

Texas Hold'em Poker Tournament play

Strategies and techniques for finishing "in the money."

In this ebook, you will read about various strategies and techniques which can make you a better poker player and enhance your chances of finishing "in the money" playing single table sit-and-go Texas Hold'em poker tournaments.

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Introduction

Single table "sit-and-go" tournaments offer an exciting opportunity to lock-horns with your opponents in an absorbing game of strategy in a format designed to eliminate players along the way. By equipping yourself with the right approach and strategy you can give yourself an edge and increase your chances of finishing in the money. A single table tournament consists of ten players and you just have to finish in third place to see a return on your entry fee. The strategies and techniques in this ebook can help you to do that.

But before going any further - let me be absolutely clear that this ebook is not a "how to win at poker every time" type manual. There is no such thing. You absolutely will not win every time. You WILL lose. It's all part of the game. That said, many, many people playing sit-and-go poker tournaments (particularly at the lower stakes levels) have simply shocking tournament skills.

After reading this ebook and a practice you should have an advantage over them and be able to develop your game and style of play.

However - there is no accounting for "bad luck" and you will experience plenty of that along the way. The cards will "turn against you" make no mistake. You have to rise above that, put it behind you and move on. I'll give you some pointers on how to do that later in the book.

But the good news is that if you apply discipline and good strategy you can experience more than your share of money finishes (and wins!) and be profitable.

Why sit-and-go tournaments?

Because you just take a seat at the table, wait for it to fill up (takes only moments on the big poker room sites) and play commences. You get action on demand. And - you know your maximum loss and profit before play begins. For example you've entered a single table tournament with an entry fee of £5 + £1. This means everyone's £5 goes in to the prize pool and the poker room takes everyone's £1 for the trouble of hosting the tournament. So straight away you're maximum loss is £6 even if you get knocked out on the first hand.

You also know that your maximum return is £25 if you win, £15 if you come second and £10 if you finish in third place. By applying a solid strategy you can be "in the money" often.

A typical single table sit-and-go lasts (in my experience) in the region of 45 minutes. Even just a third place finish in a £5+£1 tourney nets you a £4 profit while winning bags you £19. As your skill level increases you may want to venture in to higher entry tournaments. Let's say you become (or already are) proficient enough to enter a £30 tournament - under the usual 50/30/20 percentage split you'd be collecting £150 for a win, £90 for second and £60 for third. Not a bad hourly rate huh?

And there are so many poor tournament players at the lower level stakes who have no idea about application of strategy. Many play poker "for fun" and don't mind losing the off tenner here and there. You won't be taking that route - you will be applying a planned, strategic approach which can give you an advantage over the casual player so often found at lower levels.

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What you will need

A few things you are going to need:

- a starting stake - an amount you are comfortable with and can afford to lose. Just £100 will get you through at least 15 £5+£1 tournaments even if you never win a bean
- patience, and lots of it - you will be folding your cards frequently and it can get a bit boring
- concentration - always paying attention to what's happening and remembering, gathering information
- no distractions - helps with the concentration so I'd suggest you sit down to play when you know you'll have peace and quiet

You'll find a lot of information in this ebook. I strongly recommend that you read it all through a time or two (or more) to digest it all. You may find it helpful to keep notes as well. And to come back to it for a "refresher" from time to time. Please remember that this is not a "magic" book that'll mean you'll always win - something like that will never exist.

Though by understanding and applying the strategies and techniques you will read about in the following pages and also by developing your own style of play I feel confident that you will taste success. I remember winning my first sit-and-go tournament and how good that felt.

Anyway - enough rambling.....

And now - on with the action. It's time for chapter 1.....



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Chapter 1

Texas Hold'em Poker Rules and Hand Ranking

In this chapter we will learn the basic rules of Texas Hold'em and hand rankings. It's very straightforward. The basic idea is to make the best hand possible using your own two cards and the "community" cards that are dealt in the middle of the table.

One player is nominally the dealer as signified by the "button." This "button" passes around the table in turn so each player takes a turn. The "button" determines the order of play.

The player to the left of the dealer button has to place money in to the pot. This is called the "small blind." The player to the left of the small blind has to put a larger amount in as a forced bet - usually double the small blind. This is to ensure there is always money in the pot to play for. As an example - if the blinds were £1 and £2 the player to the immediate left of the dealer (small blind) would have to push £1 in to the pot and the player to the small blind's left (the big blind) would have to push £2 in to the pot. Because the dealer button passes to the left after each hand, each player takes in turn to be a "blind" and have a forced bet.

Next - each player is dealt two cards face down. Now betting commences. The player to the immediate left of the big blind is first to act. Play then runs in a clockwise direction around the table. The choices are to fold (throw your cards away), call, raise/re-raise or check.

Fold - simply to throw your cards away

Call - to match the previous bet and stay in the hand.

Raise - throw in a bigger bet and raise the stakes

Reraise - somebody has raised but you want to raise the raise

Check - the first player to act in a round of betting may chose to "check" which means they don't have to put any chips in to stay in the hand. Other players may also "check" until somebody does bet in which case players who have previously checked have to match that bet to remain alive in the hand.

The Flop

After the first round of betting the dealer deals three cards in the middle of the table face up. This is known as the "flop." All players left in the hand can use these three cards along with their two other cards to make a hand. Another round of betting commences.

The Turn

The dealer now deals one more card face up to join the three cards already in the middle. This is known as the "turn." All players left in the hand can use these

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(now) four cards along with their two other cards to make a hand. Another round of betting commences.

The River

The dealer deals one more card face up in the middle. This is the final card of the hand and is known as the "river." All players left in the hand can use these (now) five cards along with their two other cards to make a hand. Another round of betting commences.

Showdown

After the final round of betting on the river stage any players still left in the hand have to show their two initial starting cards with the highest ranked hand using the best five of the seven cards winning the money in the pot.

Example hand

We'll work through an example hand now for illustration purposes.

The blinds are £1/£2. The players in the small and big blind put the money in to the pot. Cards are dealt. Wow! you get a pair of kings. Very strong. Two players have to act before you - one folds, one calls. Now it's your turn, you decide to raise with such a strong pair. One other person calls your raise. Everyone else folds and gets out of the way.

Here comes the flop - K, 9, 5. Even better - you've flopped three of a kind. You now have three kings and throw out a big raise. The other player matches it. Now the river.....

.....and it's a 3. You still think you're ahead so raise again. Other player matches it. Only the river card left.....

.....it's another king. You've got four of a kind and bet big again. Your opponent folds his cards and you scoop a huge pot.

Now - the above is a rather extreme example but if you're reading this ebook having never played poker before I hope it's enlightened you slightly. The only real way to get the hang of it is to play/watch a few hands.

