

Double jackpots

Mega Millions and Powerball both hit \$100M

By STACEY SZEWCZYK and HASANI GITTENS

New Yorkers are betting on a big fat green Christmas this year — the first time the Mega Millions and Powerball jackpots both hit \$100 million.

The grand prize in the multistate Mega Millions draw tomorrow is an even \$100 million.

The top prize in Powerball's Christmas Eve drawing is \$137 million.

The biggest payout in

Mega's two-year history, \$180 million, went to an anonymous ticket holder in Maryland last June.

The record win for Powerball occurred last December, when \$314.9 million went to West Virginian Andrew Whitaker.

Mega Million \$1 tickets are sold in New York.

But to buy Powerball tickets, which also go for \$1 a chance, you'll have to travel to Connecticut or Pennsylvania, the closest states where they're sold.

"It's 100 million, and I'm gonna win," said florist Larry Rich, 50, as he bought his Mega ticket in Hell's Kitchen last night.

"It's Christmastime. They've gotta give it to me. The first thing I'm gonna do is buy a dog — a St. Bernard."

Not every hopeful winner had plans as warm and fuzzy.

George Morton, a retired record producer, said, "I'd spend \$10 million on two houses, two

cars and a record studio, and put the rest in a high-interest account."

Pancho Valdez, 34, of The Bronx, picked up a pair of Mega tickets hoping for a Christmas bonanza.

"Oh man, I'd buy a big house in Mexico and take my family there," he said.

"I'd put my kids in a nice school and just make everybody happy."

Even skeptics got into the act.

Peter Bjord, 50, a stage-

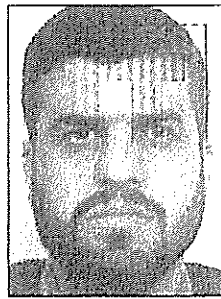
hand, decided to play Mega only after he learned about the jackpot.

"I don't really believe in these lottery things, but hey, why not?" he said.

Regis Moore, 56, the superintendent of a Hell's Kitchen building, said if he won, "I'd invest my money in New York."

And with all those millions, he said, he'd be able to change the name of his street.

"I'd call 47th Street 'St. Regis' Street," he said.



ADNAN ASFOUR
Hamas big captured.

Un-settling news out of Israel

JERUSALEM — A top aide to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon yesterday warned that "tens of thousands of settlers" may be forced to move if peace negotiations fail.

Addressing his boss' controversial new plan to unilaterally set new boundaries for the Palestinians if they don't head back to the negotiating table, Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert acknowledged "there will be a very serious protest" from all sides.

The official's comments came as Israeli forces nailed their most-wanted terror suspect in the West Bank: Hamas spokesman Adnan Asfour.

Asfour has been accused of trying to rebuild the decimated terror organization in the region, as well as helping launch homicide bombings. He was nabbed in a raid in Nablus, Israeli officials said.

Later, a 5-year-old Palestinian boy was shot dead by an Israeli soldier in the Balata refugee camp near Nablus, after troops opened fire during a melee, officials said.

Uri Dan

Dubya is out to dump Arafat

JERUSALEM — President Bush last week told an Israeli journalist, "We must get rid of" Palestinian chief Yasser Arafat," it was reported yesterday.

The president had been at a Christmas party in Washington when he made the remarks to a Washington-based reporter with the leading Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot, the paper said.

The Bush administration has said in the past that it will not negotiate with Arafat and urged him to step aside so that serious talks could begin between other Palestinian leaders and the Israelis.

Arafat has been banished to his headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah by the Israelis for the past two years.

Uri Dan

Big-bucks lure sends Lotto blotto

EXCLUSIVE

By KENNETH LOVETT
Post Correspondent

ALBANY — New Yorkers this year have been tantalized by the major jackpots of the Mega Millions game rather than plucking down a dollar and a dream on the older Lotto. The Post has learned.

