

The Main Event with Jonathan Little
In-Depth Analysis of 54 Poker Hands from my WSOP Main Event

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Acknowledgments

This book would not exist if I did not have an amazing team of people working with me on a regular basis. Dan Stanley turns all of my ideas into reality. My parents, Larry Little and Rita Little, along with Ken Adams, diligently proofread this book, which was initially littered with typos. Amie Broder tirelessly supports me and calms me down when I am overly hyper, bouncing off the walls with ideas spewing out of my mind. I would like to thank you, the reader of this book. Without my dedicated poker students, none of this would be possible.

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Ninety percent of the hands aren't shown in a poker game.

-Doyle Brunson

Introduction

This book will vividly recount my experience of playing in the 2014 WSOP Main Event. The Main Event is a unique tournament in that there are significantly more weak players in the field compared to any other tournament, meaning it is important to avoid high variance situations that can lead to an early exit. The idea behind this concept is that, if you are patient, you can get your stack in with a significant edge at various points throughout the event without the need to create an overly aggressive image. However, I believe many players take this concept too far, going out of their way to avoid playing any significant pot. In order to win all of the chips in a 6,683 person tournament, you simply must take some risks and try to accumulate some chips.

The WSOP Main Event is perhaps the deepest stacked event of the year. This means the blinds remain relatively small compared to the effective stack size throughout the entire tournament. While the average chip stack in most small stakes local tournaments is frequently 20 big blinds or less, in the main event, the average stack size starts out at over 200 big blinds and remains at around 80 big blinds until the final table. This results in excellent poker players having a huge advantage because more money will go into the pot on later streets when the excellent players have a better idea of how their hand will fare.

It is a common misconception among amateur players that deep stacks allow them to play for a longer period of time with less risk. While the amateurs will get to sit at the table for a longer period of time than they normally do, their equity is demolished by strong players who are not afraid to get a bit out of line in a calculated manner, allowing them to steal most of the pots when their amateur opponent does not have a premium holding.

Please note that this book is not geared towards total novices. If you are an amateur poker player with a reasonable amount of experience, you will likely be surprised at how aggressively I go after small pots while being able to get off the hook in situations many players would normally consider unavoidable. Please read this book with an open mind. If you have any questions, I strongly urge you to post them in my poker forum at FloatTheTurn.com.

How I Record My Live Hands

Whenever I play a major live event, I make a point to take diligent notes on every situation I encounter. While I will not review every single hand I played in the main event, mainly because most of them are fairly standard and inconsequential, I will review every decision I think is worthy of in-depth discussion. I have a fairly unique way of taking notes, although many diligent players have started copying my method. I have prepared a video tutorial for you to study how I take notes on my [personal blog](#)

[found here](#). If you don't feel like watching the video, I will explain the process.

I bring a small spiral-bound notebook to every major tournament. At the top of every page in my notebook, and in this book, I write down my hand (H), my stack size (S), the blinds (B), and my position (P). I find that frequently I have trouble recalling these details accurately, so I make a point to record them in my notebook before the action begins. After a hand is complete, I write the preflop action, the flop cards, the flop action, the turn card, the turn action, the river card, and the river action. I then note any cards that are revealed at the showdown. Once I have finished writing down a hand, I occasionally scribble down any thoughts I had that swayed my decision one way or the other.

I strongly suggest you start writing down any tricky situation, as well as some of the mundane ones that you encounter at the poker table. Discussing these situations with your peers and poker coach will greatly improve your game. You will likely discover that, with practice, writing down hands becomes second nature. I promise, it is not too difficult to get the hang of it once you experiment with it a bit.

I will discuss all of my thoughts on each and every betting round. When playing a hand, you have to assign your opponents a range of hands and slowly narrow it down as the hand progresses. While I will often outline the general range I think my opponent has on each betting round, try to assign ranges on your own and see if you come up with the same conclusions I do.

I decided to modify my notes into a quiz format so you can test yourself whenever I have a decision to make. The purpose of asking you questions is to get you in the habit of thinking about all of your options and picking the best one. While your options are almost limitless in no-limit hold'em, you will find that, most of the time, only one or two plays are actually acceptable. That being said, I made quite a few errors throughout the tournament. When I make a bad play, I will make it clear. There is no scoring system because you are not competing with anyone. Remember, I want to get you in the habit of thinking about all of your options and assessing ranges. Please do not mindlessly speed through this book. You will miss a lot of value.

I make a point to label my opponents using various descriptive terms. A "tight passive" (TP) player will play relatively few hands before the flop, usually in a passive manner. When these players raise or reraise, you should assume they have a strong holding most of the time. A "loose passive" (LP) player is someone who frequently limps in before the flop but rarely applies aggression without a strong hand. A "tight aggressive" (TAG) player plays mostly strong starting hands but aggressively tries to win most pots he enters. A "loose aggressive" (LAG) player plays a wide range of preflop starting hands and usually applies significant aggression whenever he thinks he can steal the pot or extract additional value.

A "maniac" is someone who is attacking most pots in an overly aggressive manner. A "calling station" is someone who does not comprehend that he should fold when he doesn't have at least a reasonable hand if he is facing aggression. Someone who is

“splashy” tends to try to see a flop with a wide range of hands, usually with no clear idea of how to proceed after the flop. Splashy players typically see too many flops and turns but give up to significant aggression by the river.

My style is somewhere in between TAG and LAG. It is important to not show up to a tournament with a preconceived idea of how you plan to play. The ideal strategy is to see what your opponents will let you get away with then adjust accordingly. I want to make it perfectly clear that playing according to some sort of system or formula will not work in the long run. You must learn to think for yourself and alter your strategies based on your opposition.