Hand rankings

There are nine different rankings of hands. Remember - you use the best combination of your two starting cards and the (up to) five cards in the middle of the table to make your best hand. The rankings are - in order from best to worst are:

- Royal flush - the 10, J, Q, K, A all of the same suit
- Straight flush - any five cards of the same suit in sequence. For example the 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of hearts
- Four of a kind - four cards of the same rank. For example four eights.
- Full house - three cards of one kind and two cards of another kind. For example three queens and two threes.
- Flush - any five cards of the same suit. For example any five spades or any five diamonds.

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- Straight - any five cards in sequence not of the same suit.
- Three of a kind - any three cards of the same rank.
- Two pairs - two separate pairs. For example two fives and two tens.
- One pair - two cards of the same rank.
- High card - the highest card in your hand without being able to make a better hand.

You'll soon get used to the hand rankings and what hands are possible for you. Most poker room software actually tells you what you're holding. This can help with decision making.

Chapter 2

Anatomy of a sit-and-go tournament

Let's have a look at what goes in to a sit-and-go tournament and how it works. What follows is a typical example. Always check the terms of the tournament you play as some may differ.

A single-table tournament consists of ten players each of who have paid the appropriate entry fee. Under normal circumstances, the entry fees make up the prize money fund which is then split between the 1st, 2nd and 3rd placed players on a 50/30/20 percent basis.

Thus, a £5+£1 tournament means each player had paid a total of £6 to enter. £5 goes in to the prize money fund and the poker room takes the £1 for hosting the tournament. With ten players, the prize money fund is £50 with the winner taking £25, second place taking £15 and third place taking £10.

Each player begins the tournament with the same amount of chips. The starting blinds are preset as is the rate at which the blinds will rise. A tournament is designed to eliminate people by constantly rising the blinds. This is an important part of strategy which we'll look at later.

However - it is crucial that you are aware of the blind structure, when the blinds will rise and by how much. It's either after a certain number of hands or a given length of time. Say every ten minutes or every fifteen hands.

A typical blind-rise structure might look something like this:

Round	Small	Big
1	10	15
2	10	20
3	15	30
4	25	50
5	50	100
6	75	150
7	100	200
8	150	300
9	200	400
10	250	500
11	300	600
12	400	800
13	500	1000
14	750	1500
15	1000	2000

So you can see that you can't hang around forever and the rising blinds will eventually eat up your stack of chips unless you win a few pots.

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Play continues with the blinds rising until only one player is left standing (or is that sitting.....) - the winner!

In the next chapter we will discuss general tournament strategy.

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Chapter 3

General tournament strategy

Right - here's where it gets interesting. Suggested general strategy for successful single-table tournament play. Always remember that the goal is to finish at least third place so ensuring a profit on the tournament. If after that you can finish second or even win then so much the better. Applying a solid strategy is the key to "in the money" experiences. Most of the things referred to in this chapter are covered in more depth in later chapters.

The basic approach is to play a tight game but to do so with aggression. Controlled and selective aggression. You won't do much winning playing meekly. The meek do not inherit the earth on Planet Poker!

Early stages - the blinds are still low

Just don't get involved. Sit tight, fold, fold and fold some more. Protect your stack of chips. It's simply not worth taking any risks in the early stages while the blinds are low. Of course, when you're in a blind you have to put chips in but it won't hurt you early on.

If you're in the big blind and there has been no raise before you and you can still check, do so and see the flop. Then reassess. If you flop a "monster" hand think about killing the pot there and then if you're sure you've got the best hand.

Otherwise, keep folding and let your opponents start to knock themselves out. You'll be amazed at how badly some play and eliminate themselves. LET THEM DO IT. Every person that goes out early by poor/reckless play is one less person for you to worry about. I've played in tournaments where three, four or even five players have gone out before the first blind increase.

While you're sitting back and folding - stay alert at all times. Watch your opponents closely to pick up on how they play. Are they loose, tight, aggressive. Do they call then fold when put under pressure and easy to push off their hand. Do they play few hands but do so with conviction. Collect as much information as you can about how they act, how they bet, how much they bet etc.

And in particular if they show their starting cards (after a showdown for example), what cards were they dealt. Were they dealt a monster pre-flop which then got better post-flop. Or were they dealt garbage and tried to bluff it through. Or perhaps they were "chasing" cards in the hope of getting lucky - for example chasing cards to make a flush or a straight.

Any information you can pick up on your opponents at this stage can be extremely helpful later on when you do get involved seriously in the tournament. Poker is not just a game of cards - you are also playing the person as well as your cards.

I would suggest that during the early stages and low blinds, only enter a hand if you can check (big blind as above) or you are dealt a great hand pre-flop in late table position (see chapter 5 for table positioning). What I would call a "great" hand is AA, KK, QQ or AK suited. If you get such cards in a late position then stick in a healthy raise to narrow down the number of people seeing the flop. If

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the flop helps you and/or you still think you're ahead, bet aggressively again to take down the pot. But beware if somebody raises you straight back. Even if you have AA pre-flop it's not always going to be the best hand post-flop.

Don't take any risks in the early stages. And that even means thinking about folding a "premium" hand pre-flop under some circumstances. Say you're dealt the big AA in late position. Three players before you go "all-in." Consider laying down your aces. With three players "all-in" one, possibly two of them could be going out. You can move closer to the money for no risk.

Middle stages - the blinds are rising

OK - now we're at around level three or four. The blinds have risen to around 25/50 or 50/100 or thereabouts. A few players have been knocked out. You've played tight poker so far and either have roughly the same amount of chips you started with or have hit a "monster" and now have a bigish stack (possibly even chip leader). Worst case you've tangled with somebody, got mauled and are short-stacked.

Of those left in - some will have nice, bit chip stacks after knocking out a player or two, others will be worse off than you. Whatever your chip stack size - remain calm. By watching your opponents in the earlier rounds you have a bit of a "read" on them. The blinds have reached a point where not winning a few will hurt you.

If you have a large stack - don't assume you have a right to cruise in to the money. You still have work to do. Keep that stack large and protect it. Select the hands you get involved in carefully. Stick to premium hands as before. Do not tangle with any other player who has a bigger/similar chip stack as you because that can hurt you badly. Stay out of their way unless you have a "monster" and have them beat. Wait around for small stacked players to be blinded out or if you get a chance and spot weakness, pound away at the small stacked players and pressure them.

If you're around the same stack size as you started with, loosen up your starting hand requirements a little. They've seen you're a "tight" player and only enter a pot when you have good cards so throwing out a few chips now may make your opponents wary of you and that's good. But be careful with those chips and select your targets carefully. Don't tangle with a player with a huge stack - they can take you out in a single hand. Look for opportunities to play against (ideally) a smaller stacked player when you spot weakness. The best position to do this is from a late table position and if the pot has not been raised before you. And consider attacking the players in the blinds if you have position, they have small stacks and all others before you have folded. Generally, seek opportunities to grow your stack and stay in the money-hunt for that top three finish.

