Roulette

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0.1 Summary

Let's assume we want to bet for the round i^{th} in a game and our target profit is \$$p$ for each round until we win. So far we lost in the previous rounds. We call The amount of bet in i^{th} round, b_i:

$$b_i = 2 \times b_{i-1}$$

Or we can say:

$$b_i = (2^{i-1}) \times p$$

In other words, if our previous bet was x, we should bet $2 \times x$ this time!

If we want to afford to lose $n-1$ times in a row and win in the n^{th} round, our budget should be:

$$budget = (2^n - 1) \times p$$

0.2 Expected value

The American roulette has 37 pockets and the Canadian has 36. We use n for the number of pockets in the wheel. Let's assume we bet on p numbers. For example for betting on number 1, $p = 1$ and for a red number $p = 18$. The payout is $36 - p$ to p. That means for every \$$p$ bet, we get \$36 − \$$p$. We also receive the original \$$p$. So our total balance for \$1 bet if we would win is:

$$\begin{aligned} &\frac{36 - p + p}{p} \\ &= \frac{36}{p} \end{aligned}$$

If we lose, we lost \$1. So the expected value is:

$$\begin{aligned} E &= \frac{36-p}{p} \times \frac{p}{n} - \frac{p}{p} \times \frac{n-p}{n} \\ &= \frac{36-p}{n} - \frac{n-p}{n} \\ &= \frac{36-n}{n} \\ &= \frac{36}{n} - 1 \end{aligned}$$

As you can see the expected value is not related to our choice! If we have 36 pockets, it's zero and we can call it a fair game. In Canada it's $\frac{36}{37} - 1 = -0.027$ and in the US it's $\frac{36}{38} - 1 = -0.053$. In other words, in Canada on average we should lose 3 cents per dollar and in US, 5 cents per dollar.

0.3 Change of winning

Please refer to this MIT lecture.

0.4 General case

Let's assume we are in round i^{th} of a game. We can calculate the balance for round i that we call it b_i. We want to make p unrealized profit/loss for this game, assuming we eventually win in this round

0.4.1 Mathematical induciton

We define b_i as the amount of bet for round i in such a way that if we win round i, our total profit for this game would be p. We use mathematical induciton and we assume we know how to solve b_{i-1}.

When $b_{i-1} < 0$

Let's assume we will win at the end of round i and our profit will be p. In round $i-1$ we lost b_{i-1} so we just need to spend b_{i-1} to cancel it. We use mathematical hypotheis and spend another b_{i-1} to cancel losses for rounds 1 to $i-2$ and gain p at the end of the round (assuming we will win):

$$\begin{aligned} b_i &= \sum_{j=0}^{i-1} b_j - p \\ &= \underbrace{\sum_{j=0}^{i-2} b_j - p}_{b_{i-1}} + b_{i-1} \\ &= 2 \times b_{i-1} \end{aligned}$$

When $b_{i-1} \geq 0$

Note that if $b_{i-1} \geq p$, we've already achieved our goal and no need to continue the game for the profit p. We may increase the target profit to a more ambition one later.

Let's assume $b_{i-1} > 0 \wedge b_{i-1} < p$ and we will win at the end of round i and our profit will be p:

$$\begin{aligned} b_{i-1} + \underbrace{x}_{bet} \underbrace{-2 \times x}_{rewards} = p \\ \implies x = b_{i-1} - p \end{aligned}$$

So we just need to bet on $b_{i-1} - p$ and if we win this round our profit will be p.

0.4.2 General Formula

$$b_i = \begin{cases} 2 \times b_{i-1} & b_{i-1} < 0 \\ b_{i-1} - p & b_{i-1} \geq 0 \land b_{i-1} < p \\ b_{i-1} & b_{i-1} \geq 0 \land b_{i-1} \geq p \\ b_0 - p & i = 1 \end{cases}$$

Note that we define $b_1 = b_0 - p$. Usually $b_0 = 0$, but if in the round k we decide to change p to p'. Then we can initiate a new game with $b_0 = b_k$ and profit p'.

0.5 Losing all previous rounds

Let's consider the worst case scenario and we are going to lose in n rounds in a row:

$$\begin{aligned} b_0 &= 0 \\ b_1 &= b_0 - p = -p \\ b_2 &= 2 \times b_1 = -2p \\ b_3 &= 2 \times b_2 = -4p \\ b_4 &= 2 \times b_3 = -8p \\ &\vdots \\ b_n &= 2 \times b_{n-1} = -2^{n-1} \times p \end{aligned}$$

0.6 Budget for n rounds

Now let's calculate what should be our budget if we can afford to lose in $n - 1$ rounds and win at round n. We assume r_i is our loss in round i^{th} for $1 \leq i \leq n-1$

$$\begin{aligned} budget &= -\sum_{i=0}^{n} b_i \\ &= \sum_{i=0}^{n} 2^{i-1} \times p \\ &= (2^n - 1) \times p \end{aligned}$$

Note that we use the following formula to get the budget:

$$\sum_{i=0}^{n} 2^i = 2^{n+1} - 1$$