I use a few terms to describe which seat both my opponents and I are in. I think most players know who the big blind (BB), small blind (SB), and Button are. The “cutoff” (CO) is the player to the right of the Button. The “hijack” (HJ) is the person to the right of the CO. The “lojack” (LoJ) is the person to the right of the HJ. From there, assuming the table has 9 players, the person to the right of the LoJ is 4th, the person to the right of 4th is “3rd” and the person to the right of 3rd is “2nd”. The player first to act before the flop is “under the gun” (UTG). While most of my WSOP Main Event experience is played 9 handed, when you are taking your own notes, it is important to record how many players are at the table because an UTG player 6 handed should have a much wider range than an UTG player 9 handed.

It is worth mentioning that I use “T” to refer to the card “10”. I also note any relevant

stack sizes that are smaller than mine using parenthesis after a player's description. When I mention the phrase, "top pair or better," that means "top pair and all better made hands." Assume all players in the book are male unless they are noted to be female.

I truly hope you enjoy this look into how I play deep stacked, high stakes poker tournaments. This Main Event was particularly tough because I frequently went from having a ton of chips to being nearly out. Going from lots of chips to almost none is particularly tilt-inducing. Always remember to keep your emotions on an even keel at the poker table.

If you like this book, you will also enjoy my other works. Please click the link to go directly to my "books" page at JonathanLittlePoker.com.

My best-selling books, ***Secrets of Professional Tournament Poker Volume 1 and 2*** outline my generic strategy for attacking all forms of poker tournaments. ***Secrets of Professional Tournament Poker Volume 3*** is similar to this book, although it covers three different events with varying stack sizes.

I recently completed ***Jonathan Little on Live No Limit Hold'em Cash Games***, discussing all aspects of cash games.

Positive Poker, with Dr. Patricia Cardner, addresses numerous psychological issues that poker players typically struggle with.

I produced a 14 part ebook series called ***Crushing Small Stakes Poker Tournaments*** which is effectively a collection of 700 flash cards that quiz the reader about common spots that frequently occur in short stacked poker tournaments.

I offer a wide array of poker training videos and webinars. There is even a webinar discussing some of the hands from this book. You can find my webinars at JonathanLittlePoker.com as well.

If you would like a FREE month at my poker training site, check out FloatTheTurn.com.

Finally, I urge you to sign up to my email list at JonathanLittlePoker.com so I can keep you in the loop about my life and provide you with lots of FREE valuable poker training content.

If you enjoy this book, it would greatly help me if you can submit honest feedback on Amazon. Thanks!

Day 1

Hand 1

H 6♦-5♠ S 31,000 B 50/100 P Button

Everyone folds to me on the button.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 100
- C. Raise to 300
- D. Raise to 600

I raise to 300. BB 50 year old maybe aggressive calls.

Early in a tournament, I am very prone to raise with a fairly wide range from late position, mainly to test the waters and figure out how my opponents are likely to react. If I face significant resistance, I know to slow down and if my opponents let me run them over, I know I can steal aggressively in the future.

7♣-7♦-4♥

BB checks.

Pot = 650

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 200
- C. Bet 400
- D. Bet 800

I bet 400. BB raises to 1,400.

Pot = 2450

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,000 more

C. Reraise to 3,400

D. Reraise to 6,000

I reraise to 3,400. BB quickly calls.

Talk about testing the waters! Any time the board is paired, you can expect some aggressive opponents to do their best to represent trips. While my opponent's check-raise is likely strong, I thought he could easily be bluffing and would fold to a reraise unless he had a 7. When he called my reraise to 3,400 reraise, I was quite unhappy with my straight draw.

It is important to note that I could easily be drawing dead or nearly dead when my opponent has 7-4, 7-7, 4-4, 8-7 or 7-3. When he calls my 3,400, I am done with the hand. My plan is certainly to give up if I miss. If I complete my straight on the turn, I will check behind, opting to call if my opponent bets on the river. If my opponent checks to me on both the turn and the river and I have a straight, I will value bet. Notice I am already applying significant aggression without actually risking my entire stack.

7♣-7♦-4♥ K♥

BB checks.

Pot = 7,450

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 2,000
- C. Bet 4,000
- D. Bet 6,500

I check.

I am sticking to the plan.

7♣-7♦-4♥ K♥ 9♦

BB bets 4,100.

Pot = 11,550

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 4,100
- C. Raise to 8,800
- D. Raise to 14,000

I fold.

Since I have almost the worst possible hand, calling is not an option. Raising would also be insane, given my opponent likely has trips.

Hand 2

H K♦-J♦ S 25,000 B 100/200 P CO

2nd TAG kid raises to 450. LoJ calls.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 450
- C. Reraise to 1,400
- D. Reraise to 2,400

I call. Button and SB call.

Both reraising and calling are fine options. Especially with hands that flop well, such as big suited cards, I am very prone to call and see what develops. Even if I had K♦-J♠, I would probably call. I am not a big fan of reraising in multiway pots early in the tournament when I can see the flop cheaply.

K♠-T♥-6♦

Everyone checks to me.

Pot = 2,450

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 600
- C. Bet 1,400
- D. Bet 2,300

I bet 1,400. SB, 2nd, and LoJ call. Button folds.

I think a value bet is certainly in order when my opponents check to me. When the SB, 2nd, and LoJ call, I realize I could realistically be behind at the moment and if I happen to be ahead, I can easily, and likely will be, outdrawn by the river. My plan is to probably bet again if the turn is a K, 5, 4, 3, or 2 and check behind on all other cards.

Notice that I make a point to develop a plan for future betting rounds on the flop. If you are mindlessly auto piloting, you will find that you are often confused or lost as

the hand progresses. If you think ahead, your decisions will be much easier.