If you've become short stacked and in serious danger of being blinded out - the best form of defense is attack! Caution to the wind, pick a hand and "go for it" while you can still do some damage. Any pair, two face cards, an A with a decent kicker stick those chips in the middle and hope for the best. If you get a caller or two and double up you're right back in the game. If not and you go out, at least you've done so in a blaze of (almost) glory.

Late stages - blinds are big and/or five or less players remain

Now you're close to the cash. Half the field or more has gone. Everybody starts thinking about the money and because of that fact, play can become very tight as

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people want to make that top-three spot. But the blinds are becoming seriously high so sitting on your stack (unless it's h-u-g-e) waiting for others to knock themselves out isn't an option. Another important consideration now is that fewer players mean less likelihood of anyone having a great starting hand because fewer cards are being dealt pre-flop.

You can take advantage of the tight play that generally arises at this stage as thoughts turn to money. Look for players concentrating on the money finish and give them an excuse to fold. They are looking for one anyway so help them along a bit.

Either way - at this late stage almost anything goes and you must be more aggressive than before and absolutely cannot wait for the premium hands. You can actually turn being one of the first to act in to an advantage as well - if you have the hand for it, raising from an early position can be very effective. Stealing blinds at every opportunity (see chapter 15) is similarly essential to stay in the game.

The loosening up and highly aggressive play doesn't mean you go all-in with 7-2 offsuit though. It's still controlled aggression balanced against risk. Yes, you want at least third place. But if you're still in with five or less players you're still a contender and you don't want to ruin all your hard work to get this far with a reckless move. Stay clam and pick your moments.

If you make it in to the money, don't think "I've done enough now" and go to pieces. Even if you're the short stack try to hang around as long as possible because the bigger stacks might lock horns and one get taken out by the other in a monster pot.

Advanced techniques now

In the remaining chapters we will look at advanced techniques, strategies and practices that build on the general strategy you have read about in this chapter. It's all part of the tournament poker jigsaw - one which you can put together only through actually playing.

Chapter 4

Starting hands

Perhaps the most important decision you face as a sit-and-go tournament player is that of starting hand selection. You're dealt your two cards pre-flop. Do you play them or just throw them away? If you play, you are committing chips to the pot. It's a big decision.

Thanks to the work and theories of a David Sklansky, starting hands can be banded in to seven different groups running from group 1 (strongest) to group 8 (weakest). It's important to remember that the strength or weakness of your starting hand changes after the flop. The strongest hand can become the weakest and vice-versa after more cards hit the table.

But - choosing the right starting hands to play and bet on is crucial. Here are the Sklansky hand groupings. Anything followed by a small s means "suited" - of the same suit. So A9s means an ace and a nine of the same suit.

Group 1:

AA, KK, QQ, JJ, AKs

Group 2:

TT, AQs, AJs, KQs, AK

Group 3:

99, KTs, QJs, ATs, AQ

Group 4:

A8s, KQ, 88, QTs, A9s, AT, AJ, JTs

Group 5:

77, Q9s, KJ, QJ, JT, A7s, A6s, A5s, A4s, A3s, A2s, J9s, T9s, K9s, KT, QT

Group 6:

66, J8s, 98s, T8s, 55, J9, 43s, 75s, T9, 33, 98, 64s, 22, K8s, K7s, K6s, K5s, K4s, K3s, K2s, Q8s, 44, 87s, 97s

Group 7:

87, 53s, A9, Q9, 76s, 42s, 32s, 96s, 85s, J8, J7s, 65, 54, 74s, K9, T8, 76, 65s, 54s, 86s

For tournament play, the suggestion is in the early rounds only play Group 1 hands then loosen up your starting hand selection as players are knocked out and the blinds rise.

Table positioning - where you are sat in relation to the dealer button - is another crucially important aspect of successful tournament play along with starting hand selection. We will look at table positioning in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Table positioning

Are things starting to fall in to place a little - you've read about the rules of Texas hold'em, how sit-and-go tournaments work, outline strategy and starting hand selection. Some very important and fundamental stuff. Another aspect of importance (and one which a lot of players overlook and/or have little knowledge of) is where you are sat at the table for each hand.

Your position dictates your "turn" to act - to bet, raise or fold. Remember from chapter one that the dealer button passes around the table and the first player to act in each hand is the player immediately to the left of the "big blind?" When it's your turn to be the "virtual dealer" you are known as being "on the button." This can be very powerful.

Imagine the table split in to three sections to signify position. Early, middle and late.

Early position

When you are in an early table position you have to act first or before the vast majority of players. This can be very difficult as at this point you have no idea what cards others could be holding. So, if you decide to enter a hand from early table position be sure it is a hand you really want to play. Think what you would do if a player acting after you raises the pot. Is your hand good enough to match that raise? For example you're in early position, you look down at your starting cards and you have JT. Not bad, but not great. You call. Another player throws in a big raise. Action comes around to you again - what could the raiser have, is your JT up to the job. Is it worth calling that big raise to see the flop. Play the strongest starting hands from early position and be prepared to call a raise if you do.

Middle position

When you are in a middle table position still only play very strong starting hands (say group 1, group 2) because there are still a good number of players to follow you who may raise. If a player from early position has already raised, I'd get out now with anything other than a group 1 hand. Middle position is still tough to play from so select those starting hands carefully.

Late position

When you are sat in late position (on the button or next to the button) you have the advantage of seeing what everybody else has done and know that only the small and big blinds have to act after you and they have already been forced to put chips in the pot. Being in late position is an advantage. Say nobody had raised the pot so when play gets around to you - a few have folded, the remainder have just called. Nobody has shown that they may have a strong hand by raising the pot. If you have a reasonable hand here, throwing out a small raise at this point even with a marginal starting hand could take down the pot there and then as you are showing "strength." It also puts pressure on the players in the blinds as they now have to decide whether or not to put even more chips in to the pot over and above their "forced" bets.

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Small blind

When you are the small blind, you've already had to put chips in to the pot. And you'll have to put more in to stay in the hand. If the blinds are 25/50 you've put 25 in and would have to put another 25 in to stay alive assuming the pot has not been raised when the action gets to you. If you've got nothing or the price of calling is too much, simply fold. Don't fall in the the trap of thinking "it's only another X-amount of chips to call" because those extra chips soon eat a big hole in your stack. Be smart, think smart.

Big blind

When you are the big blind, you've been forced to put the full blind in already regardless of the cards you're dealt. If the pot has not been raised when play comes to your turn you can "check" and see the flop for no extra chips. That's about the only "advantage" to being the big blind. If you can check and then flop a "monster" (great hand) it's not so bad.....doesn't always happen though.

