

In Bonita alone there are Palace Games, The Palladium, Reel Fun, Bonita Arcade and M&M's Double Diamond.

And more are planning to open.

Aces High is expected to open soon off Old U.S. 41 near Hawthorne.

"It's crazy," said Palace Games manager Patricia Jubinville. "The market is totally saturated."