K♠-T♥-6♦ Q♠

Everyone checks to me.

Pot = 8,050

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 3,000
- C. Bet 4,500
- D. Bet 7,600

I check.

Because I could have been behind on the flop and I now lose to A-J, Q-T, and Q-9, I see no reason to bet. Once the turn checks through, if someone makes a reasonable bet on the river, I might make a crying call, depending on the read I get and the exact river card.

K♠-T♥-6♦ Q♠ 8♥

Everyone checks to me.

Pot = 8,050

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 3,000
- C. Bet 4,500
- D. Bet 7,600

I check.

I beat SB's Q♥-J♠ and LoJ's 7♠-7♣.

When everyone checks through on the turn, I expect to win a huge percentage of the time, as most players would bet with a better hand on the river. That being said, I don't think there is a ton of value in betting as the only hands likely to call a bet are top pair and better. Since I lose to most decent Ks and I could conceivably be beat, I

don't think there is much value in a river bet. If I decided to bet, I would probably bet tiny, hoping to induce a light call from perhaps a Q.

It is interesting to note that the LoJ called the flop with 7-7, which is a terrible hand on K-T-6. I suppose he thought he was set mining, which is often a terrible play after the flop, mainly because he cannot count on realizing any sort of implied odds in a multiway pot. Notice that if he gets lucky and peels a 7, I will only pay him off on one street if the river is a safe card. If he takes an aggressive line when he hits by leading or check raising the turn, he will usually scare off all hands worse than two pair, which is most of everyone's range. He almost certainly has little to no implied odds, making his flop call terrible.

Hand 3

H A♣-9♦ S 31,000 B 100/200 P Button

Everyone folds to me on the button.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 200
- C. Raise to 525
- D. Raise to 800

I raise to 525. BB LAG French calls.

Notice this is the same player from the 6♦-5♠ hand. In my eyes, he has gone from being classified as a 50 year old possibly aggressive guy to a LAG French guy. Within a few orbits, I have made a much better classification of my opponent. In general, a random French guy is splashy preflop and doesn't like to fold reasonable hands after the flop.

J♠-7♣-6♦

BB checks.

Pot = 1,150

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 600
- C. Bet 900
- D. Bet 1,300

I bet 600. BB calls.

This is a standard continuation bet. I would make this bet with my entire range because it allows me to continue building a pot when I have a strong hand and also allows me to get to the showdown relatively cheaply when I opt to not bet the turn.

J♠-7♣-6♦ A♥

BB checks.

Pot = 2,350

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 800
- C. Bet 1,200
- D. Bet 1,900

I check.

I probably thought my opponent would at least consider folding to a bet if an A, K, or Q fell on the turn. This makes betting a bad idea because I don't want my opponent to fold. This should lead me to check behind, hoping to get one sizable street of value on the river, either by calling if he bets or betting when he checks.

J♠-7♣-6♦ A♥ A♦

BB checks.

Pot = 2,350

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 800
- C. Bet 1,200
- D. Bet 1,900

I bet 1,900. BB calls. I win.

I seriously doubt I needed to make trips to have the best hand on the river. I would probably make this same large bet size on most rivers, hoping to look like I am trying to push my opponent off his hand. You will find most “sticky” players who don’t like folding made hands or guys who think you frequently bluff will be fairly prone to call large river bets with a wide range, at least until you prove to them that you are mostly betting large on the river with premium holdings.

Hand 4

H 7♥-6♥ S 34,000 B 100/200 P Button

CO splashy, likely weak limps.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 200
- C. Raise to 700
- D. Raise to 1,000

I call. SB LAG French guy and BB calls.

Both raising and limping before the flop are fine when you have a hand that flops well. I generally don't want to discourage my opponents from limping in with a wide range earlier in the day so I prefer limping behind, at least initially. As the limps become more valuable, I will tend to raise more often. If I were to raise, I would make it around 800.

A♠-4♥-2♥

SB bets 600. BB folds. CO calls.

Pot = 1,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 600
- C. Raise to 1,900
- D. Raise to 3,000

I call.

With a weak flush draw, calling is probably ideal because if I raise and someone continues, I am likely either against a made hand that is top pair or better or a strong draw that has me crushed. By calling, I keep the pot small and give myself the opportunity to get away on various bad turn cards while also making the pot large if I make my flush and everyone checks to me.

A♠-4♥-2♥ T♥

SB bets 1,500. CO folds.

Pot = 3,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,500
- C. Raise to 3,000
- D. Raise to 4,200

I call.

When the small blind continues betting on the turn, he almost certainly has an A or a better made hand. Since there is no real reason he could not have a flush and he may fold most marginal made hands if I raise, I think calling is by far the best option.

Whenever a raise will frequently keep your opponent in with a range consisting of mostly hands that beat you without getting value from too many hands you beat, a raise is usually bad. Notice if he has two pair or trips, he will call the turn but will likely fold on the river if I continue betting whereas if he has a flush, he will likely call the

turn then also call on the river. Raising the turn sets me up to be in a reverse freeroll situation whenever he has a better flush.

A♠-4♥-2♥ T♥ 2♠

SB bets 2,500.

Pot = 7,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 2,500
- C. Raise to 5,500
- D. Raise to 7,000

I call. I lose to his 4♠-2♣.

I don't think there is much merit at all in either folding or raising the river. I still beat numerous worse made hands and, because my hand is severely under represented, I should expect my opponent to value bet many worse made hands. Raising doesn't

seem good because my opponent will call with any flush or full house and fold most hands worse than a flush. Calling is the only option that makes sense.