Other considerations

As a tournament progresses and players are eliminated, table positioning becomes less of a consideration though remains crucial. When few players are left, being first to act can actually be an advantage as the likelihood of anyone having a great starting hand is reduced. A strong pre-flop bet from early position can instantly win a pot as you are saying "I've got a great hand." This can cause your opponents to fold immediately as their thoughts are on the money. Picking the right moment is the tricky bit...!

When you are the big or small blind, prepare to be "attacked" by other players who want to "steal" the chips you've already put in by raising in to. You can "defend" your blinds by raising them back if you think they are trying it on. Important particularly in the late stages of a tournament when the blinds are high.

In general - use table positioning to your advantage and be aware of it. Play only the best cards from early position. Look for opportunities to raise from late position if you think other players are weak and/or to attack the blinds.

Master table positioning and you can take down more pots.

Chapter 6

Tilt - don't do it!

What is "tilt"? Basically, it's poker slang for losing your composure and concentration (perhaps after experiencing a little bad luck) and immediately going on a mission to recover those lost chips without delay

Example scenario - you've got AA. Big, big raise. You get one caller. Flop comes. It's A, 4, 7. Great for you. Three aces and nothing on the flop that could help your opponent you think. Bang! you throw out another big bet. Your opponent calls. You're confused. You've got the best hand and the other guy should be folding. Turn card comes down. It's a 9. You're still in front. Bang! Another big bet. Again he calls you. By now you're scratching your head trying to figure out what on earth has possessed your single caller to stay in the hand. River - 8. Boom! In you go again. This time the other guy raises you - just what is all that about. He can't have a full house, straight flush or anything like that - not possible with the cards on the table. Maybe he has three of a kind on the flop you think or at best he has a pair of aces with a decent "kicker."

You push all your chips in to the middle. What - he's called your all-in raise. Showdown. You flip over your AA. He flips over a 5 and a 6. He's beat you with a straight. And he chased it all the way calling your big bets. You've been turned over by a guy who should have folded pre-flop with 5,6 but instead he's chased his unlikely straight and hit it very much against the odds.

You're not just mad, you're positively fuming. You want blood! But you're still in the tournament because you had a bigger chip stack than your opponent although you're in bad shape now after losing to that joker! All you can see is the red mist. He's taken your chips. You want them back - off anybody. And you want them back NOW!!

Your thoughts are consumed with anger and rage. Your game goes to pieces, you push in the remainder of your stack on the next hand even though you're in early position with just a pair of fours. Callers come thick and fast. With a pair of fours you're dead on the flop unless a four appears. It doesn't and you're gone.

You've lost it because you let the "bad beat" get to you so much you've become uncontrollably irrational and in an instant undone all the hard work you put in to the tournament so far. That's what "tilt" is my friend.

Want to know what you should have done? Just taken a deep breath, taken it on the chin as all part of the game and gone back to playing your best game.

You are going to experience "bad beats" and long runs of bad cards and or bad luck. There's no avoiding it. And to be a successful player you must accept the fact and never let it affect you when it happens. No matter how "perfectly" you play there is still the luck element of the game.

When it happens to you, roll with it, shrug it off, put it behind you and remain calm. **DO NOT TILT**. Or click the "away" button and leave the table for a few minutes. Literally take a break to clear your head if you feel the need.

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If you do go on tilt, others can spot it and rob you blind some more. How much worse would that make you feel?

And if you spot an opponent you think is "on tilt" - you can think about taking their stack

Does that make sense - good!

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Chapter 7

Study and observe

Always, always concentrate and pay attention to what your opponents are doing, how they play, how they bet.

Do they enter almost every hand then cave in to any raise. Do they bet aggressively all the time, do they play few hands but do so solidly. Do they "chase" cards. Do they fall in to patterns of play and set behaviors.

Pick up as much information as you can by watching your opponents like a hawk. Try to get a "read" on them and mentally prepare a plan for how you'll go up against them when it's time to engage in battle. We will look at strategies for various types of player in a later chapter.

By always being on the lookout for information on your opponents you can build a picture of what kind of player they are. Invaluable information. Keep a few written notes on a pad at the side of you while you play.

You may even be able to "guess" what type of hand they have and be able to act accordingly. The "solid" player raising from early position must mean he's got a monster. The weak player limping in - you think you can take him out and win the pot just by raising because you've always seen him fold to a raise.

Get the drift - by constantly studying what's going on, collecting information and figuring out how best to use it to further your own cause.

And while you're doing it, they'll be watching you (well, the more savvy ones at least). Be alert to that. Even though you'll be playing a controlled, solid and selectively aggressive game try to mix it up a little from time to time if your chip stack can handle it and make it harder for your opponents to get a read on you.

Continuing on this theme, in the next chapter we will look at "tells" - actions by other players that may give you a clue as to what they may be holding. Are they strong, are they weak.

Chapter 8

"Tells" - clues about what your opponents might have

What is a "tell" - it's a typical action/behavior which when exhibited by an opponent may well give you a clue as to the type of hand they are holding. We'll look a few below. I should point out that these are only generalisations - there is, nor can there be, any guarantee that "tells" will always be correct. They won't be. But looking for "tells" is yet another piece of that big poker jigsaw that you must put together to be a successful sit-and-go tournament player.

Speed

How fast does a player play. A very fast bet may indicate weakness. A player taking their time a little may mean a good hand.

Automatic play

On-line poker room software allow you to pretty much decide what you want to do in advance - fold, check, call raise. The software has buttons and options you can select to act for you on each hand. You can easily see if a player has made use of this as their action is instant when it's their turn to play. Anyone who instantly checks may have nothing. A player who instantly raises probably has a good hand and clicked the "raise any" button.

Always raises from late position

Players who frequently raise from a late position after all before have folded don't necessarily have a good hand. They are attempting to put pressure on the small/big blind to fold "steal" their chips. Extremely legitimate tactics. You can "fight back" if you are in the small/big blind by re-raising and defending your blind if you are holding good cards and consider the constant late position raiser is actually weak. Mostly they will fold if they do have a weak hand. If they don't then be careful. They are holding something good.

Always be on the lookout for tells exhibited by your opponents. You won't always be right but if you can pick up on any and/or patterns of play you will have a good "read" on that player and can use it to your advantage. If you sense weakness in an opponent, you may well be able to exploit it and transfer his chips into your stack.

And be aware that you will be giving out your own tells. Try to cut down on that. Tactics to do so include always betting at the same speed (say always betting after five seconds) so they won't know if you're strong or weak from your speed of play because it's constant.

Chapter 9

Betting - when, how much, when not to

There is no magic formula here that says how much to bet and when to take down a pot. Betting is very much down to individual style and comfort. That said, you must bet to win. How much to bet depends on a few factors - for example the size of your stack compared to your opponents, the size of the pot, how good (or bad) your hand is, your table positioning.