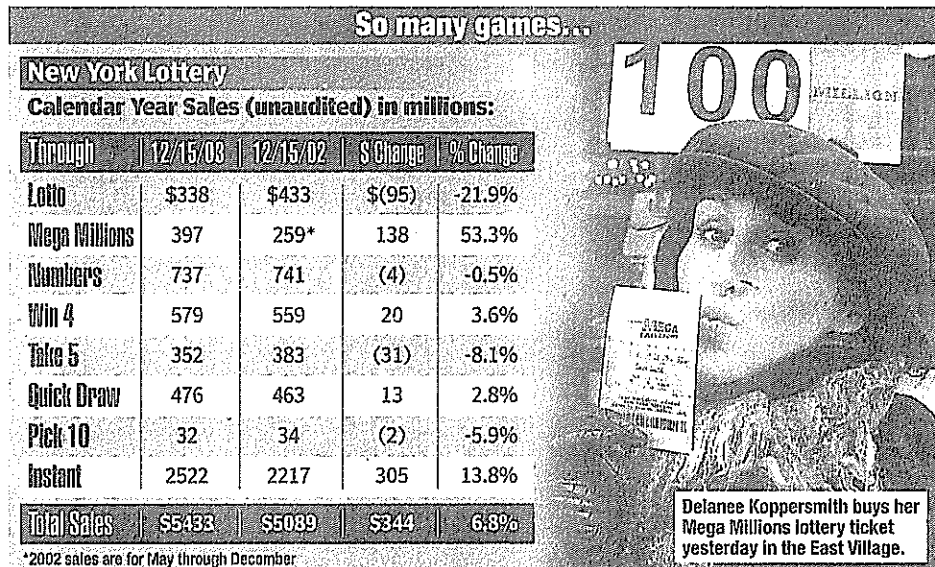
With its smaller prizes, Lotto sales since January have dropped nearly 22 percent over last year, while the multi-state Mega Millions game has seen its sales in New York grow steadily since its inception in May 2002, according to the state Lottery Division.

"They're jackpot games and people go for the higher jackpots," said Lottery Division spokeswoman Carolyn Hapeman.

As of Dec. 15, Mega Millions, which has a minimum \$10 million jackpot, has taken in about \$400 million this year.

Lotto, by contrast, has a \$3 million minimum jackpot and has taken \$338 million this year, down from \$433 million last year.

Meanwhile, Quick Draw,



the barroom video game, saw a 2.8 percent increase in sales this year despite a dip after the statewide smoking ban went into effect, Lottery officials said.

Total lottery sales through Dec. 15 exceed \$5.4

billion, up 6.8 percent from the same period in 2002.

Sen. Frank Padavan (R-Queens) accused the state of trying to solve its fiscal problems on the backs of those who can least afford it.

"It doesn't matter if more

people are playing one game more than another," Padavan said. "They're preying on low income earners who can't afford to lose that money."

In addition to Mega Millions, New Yorkers pinned their hopes on instant

games, which saw a combined 14 percent increase in sales.

But like Lotto, sales for the daily Numbers, Take 5, and Pick 10 all declined compared with last year, according to the Lottery statistics.

Brit celebs: It'll be a cold 'knight' in hell

By BILL HOFFMANN

Lots of celebrities don't want to lord it over their fellow Brits.

Hundreds, including rocker David Bowie, actor Albert Finney and comic John Cleese, have told the British government to take a hike over the years by rejecting knighthoods and other prestigious honors.

The government has never officially revealed the names of the snubbers — but they were bared

yesterday in classified documents leaked to London's Sunday Times.

Other movers and shakers who have refused the awards have been authors Graham Greene, John le Carré, Roald Dahl, Evelyn Waugh and Aldous Huxley, as well as actor Trevor Howard.

Among the women rejecting awards that would make them "dames" were author Doris Lessing and actresses Vanessa Red-

grave and Helen Mirren.

The reasons for the refusals are many.

"Many people in America think being a sir is a big deal, but I think we should all be misters," said Finney, who's in Tim Burton's latest flick, "Big Fish."

"The 'Sir' thing slightly perpetuates one of our diseases in England, which is snobbery."

Bowie, who has made some of the greatest rock

albums ever, said: "I seriously don't know what it's for. It's not what I spend my life working for."

Helen Mirren, star of the new flick, "Calendar Girls," added: "I feel very ambivalent about it actually ... The whole idea of aristocracy I loathe."

The list also reveals that famed suspense director Alfred Hitchcock first refused a knighthood in 1962, two years after directing "Psycho," but later re-

lented and accepted the award shortly before he died in 1980. Many critics of the 700-year-old awards system have complained that it wrongly promotes respect toward a nonexistent empire.

"It makes us look like a laughingstock and encourages deference to the crown," said J.G. Ballard, author of "Empire of the Sun" and "Crash," who rejected a knighthood. "I can't take it seriously."