Some readers are probably screaming “By calling the turn, you let him outdraw you!” While this is true, notice my opponent would have likely lost the same amount whether or not he improved to a full house on the river. Given I am going to have the best hand on the river around 91% of the time when facing two pair on the turn, I am more than happy to allow my opponent to see the river card.

Assuming a 2,500 bet goes into the pot on most rivers, I will profit around 2,000 chips on average, which is huge. I figured out this amount by taking the total amount going into the pot on the river, 5,000, multiplying it by my equity, .91, then subtracting the amount I have to put in, 2500. Raising the turn perhaps allows my opponent to get off the hook, costing me this substantial bet.

Hand 5

H A♣-Q♦ S 25,000 B 100/200 P 2nd

UTG splashy guy limps.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 200
- C. Raise to 800
- D. Raise to 1,200

I limp. Button world class TAG kid raises to 1,000. UTG calls.

Pot = 2,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold

- B. Call 800 more
- C. Reraise to 2,800
- D. Reraise to 4,500

I call.

While I normally like to raise limpers, I am a bit cautious versus early position limpers because they often intend to limp-reraise. I also don't mind limping in and letting numerous other players limp behind with marginal A-x hands I have dominated. As long as you play well after the flop, limping is probably the best play.

When the world class TAG kid raises, I think he could have a fairly wide range of decent hands, such as pairs, big cards, suited connectors, and the occasional bluff. I do not want to reraise because playing a huge pot out of position with a hand that could be dominated, especially when a lot of money goes in the pot, is rarely a good thing.

K♣-8♣-4♣

UTG checks.

Pot = 3,300

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 1,300
- C. Bet 2,500
- D. Bet 5,500

I check. Button bets 2,200. UTG folds.

Pot = 5,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 2,200
- C. Raise to 5,300
- D. Raise to 7,800

I raise to 5,300. Button reraises to 12,000.

Pot = 20,600

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,700 more
- C. Reraise to 18,700
- D. Go all-in for 12,000 more

I go all-in. Button quickly calls with Q♣-T♣. I win when the river brings the beautiful 6♣.

Check-calling with strong, obvious draws out of position is usually not a good idea because you will have a difficult time extracting value if you complete your draw and will likely face a turn bet when you miss. This should lead you to check-raise, hoping to maximize fold equity. When he made it 12,000, I did not think he was bluffing but I thought he could conceivably make the same play with A♥-A♦, K♥-J♣, or 7♣-6♣ and fold if I pushed all-in. Perhaps my push was overly optimistic but in the moment, I thought I had a touch of fold equity, which may or may not have been true.

I am sure some of you are thinking “Clearly he had a premium hand he wasn’t planning to fold.” While that would certainly be true of weak opponents, my opponent is incredibly good at poker, meaning he knows he should have some bluffs in all of his ranges. If he is ever bluffing, I think my push is acceptable. While I was certainly not trying to build a huge pot early in the tournament, once I check-raised the flop, I was completely priced into the hand.

I recognize that I mentioned in the Introduction that my goal was to not risk my stack early in the event. Notice that check-calling the flop makes it quite difficult for me to get paid off when I hit and check-raising puts too much of my stack in the pot to fold. When you are out of position with a strong draw that has almost no implied odds when you hit, it is usually best to take the aggressive line, allowing you to maximize fold equity, even if it risks your stack.

Hand 6

H A♦-A♥ S 51,000 B 100/200 P SB

LoJ same world class TAG kid (10,000) raises to 550. Button splashy (45,000) calls.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 550
- C. Reraise to 2,100
- D. Reraise to 3,600

I reraise to 2,100. LoJ folds. Button calls.

While I have not been too aggressive lately, it is still mandatory for me to reraise with A-A for value, even out of position. It is important to try to develop an aggressive preflop image early in the tournament to increase the likelihood you get paid off when you actually pick up a strong hand. Luckily, the button called.

J♠-4♠-3♦

Pot = 4,950

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 1,800
- C. Bet 2,700
- D. Bet 4,400

I bet 1,800. Button raises to 3,500.

Pot = 10,250

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,700 more
- C. Reraise to 5,500

D. Reraise to 8,000

I call.

My flop continuation bet is fairly standard. Interestingly enough, no one noticed my opponent's illegal raise size to 3,500 at the time, which is usually a sign of intense strength. When my opponent raised to 3,500, I thought he had either a strong made hand, most likely a J or better, or a strong draw. Against that range, calling is by far the best option because if I reraise, he may fold his marginal top pair hands, meaning he will only continue with made hands I lose to and draws that are getting the proper pot odds to continue in the pot. It is mandatory that I play my hand in a manner that keeps worse made hands in.

J♠-4♠-3♦ 9♣

Pot = 11,950

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 3,500

C. Bet 5,000

D. Bet 6,600

I check. Button bets 4,000.

Pot = 15,950

What did I decide to do?

A. Fold

B. Call 4,000

C. Raise to 8,800

D. Raise to 13,000

I call.

As on the flop, I do not want to check-raise my opponent off his worse made hands. While check-raising may push my opponent off his draws at this point, it also allows him to play perfectly with all of his made hands, continuing when I am crushed and

folding when I am ahead.

J♠-4♠-3♦ 9♣ J♣

Pot = 19,950

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 4,000
- C. Bet 5,900
- D. Bet 8,800

We both check. I beat A♠-3♠.

(note: BB Folded A♣-K♣)

Any J is a particularly bad river for me because I now lose to all hands that had top pair on the flop, meaning I only realistically beat busted flush draws by the river. Seeing how most players aren't trying to blast off early in the WSOP main event, my plan was to check-fold. Luckily my opponent did not want to fire the last barrel.