If you think your opponents are weak and you are holding the best hand, bet like it. And bet aggressively to show them. If anyone pushes back, beware because they may have you beat.

When you throw some chips in to the pot you are sending a message. In general - a raise or a Reraise says "I'm strong, I've got great cards so back off." Calling says "I'm OK I think, could be better and hope I will be after the flop/turn/river cards arrive. Checking says "I've got nothing and it's not worth me putting any more chips in to this pot."

Deciding whether or not your hand is good enough to bet on depends on some of the things we've already looked at - for example your cards, your table position, the stage the tournament is at, do you consider your opponents strong or weak, can your chip stack cope with it.

Remember the controlled aggression from before - this applies to your betting as well. Bet aggressively to indicate strength and force your opponents to fold. If they don't fold, you might have to because they've got the better hand.

You'll develop your own style of betting as you play.

If you are in late position pre-flop and many have folded with just a couple of callers then throwing out a raise here may win it for you. Nobody has raised before you which indicates nobody has a great hand. If you spot weakness and you're holding reasonable cards then a strong bet could do the trick.

But what is a strong bet? - depends on the size of the blinds, the size of the pot and how much you think you'll have to bet to make your opponent fold (if that's what you want them to do). The minimum raise in to a weak player may be enough. Not so with a stronger player. Betting is a game of subtlety.

A general rule of thumb if you're wanting to raise would be to raise about three times the amount of the big blind. So if the big blind is 100, you raise 300. Or raise at least the amount of the pot in post-flop play. Part of your constant watching and studying your opponents (including their own betting patterns) will help you to form an opinion on how much you need to bet to win.

If your opponents raise pre-flop it usually means they have good cards or a premium starting hand AA, KK, QQ etc. So be wary if there has been a raise before the action gets to you. Do you really want to bet to a raise if you're holding 9,8. No, you don't.

Here's a suggested "golden rule" for you - never get in to a raised pot unless you are completely sure you have the cards to do so. This will save you chips.

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Of course, if it's you with the pre-flop monster then raise and raise some more.

Post-flop everything changes. If the flop was no help to you and you think you're beat (say a player who limped in now fires out a huge raise) then get out, fold and save your chips for another hand. No good throwing chips in now on a lost cause.

If you raised pre-flop and are first to act post-flop, consider a strong bet regardless if you sense weakness in your remaining opponents to show then that the flop helped you even if it did not. If you check now they'll know your hand did not improve. Whereas if you bet like it helped you they may well think it did and fold. Of course, if somebody comes in with a big bet of their own, fold if you think you're beat.

Or lets says the flop comes and you're not sure where you stand in the hand. Throwing out a small "feeler" bet might help. If somebody raises you, get out. If nobody raises (or they all fold) you'll know you're still in good shape.

Example: you have JJ pre-flop. You raise and have just two callers. Flop arrives A, 9, 6. That A scares you because anyone of those other two might have an A and if they do you're cooked. You're first to act post-flop too so it's all the harder. Throw out a reasonable bet. They've seen you raise pre-flop so now may think that the A helped you and fold. They might think you have three aces or just paired up with a big kicker. But if somebody really does have an A and raise your bet you'll know you're beaten so can fold. "Feeler" bets used at the right time let you have "information" of where you are.

Back to the above example - if you were in late position post-flop and somebody raised before you then strongly consider folding on the spot. The raiser quite probably has that other A. Can you see how "feeler" bets can help?

In chapter 18 we will look at why analysing the flop, turn and river not only to see how it has (or has not) helped you but also how it may have helped (or not helped) your opponents is vitally important and how you may react with your betting (for example if a flush is developing and you have three of a kind, how a big bet may discourage your opponent from chasing his flush any further).

Something else to consider is how the table is behaving - is it an aggressive table with players constantly raising or is it passive with few raisers. It may well fluctuate depending on the stage of the tournament. For example it may be fairly loose and aggressive early on then tighten up in the later stages and few players as those left in concentrate on making a money finish.

If the table is aggressive, stay out of the way unless you have the cards to get serious. If the table is passive, you may consider being a little looser with your bets and throw in a few raises if you think the overall passiveness will mean your opponents will fold to your raise.

In general:

- bet aggressively when you are strong, sense weakness or know you're in front and unlikely to be beaten
- fold if you think you are beaten
- don't enter a pot unless you need to/have the cards to do so

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- always think for a moment before you bet - do I want to bet, how much should I bet etc

Betting in poker tournaments is far from an exact science and dependent on many variables. We have briefly examined a few here. You must develop your own style as you play, looking for opportunities.

Chapter 10

Types of player and strategies to beat them

While you are Studying and watching your opponents, you'll see that they fall in to typical styles depending on their overall play.

The four general styles are:

- loose-passive
- loose-aggressive
- tight-passive
- tight-aggressive

Knowing what "type" of players you are up against and how you can adapt your play to beat them is yet another skill to develop. But once you are able to spot what style of players your opponents are you can figure out a plan for each one (picking your moments of course)

Loose-passive players tend to enter many, many pots calling with just about any two cards and hoping to hit something later. Bet in to them aggressively if you have a decent hand. Loose-passive players don't usually respond well to pressure and fold if they have nothing. Beware if one bits back though.

Tight-passive players typical action is to play very few hands and wait for the premium starting hands. Then they tend to bet big. It's a clear signal that they've got a great hand when they come out of their shell. When they do emerge from under their rock, get out. Otherwise, give them an excuse to fold and bully them.

Loose-aggressive players (as you've probably guessed by now) spray huge amount of chips all over the table all the time. They enter almost every hand with extreme aggression like they've been dealt AA every time. Nobody has the number of great cards a loose-aggressive player would have you believe. So how do you play them? Just stay out of their way and let them take out a few of your opponents. Even though it means the "maniac" may have a huge chip stack it doesn't matter because each one they take out means one step closer to the money for you. Stay patient while the "maniac" is at large. Wait for a great hand of your own then take it to the "maniac" and strip their chips away from them with your monster.

Tight-aggressive players play few hands but when they do, they do so with gusto. As you've read throughout this ebook, tight-aggressive play is the "right" way to play in tournaments. This type of player is selective about when he plays. I hope you fall in to the "tight-aggressive" category. When you come up against a tight-aggressive player pick your moments to go up against them. Concentrate on the weaker players first.

But a final note on the tight-aggressive style. Your opponents may well be seeking to label your style of play as you are looking to label yours. If they tag you as tight-aggressive they might clear the decks when you bet and fold thinking you've got a great hand. You may not always get enough "action." To counter this an "confuse" your opponents, consider occasionally playing hands you would not normally play and show your cards. It might just throw them off balance and make it more difficult for them to categorise your style.

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Towards the later stages (and certainly heads-up) you'll have to move to a looser style of play mostly as waiting for premium hands won't be an option. Fewer players = fewer cards dealt = less likely to get a great starting hand.