It is worth noting that the BB tanked forever before folding preflop. His fold was likely too tight with A♣-K♣, but he understood that I have not been overly wild before the flop, meaning I almost certainly have a strong hand unless I am all of a sudden getting out of line. I think he took that concept too far, but this goes to show you that it is very difficult to get action with your premium hands when you do not reraise too often before the flop.

Hand 7

H Q♣-9♣ S 61,000 B 150/300 P CO

UTG world class TAG kid (7,000) raises to 600. LoJ (40,000) and HJ call.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 600
- C. Reraise to 1,900
- D. Reraise to 3,000

I call. SB (60,000) and BB call.

Since there are numerous players in the pot against whom I have large implied odds, I don't mind calling and seeing a flop in position with a hand that has a huge amount of potential. However, if only the UTG kid raised and everyone folded to me, I would definitely fold due to his small stack size the complete lack of implied odds. Always be aware of your opponents' stack sizes as they can change easy calls into obvious folds.

A♦-A♣-J♣

Everyone checks to me.

Pot = 3,600

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 1,200
- C. Bet 2,100
- D. Bet 3,000

I check.

If I bet, no one is ever folding an A. That means if I bet and one of my five opponents has an A, which is somewhat likely, I am purely putting money in behind in a spot where one of my flush card outs is not live. That is not a situation I want to be in. Checking behind allows me to get a better idea about whether or not one of my opponents has an A and also lets me draw to my flush for free.

A♦-A♣-J♣ 7♣

SB bets 1,500. Only LoJ calls.

Pot = 6,600

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,500
- C. Raise to 3,900
- D. Raise to 4,900

I call.

Facing a bet and a call, I am fairly sure I am against some combination of A's, strong flush draws, and flushes. Maybe someone has an overplayed J. If I raise, I imagine the only hands that will give me significant action on both the turn and river will have me beat. This leads me to call to see what develops. If the SB bets on the river and the LoJ raises, I am planning to fold.

A♦-A♣-J♣ 7♣ 5♥

SB and LoJ check.

Pot = 8,100

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 2,300
- C. Bet 4,800
- D. Bet 7,000

I bet 4,800. SB calls. LoJ folds. I win.

When both of my opponents check to me, I think value betting is mandatory. If I get check-raised, I will usually fold unless I get the vibe that my opponent is bluffing. I picked fairly large bet size in order to extract a large amount of value from an A while making it much tougher for one of my opponents to bluff check-raise, given the check-raise would have to be quite large.

Hand 8

H T♠-7♦ S 72,000 B 150/300 P SB

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 150 more
- C. Raise to 850
- D. Raise to 1,150

I raise to 850 for the 2nd time in a row from SB. BB TP 50 year old (35,000) calls. He hasn't messed around against me so far.

Whenever my opponent in the big blind is tight and passive, I make a point to pillage his blinds whenever possible, at least until he starts fighting back. I would likely raise almost any two cards in this situation.

T♦-9♥-6♥

Pot = 1,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 600
- C. Bet 1,000
- D. Bet 1,400

I bet 1,000. BB raises to 3,000.

Pot = 5,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 2,000 more
- C. Reraise to 5,500

D. Reraise to 9,000

I call.

My flop bet is fairly standard with a reasonably strong hand. I would have probably bet this flop with any two cards.

When my opponent raises, I made what I think is my first major error of the tournament by calling. I had no reason at all to believe that my opponent was bluffing, or even semi-bluffing. His range is almost certainly top pair or better and perhaps strong draws. Against that range, my top pair with a gutshot is trash, especially out of position. I leveled myself into thinking my opponent was capable of attempting a risky bluff when in reality, he simply was not.

T♦-9♥-6♥ 4♠

Pot = 7,700

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 3,000

C. Bet 4,200

D. Bet 7,000

I check. BB bets 4,000.

Pot = 11,700

What did I decide to do?

A. Fold

B. Call 4,000

C. Raise to 8,000

D. Raise to 12,000

I call.

I compounded my error by continuing in the pot when the turn brought an innocuous card. I should have folded to this bet as well.

T♦-9♥-6♥ 4♠ A♦

Pot = 15,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 2,000
- C. Bet 5,000
- D. Bet 8,000

We both check. I lose to T♣-9♦.

Luckily the scary river card saved me from making an additional blunder. I imagine if the river was a low card, I would have called one more time.

This leak, assuming my opponents are capable of attempting to bluff me in excellent bluffing spots, occasionally plagues me when playing with amateur competition. It is worth noting that my play in this hand would be completely standard against a strong, aggressive opponent. I am working hard on eradicating this leak from my game. I must accept that some people simply are not going to try to run a bluff, even if the situation is excellent and I have been pushing them around for a while.

Hand 9

H 8♠-7♣ S 66,000 B 150/300 P Button

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 300
- C. Raise to 700
- D. Raise to 1,500

I raise to 700. SB TP (40,000) and BB splashy LAG 50 year old French calls.

As you can see, I tend to raise a wide range from the button.

6♠-5♠-4♥

SB and BB check.

Pot = 2,100

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 700
- C. Bet 1,300
- D. Bet 2,100

I bet 1,300. SB calls. BB raises to 4,000.

Pot = 8,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 2,700 more
- C. Reraise to 8,000
- D. Reraise to 12,300

I reraise to 12,300. SB folds. BB quickly calls.

This flop is nice! My continuation bet is completely normal, as I would tend to bet with most reasonable holdings on this board. There is no point at all in slow playing because it is quite easy for one of my opponents to have a decently strong hand on this flop as they did not reraise before the flop.

When the BB raises, I am thrilled because he probably has some sort of strong made hand. While a reraise may chase him away, given he is a splashy French guy, I think he will stick with me, especially since he has already seen me play a draw in an overly aggressive manner. When he calls my reraise to 12,300, I put him on a range of only premium made hands, perhaps two pair and better, and good draws.

6♠-5♠-4♥ J♣

BB checks.

Pot = 28,000

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 8,000

C. Bet 16,000

D. Bet 24,000

I bet 16,000. BB quickly calls.

The turn is equally beautiful as the flop. I make a bet for value, expecting him to continue with his entire flop range. Be careful to not bet too large in this situation. The worst thing you can do is bet so large that your opponent hero folds various two pair or weak drawing hands.

6♠-5♠-4♥ J♣ 3♦

BB leads 20,000.

Pot = 80,000

What did I decide to do? I don't think I need to ask you what I should do in this situation.

I go all-in for 17,000 more. BB quickly calls and I beat 7♦-6♦.

When he leads into me, I assume he must be bluffing because leading with anything else is almost certainly terrible. Since my only options are to minraise or call, and I have the nuts, I put in the minraise. When he quickly called, I assumed he also had 8-7 but to my surprise, he had the 2nd nuts.

If I found myself in my opponent's shoes on the river, I would have check-called to induce bluffs from busted draws. As played, he forced me to play perfectly. If I had a 7, I would call and if I had a worse hand, I would fold. It is as simple as that. My opponent took the exact worst possible line on the river. That's lucky for me! Never forget, you have to get lucky to win a tournament. This is a form of luck people often fail to consider.

Somehow, four hours into the event, this pot made me the chip leader.

Hand 10

H 6♥-5♥ S 140,000 B 150/300/25 P LoJ

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 300
- C. Raise to 700
- D. Raise to 1,400

I raise to 700. Button new to table unknown 50 year old (60,000) reraises to 2,100.
Both blinds fold.

Pot = 3,475

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold

- B. Call 1,400 more
- C. Reraise to 5,500
- D. Reraise to 7,000

I call.

Both calling and folding are fine options. Due to the relatively deep stacks, I am fairly prone to see a flop with a hand that has a ton of postflop potential. When calling in similar situations, you must be careful to not give your opponent too much action when you flop one pair. You must be cautious when playing out of position because a lot of things can go wrong and very few things can go right. Reraising as a semi-bluff and simply folding are also both reasonable preflop options, depending on how I expect my opponent to react.

K♦-8♠-4♥

Pot = 4,875

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check

- B. Bet 1,800
- C. Bet 2,400
- D. Bet 4,000

We both check.

My plan was to check-raise this flop. Whenever you have a gutshot and a back door flush draw in a situation where your opponent can only continue versus a check-raise with top pair or better, check raising is a powerful play, especially if you expect your opponent to continuation bet the flop with most of his range. If I had a reason to believe that my opponent was overly tight and would only continuation bet with top pair or better, I would plan to check-fold.

K♦-8♠-4♥ 2♠

Pot = 4,875

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 1,900

C. Bet 2,600

D. Bet 5,000

I bet 1,900. Button calls.

When the Button checks behind on the flop, I usually assume he has a hand worse than a K. Whenever I think my opponent has worse than top pair, I am not afraid to fire out two sizable bets, hoping to get my opponent off his entire range by the river.

K♦-8♠-4♥ 2♠ K♠

Pot = 8,675

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 3,600

C. Bet 7,200

D. Bet 9,000

I bet 9,000. Button calls with A♠-Q♥. I lose.

My river bet is mandatory given I thought my opponent had worse than top pair. I thought a hefty 9,000 bet would make him fold most of his range but apparently I was blatantly incorrect. Perhaps a smaller bet would have looked more value-heavy to my opponent. Most likely, he assumed I was a LAG kid who would blindly attack weakness. His adjustment was to check behind on the flop and call down on any safe run out. With A-Q, this probably isn't the best idea because I would probably turn all small pairs into bluffs. Luckily for him, it worked out this time.

Hand 11

H A♠-K♦ S 124,000 B 150/300/25 P 2nd

UTG folds.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 300
- C. Raise to 700
- D. Raise to 900

I raise to 700. BB maybe wild (35,000) calls.

This is a super standard preflop raise, even from early position.

Q♣-T♥-3♠

BB checks.

Pot = 1,775

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 600
- C. Bet 1,000
- D. Bet 1,400

I bet 1,000. BB instantly calls.

With a gutshot and overcards, you should usually make a continuation bet unless you think you will frequently face a check-raise.

My opponent's speedy call probably means he has some sort of marginal made hand or a draw because if he had a vastly stronger or weaker hand, he would have to think for at least a few seconds to consider his options. With a marginal made hand or draw, he knows he isn't folding or raising, leaving only one obvious option. Always be sure you aren't giving away your hand based on your timing.

Q♣-T♥-3♠ J♥

BB leads 2,000.

Pot = 5,775

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 2,000
- B. Raise to 4,000
- C. Raise to 5,500
- D. Raise to 6,700

I raise to 6,700. BB quickly folds.

When my opponent bets into me for 2,000, I assumed he improved to a strong two pair hand or a pair with a straight draw. With a hand that strong, I assumed he would not fold to a fairly large raise. Perhaps I went overboard with my raise sizing, allowing him to get off the hook. Most likely, he had a junky made hand such as A-T or 8-8 and decided to turn it into a bluff. Maybe a raise to 5,000 would have been a bit better.

I don't think there is much merit in calling the turn lead because it is extremely easy for my opponent to have a strong value hand. If I thought his range was mostly marginal and bad hands, calling would be the best line.

Hand 12

H 5♣-2♣ S 100,000 B 200/400/50 P Button

I lost a few hands in a row to get down to 100,000. I probably appear to be tilted to my opponents.