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Chapter 11

Playing certain types of hands

We've talked about the importance of hand selection in a previous chapter. But once you've got your "monster" pre-flop, what should you do?


Generally, raise big and reraise with AA, KK, QQ, JJ and AKs to drive people out of the hand so fewer see the flop. Then see what the flop brings for you.

If the helps you (you've got KK and another K appears) get in there! But get out of there if somebody comes back at you with a reraise and the flop is showing a better hand is possible. They might just have that better hand.

If the flop doesn't help you and you think it hasn't helped anyone else either you're probably good so throw out a bet to show that. But as above, if somebody comes in with a bigger bet they may well have a bigger hand. Use your judgment.

If an overcard appears on the flop (you've got KK and an ace comes up on the flop but no K) you're potentially beaten. In fact you ARE beaten if anyone is left in with an ace. If you're first to act, still throw out a good bet like the ace helped you. If somebody comes back at you, they've probably got you stuffed. If you think you're beat, you probably are. Fold and fight again later. Don't throw your whole tournament away with one bad move.

Always be thinking what your opponents could have based on your observations and their actions. And always be thinking how the flop/turn/river could have helped them. We'll look at this in a later chapter.

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Chapter 12

Short stack - "come back from the dead"

Your chip stack is dwindling - you just can't catch any cards or you've been mauled. The blinds are rising and eating your stack even further. You're dropping behind. You can't keep folding or if you do the blinds will take you out. What do you do?

Point number one is that being "short stacked" is going to happen to you a lot. You play poker, you do get short stacked. Period. And old cliché but a very valid one "you can't win 'em all."

But - with poker (and here's another cliché) the saying goes that you always have a chance as long as you have "a chip and a chair." One famous story to reinforce that goes back to the World Series of Poker in 1982. Jack Straus went all-in and lost the pot. He thought he was on his way home. But a dealer spotted a \$500 chip under Straus' napkin. Remarkably, Straus came back to win the title from just that \$500 chip.

So - never give up. You've always got a chance of making the money as long as you're in the game. But when you find yourself becoming short stacked and your chances getting slimmer, the best form of defense is attack! You must make a move - and do so while you still have enough chips to make a difference. It's no good waiting until you have a couple of hundred chips and everyone else has a couple of thousand. They can easily call you with anything and you will find yourself with multiple callers and little chance. The big stacks will take you out.

Again - make your move while you can still affect the chances of you opponents and have enough chips to do so. A general rule of thumb here is when you have a stack of between five to ten times the amount of the big blind. Then pick your hand and "go for it." But not just any hand - you can still play smart if the opportunity to do so comes along, such as raising from late position against few callers (and no big stacks).

Or if you're fortunate enough to get a premium starting hand, shove all your chips in and cross your fingers.

If you're not fortunate enough to get a premium starting hand and your chip position is perilous (between five to ten times the big blind) then pick a hand with which to make your stand. Could be any pair, any time you're dealt two face cards. But pick one you must. If you get a caller or two and win you've at least doubled up and back in the hunt. If you cause them all to fold, you've still won the blind's chips.

You may have to do this more than once in the same tournament.

That is how you can "come back from the dead." Never give up, be aware enough to know when to make your stand and then make it. Yes, it's a coin-toss scenario but the alliterative is a lingering death as the blinds take you out.

Chapter 13

Why size IS important

The size of your chip stack (or lack of it) is very important. Of course, to win the tournament you must have the biggest stack at the end. And that's a gradual process over the course of the tournament. You won't win the tournament with one hand but you sure can lose it by playing one hand recklessly.

You are always trying to build your stack by seeking the right opportunities to do so.

If you have a big stack

Don't assume you have an automatic right to keep it. You have worked hard to get it so work hard to protect it and don't fritter it away. But having a big stack and being able to use it means you can wield great power and influence over the rest of the table, in particular the players with a much smaller stack than you. Push them around, raise them, bully them. However - be aware at all times of players with a stack size that can hurt you if you tangle with them. Very simply, do not go up against similar sized stacks or stacks that can hurt you unless you are 100% certain you have the cards to beat them. Be smart - if your stack is real large you might even be able to fold every hand and still make the top three and a money finish. Be smart with your big stack. Use it well.

If you have a medium small stack

You are still a major contender but must pick your battles carefully. Try not to lock horns with a bigger stack, pick the hands you'll get involved in carefully and seek opportunities to milk chips from weaker players and smaller stacks. At all times remembering your top three target and keeping an eye on the rising blinds. Try to become a big stack if you can, try not to become the short stack!

If you have a small stack

You just read about that in the previous chapter.

See what size IS important now? - no matter how big (or small) your stack of chips is, by knowing what to do with it you are always in with a chance of making that top three finish and pocketing some money.

Chapter 14

"I'm all-in"

Three little words. A big part of tournament poker play. It's the ultimate move. Committing all your chips to the pot. Your opponents will do it, you will do it. Like most other things we've looked at in this ebook, knowing *when* to do it is the key point. Also knowing if to call an opponent when they go all-in.

Players push all-in at any time. Even on the first hand you'll find players doing this. It's madness to do it so early. The best you can hope for is a quick double-up. The worst case you get a caller, lose and go out before things have even got warm.

Unless you have the absolute best hand and there's an early all-in just ignore it and let somebody else knock themselves out. Why bother risking your own participation?

If somebody goes all-in with a bigger stack than you have and you call that move, your entire tournament is on the line. Lose and you're out. So, a quick "golden rule:" never, ever call an all-in from an opponent with a bigger or similar sized stack as you unless you are sure it's the right thing to do. For example you have the best hand.

If you have a huge stack and calling the all-in won't hurt you if you lose while you can knock out that player if you call, pretty much call every time.

When should you go all-in yourself? Only when you have to. You'll have to do it often if you're the short stack (see previous chapter). You'll also find that you have to do it frequently towards the latter stages of a tournament when it's the only viable move because the blinds mean anything else isn't possible.

As with many aspects of successful tournament play - it's about spotting and knowing the right time to commit your chips and take your chances. In my experience it's better to be the first to go all-in during any particular hand because you're first to say "I'm so strong it's worth everything I have" which, you hope, is enough for you to win the pot by scaring others out of it and putting the pressure on them to make a tough decision.

If, on the other hand, you are faced with that decision yourself by an opponent's all-in then think carefully. Are they bluffing, do you have better cards, do you want to risk your tournament, can you afford to call the all-in, how much damage will you sustain if you lose.

Every time somebody goes all-in and there is at least one caller, somebody could be eliminated and that's good for you because you can move up the order for no risk (if you're not in the hand that is). Consider this potential scenario.....