UTG calling station (A♠-Q♥ hand, 60,000) raises to 1,000.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,000
- C. Reraise to 2,300
- D. Reraise to 2,700

I call. BB wild calls.

This call is certainly speculative but I thought that if I made two pair or better, I could easily win a huge pot from the UTG calling station, especially given he knows I am more than happy to attack weakness. If my hand was off suit or lacking straight potential, I would have folded.

T♦-8♣-3♣

BB checks. UTG bets 1,500.

Pot = 5,150

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,500
- C. Raise to 3,500
- D. Raise to 4,800

I call. BB calls.

With a weak flush draw, I don't think I have a good reason to raise because the UTG player could easily have a strong hand. Also, he may opt to go into call-down mode with any sort of marginal hand if I raise, which is not good for me, given I have 5 high. I think a better idea is to call the small flop bet and see what develops on future betting rounds.

T♦-8♣-3♣ 6♣

BB checks. UTG bets 2,000.

Pot = 10,150

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 2,000
- B. Raise to 4,500
- C. Raise to 5,500
- D. Raise to 13,000

I call. BB folds.

When my opponent bets again on a fairly scary turn, he probably has an overpair or better or perhaps a strong flush draw with an overcard. I also have to consider that the BB could have a flush. If I raise the turn, I am not sure I will get too much value on both the turn and river from either player if I am ahead. If I raise and either of my opponents reraise, I will be in a miserable situation and probably have to fold. I think the best plan is to call the turn with the intention of calling if my opponent bets on

the river or betting if he checks to me.

T♦-8♣-3♣ 6♣ A♦

UTG checks.

Pot = 12,150

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 4,000
- C. Bet 8,000
- D. Bet 14,000

I bet 14,000. UTG calls with K♣-J♣. I lose.

When my opponent checks the river, I must assume I have the best hand. Based on the previous hand against this opponent, where I blasted the river with 6 high, I decided to blast this river with what I thought was the nuts. I am a big fan of taking similar lines with both the nuts and nothing, especially if your opponent knows you are capable of

taking a specific line with a specific type of hand.

When he instantly called, I assumed I was good. Somehow he showed me the 2nd nuts, which confused everyone at the table. This is another example of me getting “lucky,” even though it may not appear that way. Notice if I raise on the flop or turn, I probably end up doubling up my opponent. Even though I lost a sizable river bet, the result could have been much worse.

Day 2

Hand 13

H A♦-K♠ S 74,000 B 250/500/50 P 3rd

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 500
- B. Raise to 1,200
- C. Raise to 1,500
- D. Raise to 1,850

I raise to 1,200. BB had 50 year old (11,000) calls.

Q♦-J♦-3♥

BB checks. I picked up a read that made me think he possibly had a strong hand.

Pot = 3,100

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 800
- C. Bet 1,500
- D. Bet 2,200

I check.

This spot is similar compared to earlier where I had a gutshot and overcards with A-K, but this time, if I make any reasonable bet, my opponent will have a nice stack size to check-push. I also picked up a tell that made me think my opponent liked his hand. Seeing how I don't want to put in 10,000 on this flop, I think the best plan is to check behind, likely with the intention of calling a turn bet and evaluating the river.

Q♦-J♦-3♥ 4♣

BB checks.

Pot = 3,100

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 800
- C. Bet 1,500
- D. Bet 2,200

I bet 1,500. BB folds.

When he checks again, I decide that my flop read could be incorrect. I took a fairly standard stab at the pot and he folded. Notice if he decided to check-push the turn, it is not a big deal because I would not be getting the correct pot odds to call, allowing me to easily fold.

Hand 14

H J♣-T♦ S 68,000 B 250/500/50 P LoJ

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 500
- B. Raise to 1,000
- C. Raise to 1,200
- D. Raise to 1,500

I raise to 1,200. BB 50 year old unknown calls.

This is another fairly standard open raise. The exact preflop bet sizing isn't too relevant as long as you choose the same bet sizes with your entire range. If you think the players yet to act are particularly strong, you should consider folding. From early and middle position, you should feel no obligation to raise with a wide range of hands, especially when facing strong opponents.

Q♣-7♠-6♠

BB checks.

Pot = 3100

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 1,100
- C. Bet 1,500
- D. Bet 2,000

I bet 1,500. BB calls.

With no hand and no draw, I could check with the intention of either delayed continuation betting or folding if my opponent bets the turn, but until my opponent proves to me that he is willing to fight back, I like firing out continuation bets almost every time, even with very little equity.

Q♣-7♠-6♠ 4♦

BB leads 2,600.

Pot = 8,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 2,600
- C. Raise to 6,600
- D. Raise to 8,000

I raise to 8,000. BB quickly calls.

When my opponent leads into me on the turn, I assume he either has a marginal, but not great, made hand or a premium hand. Since it is fairly difficult for him to have 8-5 or 5-3, I decided to raise, hoping to get him off most of his marginal holdings.

When he calls, I am unhappy but I am planning to fire again on the river, hoping to make him fold all hands that are worse than an overpair, which should be most of his range.

Q♣-7♠-6♠ 4♦ J♦

BB checks.

Pot = 22,100

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 6,600

C. Bet 11,000

D. Bet 19,000

I check and lose to K♠-Q♥.

The J is an interesting card in that I now beat all middle pairs, which I thought made up a decent portion of my opponent's range. I also thought he could have Q-J, which he will now never fold. I decided that the possibility of blowing my opponent off A-Q, K-Q, Q-T and Q-9 with a big bet was not worth the risk involved.