There are five players remaining. You're in fourth place. The short-stack goes all-in from an early position. The other three players call the all-in. It's now your turn to act and you're holding a pair of aces. Your instinct is to call. But think on it for a moment. Sure, you've got the best hand at this point. But if you call you're in a pot with five other players so the chances of your pair being successful are reduced. And if you lose, you're gone. Instead, if you fold (even though it's hard

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to put down the AA) you have a chance to go immediately in to third place and a money finish without any risk if the big stack or current second placed player takes the pot.

In summary - when somebody goes all-in, take a moment to consider the effect on your chances if you call it. Will your chances of a top three finish be fatally wounded or enhanced. It could be the end of the line for you. If it's time for you to go all-in, try to be the first to do so.



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Chapter 15

Bluffing and stealing

Bluffing

Bluffing - pretending you have a good hand when the truth is somewhat different. You will have to try a bluff from time to time. There's no escaping. It can be a devastating tactic and push you to the top of the pile if you pull it off. Or it can devastate you if you get caught.

Attempting to bluff in normal tournament play, I suggest to you, is not a tactic to employ on anything like a regular basis with your target being to survive and work towards that "in the money" finish. Although there are times to give it a try.

It's about spotting the opportunity and then measuring if you think you can get away with it. When you attempt a bluff, it's much more a case of playing the player (for example trying to push a weak player off a hand) than the cards you are holding. This is one reason why it's so important to figure out your opponents' style of play.

I would not recommend that you attempt to bluff a bad player. Some players will call your raise no matter what they are holding hoping they'll catch some cards and make a hand as they go and to "get lucky". They never know when they are beaten. Or that you want them to think they are beaten.

On the other hand, weak or tight players will be easier to bluff. Show them "strength" by representing you have a big hand if you spot weakness in them and you might be able to pull it off.

Another "don't" is to attempt a bluff against multiple opponents or from an early table position. If you do either, you have an increased possibility that somebody will have something better than you and will take your chips away from you.

Bluffing when chasing cards yourself is not advisable. Say you have J T and the flop comes 9, K, A. You need a Q to make a straight. The odds are very much against you so why bother wasting chips chasing the Q. OK, you'll get lucky from time to time and the Q will come, but much more often that not it won't.

So when might be a good time to bluff? Tricky question. Possible scenarios may be if you are in late position pre-flop with just a couple of players limping in (calling, not raising) or you are last to act post-flop and everyone has checked before you. Throwing out a reasonable raise to "pretend" you have a great hand might convince your opponents you really do and cause them to fold.

For example - post-flop there is a potential flush showing. Players acting before you do check so you think they can't have made the flush. Pretending you HAVE made it with a bluff-raise might take the pot for you on the spot. If not and somebody calls your raise or re-raises you the likelihood now is that they really do have the flush. You can fold and still be alive. Sure, you've been caught bluffing - it will happen.

And if you are going to bluff (or your position in the tournament is under threat) try to do so not only if you spot weakness on others but also when you have

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"outs" - a reasonable chance of making that great hand you want others to think you have. For example you have J T hearts and two more hearts arrive on the flop. A heart on either turn or river and you have your flush.

Stealing

Another form of bluffing is know as "stealing the blinds" and becomes very important as the blinds raise as the tournament progresses. For example you are in late position, everyone has folded before you so now it's just you, the small blind and the big blind. Throwing out a good bet now may mean they'll fold and the pot will be yours. Why - because the blinds have already been forced to put chips in to the pot and may not want to put more in unless they have good hands. And you'll know if one or both of them has got a good hand because they'll call your raise or re-raise you.

Another "stealing" opportunity may be if you are in an early position to bet in the latter stages against few opponents. Everyone will now be thinking about making the money finish and play will tighten up. A nice raise from early position might convince everyone you've got a good one and make them fold.

If you are in the big or small blind - prepare to be attacked! Opponents will be trying the "stealing" tactic. If you suspect that's what they are doing and they don't in fact have good cards and/or you do be prepared to defend yourself by re-raising.

Bluffing and stealing are elements of the game in which you will have to develop your own style and spot opportunities. But hopefully the above paragraphs will have given you an insight. Pulling off a bluff move can be very satisfying though if you are going to try it, be prepared to accept the consequences if it goes wrong!

Chapter 16

S-l-o-w play

If you've got a great hand (ideally the best possible hand) and want to try and extract the maximum amount of chips from your opponents with it, one tactic to do is to do what's known as "slow play." In other words, pretend you have nothing and hope your opponents will do the raising for you because if you fire out a raise they'll know you have a whopper and fold instantly. But if you can trick your opponents into raising, you can call their raise and scoop all those lovely chips into your stack.

Example - you have J T again pre-flop. No big raises so you can limp in cheaply. Flop comes down J, T, T. Wow - you flopped a full house and right now you're super-strong. Your opponents call post-flop. You decide to check to pretend that the flop hasn't helped you. Turn is an A. Now one of the players left in raises big. You think he might have two pairs now. Aces and Jacks. You know you're still in front so call his raise. The river is a 4. He bets big again, you call and show your full house. And by "slow playing" your huge hand you have gathered many more chips than if you'd have raised after the flop.

But beware - slow playing can bite back at you hard. Here's how.

Example - you have a pair of eights. Flop is 8, Q, K. You don't think anyone has your three eights beaten yet by three queens or three kings because nobody was betting like they had QQ and KK pre-flop. So you think slow-playing your trip eights is a good idea. Turn card is a J. There's a possible straight developing out there but you think you're still good with your hand so continue your slow play tactics. River is an A and an opponent now puts out a huge raise. You scratch your head - what could he have all of a sudden? You call the raise only to be heartbroken as your opponent turns over T J showing you that he made his straight on the river with that A.

And that's how slow-playing can hurt you big time.

If you are slow-playing but at any stage think you are no longer the "strongest" hand, save your chips. Always think about what other cards are showing and how they may have helped your opponents.

Slow-play can take you to chip leader in one hand - or it can take you out of the tournament just as quickly. Be careful!

Chapter 17

(Don't) chase me

Chasing cards hoping they arrive to make your hand is extremely dangerous. Don't do it! You'll waste chips chasing and you'll lose them with the odds against you.

Say you have T J again pre-flop. Limp in cheaply. Flop is 6, 7, 8. You think that's not bad for you because if a 9 shows on the turn or river you'll have a straight. Somebody throws out a tasty bet. You call. Turn card is a 3. Still your opponent bets. You think "oh well, another few chips to see if I can get the nine on the river." But it doesn't arrive. Your opponent shows it hand at the showdown and flips over 9 T. He'd got his straight on the flop and had you dead in the water all the way.

You've lost a huge portion of your chip stack chasing a dream, ruined your chances of that top three finish and a return on your tournament entry fee.

Don't chase - too risky!



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Chapter 18

Analyse, analyse, analyse

Let me repeat this chapter title, and in capitals! ANALYSE, ANALYSE, ANALYSE.

A common mistake by many players is to concentrate only on their cards and not to take any real notice of how the flop, turn and river cards can have helped other players. A big mistake.

Always, always keep alert, take notice of cards as they appear on the board and analyse how those cards might have given your opponents a boost and if your hand is now beaten or unplayable - if it would be unwise to commit any more chips to the pot.

Your pair of aces pre-flop may no longer be the best if the flop comes 5, 6, 7 or any three cards of the same suit. Somebody could have a straight or a flush. If they do, your aces are toast.

Always, always think what hands might be out there. Some examples:

- any pair on the board - possible three of a kind, a full house or four of a kind
- three cards of the same suit - possible flush
- three consecutive cards of the same suit - possible straight flush or even a royal flush
- any two cards of the same suit - somebody might be chasing a flush
- any sequence of "connected" unsuited cards - possible straight or somebody chasing a straight

Stay alert to the potential that you're beat as cards fall. And if you think you are beaten, do you really need to call that big raise when you're holding a pair of tens with a flop of K, 9, 6 all hearts. You're beaten if anyone has a K, never mind a flush.

If you think somebody might be "chasing" a hand you might be able to stop them by raising yourself to represent you already have a better hand (which you may have of course). Make it expensive for the chasing player to see another card and they may not bother.

Chapter 19

Keep a private note

Most poker room software has functionality to keep notes on your opponents, on individual players. Using this functionality can be a very powerful thing. By keeping a few sentences on each player you'll know when you next sit down with them at the table what their style of play is and be able to figure it out from the start of the tournament.

And because the player notes are editable, if you come up against a player that your notes show is a poor player but now is a better player, you can update your notes about that player to show they have improved.

Do make use of the player notes functionality.

Make you own hand-written notes if you wish during a tournament. It will help to retain your concentration during the early stages and build up a running "picture" of how your opponents are playing. Write every scrap of information down about them because it may be useful later. Help to identify trends and patterns in their game - do they always bet the same amount, do they chase cards, are they super-tight and easy to muscle out of a hand and so forth.

Information is power when you are "playing the player!"

Chapter 20

Multi-table tournaments

So far in this ebook we have looked at strategies and techniques for playing in single-table sit-and-go poker tournaments of ten players.

You'll see from your poker room software that it is also possible to enter massive tournaments consisting of hundreds (or thousands) of players stretching over multiple tables. You can win some fantastic prizes by entering multi-table tournaments though must balance the chances of that by deciding first if entering and playing is a worthwhile effort.

Prize money can often be paid out down to the top 200 or more players (always check the prize structure before entering so you know). But at the lower end of the prize money distribution you're usually only going to win enough to get your entry fee back or make a small profit. To make the "big bucks" you need to be on the final table.

And a multi-table tournament can take hours to conclude. Do you want to spend those few hours in the hope of surviving long enough to creep in to the lower reaches. Is it a worthwhile time investment. A couple of questions to ask yourself before you enter a multi-table.

If you do enter and take a shot at the "big one" a suggested strategy is to still keep things tight in the early stages as per single-table strategy and let other people knock themselves out. Then play the middle stages according to your chip stack size but doing so aggressively when you have the chance. Keep an eye on your overall position and how close to (or far away from) the money you are and how many players are left. You'll be able to gauge if you can sneak in to the money or have a shot at a higher finish. As the money approaches, play will generally tighten up so that's when you might be able to take advantage of that tightening by loosening up a bit yourself, always picking your fights carefully.

In many ways, it's not unlike single-table strategy and you'll need a fair amount of luck allied to your poker skill to make good money finishes in multi-table tournaments. Great if you can finish high up the ladder, though do consider if the time investment is worth the return. You could be playing for hours for no return at all.

Freeroll tournaments are those in which (like the name suggests) the poker room is putting up the money. No entry fee. Again, some great prizes up for grabs but I suggest you think even harder about the "time investment" factor. Freerolls tend to attract a lower standard of player and play resembling nothing like "normal" poker at all. Because it's free to enter anything goes. Would your time be better spent entering a few single table tournaments instead and putting your skills to use in an environment where you have a better chance of a return on your time and effort?

This is the final chapter on tournament strategy and techniques, before we look at a "putting it all together" chapter - a quick one on suggested poker rooms is next.

Chapter 21

Putting it all together - getting started

Right - time to get started. You've read a lot of information in previous chapters. It won't do you any harm to read it all again a time or two. Then when you're ready, take the plunge and get your feet wet. Playing for real is the only way to learn.

Fire up your poker room software, enter a tournament and you're away. I would suggest that you start out at low stakes level (\$5/£5) and only consider moving up to higher staked tournaments when you are consistently making the money at the \$5/£5 level and your account balance can handle the step up in grade. And please, **never** play with money you can't afford to lose.

You will find your own style of play, but to try and summarise:

- remember that your target is a top three finish - even at low stakes you can still win a reasonable amount of money
- keep it tight in the early stages
- pick your fights carefully and when you do fight, do so with aggression
- watch your opponents and figure out how to beat them
- don't chase cards
- don't concentrate only on your own cards - analyse what your opponents might have
- look for opportunities to bluff and steal (if you don't think your opponents have a hand, pretend you do)
- don't bluff with nothing unless you HAVE to (for example you'll be blinded out of you don't)
- know when you are beaten in a hand - have to discipline to fold and stay alive
- stay patient and never give up - "chip and a chair"
- no matter how skilled a player you become, you will always need a little luck

All that remains is for me to thank you for reading and for me to wish you nothing but success. I only wish I could promise you success at the tables. I can't do that though by reading, understanding and applying what you've read here you should have a greater appreciation of tournament poker strategy and enhance your overall chances of experiencing "in the money" finishes.

Please do feel free to email me with feedback and strategy-related questions. I'll be happy to hear from you and will reply as soon as possible.

Be sure to check out the next couple of pages for some cool poker rooms and an even cooler bit of kit that can give you the edge.

Chapter 22

Poker rooms and resources



"Who Else Wants To Play The Official UK National Lotto 88 Times A Week, From Anywhere In The World, Easily And Legally... For Free?"

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Get a £100 sign-up bonus from Bet365poker AND earn Loyalty Points by both contributing to the pot and for every raked hand you partake in. You can also earn Loyalty Points when you play in tournaments. For every 100 Loyalty Points you earn you get \$1 in cash! It really is that simple! So good luck at the tables and remember you are accumulating these fantastic points as you play!

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Pokerbility - The most accurate Poker Odds Calculator

Instantly calculates the odds of your current hand, giving you a clear picture and recommendation of what you should do in real time, according to the calculated probabilities between you and your opponent.

Use the software to gain a competitive advantage over the other players on the table.

Choose your style of play - from tight to loose, from passive to aggressive.

Intuitive and user-friendly interface blends into the natural environment of the online poker room.

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