While the J improved my hand's value, it may have cost me the pot because I was planning to bluff almost all rivers. Always be sure to accurately assess if your hand actually improves versus your opponent's range or if the improvement is irrelevant.

Suppose I had A-2 instead of J-T and I rivered a 2, I would have certainly continued betting because bottom pair does poorly against my opponent's perceived range of top and middle pairs.

Looking back, the plan to try to bluff my opponents off good, but not amazing, made hands is optimistic as no one seems to fold to my hefty levels of aggression. Whenever all of your bluffs are getting called, it is usually wise to tighten up and wait for good hands.

Hand 15

H K♣-Q♥ S 60,000 B 300/600/75 P 2nd

UTG folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 600
- C. Raise to 1,300
- D. Raise to 5,000

I raise to 1,300. LoJ world class kid reraises to 3,500.

Pot = 6,375

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold

- B. Call 2,200 more
- C. Reraise to 8,500
- D. Reraise to 12,300

I reraise to 8,500. LoJ folds.

My initial raise from 2nd position is perhaps a touch loose, but fairly standard, for me at a reasonably soft table. The LoJ just got moved to the table. He is a world class kid who is known to be fairly LAG, but not too insane.

You will find that when a well-known LAG moves to your table, he will often try to test the waters and see what he can get away with. I usually do my best to let him know that I am not the person to mess around with. Sometimes this specific hand works out and sometimes it doesn't, but either way, it often results in the LAG leaving me alone, at least for a little while.

Sure enough, this kid didn't mess around with me for the rest of the day. Not only did I win the pot, but I induced my opponent to pick other people to mess with, allowing me to play my default, somewhat LAG, strategy without facing significant preflop aggression from the most skillful opponent at the table.

Hand 16

H K♦-Q♠ S 63,000 B 300/600/75 P CO

HJ excellent TAG kid (45,000) raises to 1,300.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,300
- C. Reraise to 2,300
- D. Reraise to 3,800

I reraise to 3,800. HJ calls.

At my table, there were two other excellent kids and six unknown players. My goal was to get both of the kids under control such that, if I wanted, I could effectively be the “table captain.” While K-Q is not an amazing hand, it is certainly good enough to play in position versus a HJ raise.

With off suit big cards, you will often find you are best off reraising instead of calling due to their lack of postflop playability. When a hand lacks postflop playability, you

should usually reraise or fold when facing an open raise. You will probably notice that this is the exact opposite of what most amateurs do.

T♦-7♦-6♣

HJ checks.

Pot = 9,175

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 2,400
- C. Bet 4,200
- D. Bet 6,400

I bet 4,200. HJ raises to 10,200.

Pot = 23,575

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,000 more
- C. Reraise to 16,200
- D. Reraise to 22,000

I fold.

This flop is awful for my hand and quite good for my opponent's range. This would normally lead me to check behind with the intention of giving up. However, sticking with the plan of applying pressure, I decided to make a continuation bet of around $\frac{1}{2}$ of the size of the pot.

In reraised pots, you should continuation bet much smaller than you normally do in single raised pots because you will be able to get significant money in the pot by the river regardless of your bet size. Betting small allows you to save money whenever you are bluffing and your opponent plays back at you, such as in this scenario. By betting 4,200 instead of perhaps 6,500, I saved a decent amount of equity.

Even though I lost this hand, it also had the desired effect of keeping the kid to my right in line. He played what I would consider a bit too tight for the rest of the day, giving me numerous opportunities to steal before the flop that I normally would not

have.

Hand 17

H 7♣-7♥ S 54,000 B 300/600/75 P UTG

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 600
- C. Raise to 1,300
- D. Raise to 1,600

I raise to 1,300. 2nd TP lady (14,000), HJ LAG, and Button TP calls. SB TP reraises to 4,500.

Pot = 10,975

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 3,200 more

C. Reraise to 8,800

D. Reraise to 13,000

I call. Everyone else folds. We are heads up.

Whenever a TP reraises small over an early position raiser and numerous callers, you can be certain he has a premium hand. While I don't know his exact range, I imagine it is roughly A-A, K-K, Q-Q, and A-K. It could even be as tight as only A-A and K-K. Due to my position versus the SB and my excellent implied odds, I decided to call and see a flop. To my surprise, everyone else folded. Unless they had hands that are easily dominated, in which case they should not have called my initial raise in the first place, they were getting the correct implied odds to see a flop.

K♣-6♠-2♦

SB checks.

Pot = 14,175

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

- B. Bet 4,600
- C. Bet 7,200
- D. Bet 9,000

I check.

Since I think my opponent has A-A, K-K, Q-Q, or A-K, I don't think there is any reason to bet because the only hand I may be able to make fold is Q-Q. Given my track record with bluffing so far in this event, attempting another sizable bluff seems insane.

K♣-6♠-2♦ 7♠

SB bets 6,000.

Pot = 20,175

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,000
- C. Raise to 13,000

D. Raise to 18,000

I raise to 13,000. SB instantly goes all-in for 36,500 more.

Pot = 76,675

What did I decide to do?

A. Fold

B. Call 36,500 total

I call and beat A♦-A♥.

When he bets the turn, I think he probably has A-A, K-K, or A-K. I do not think he plans to fold any of these hands to any amount of aggression. While he could have K-K, it is well worth the risk to raise and get all-in. If he happened to call my raise to 13,000 instead of going all-in, I would probably make a giant bet on the river because I don't think he is ever folding top pair or better. I think calling the turn would be fairly bad as well because I want to play a huge pot with what is effectively the nuts. Calling keeps the pot small, which is the exact opposite of what I want to happen. Slow playing is usually overrated.

It should be blatantly clear that my opponent played his hand horribly on all streets. Preflop, he should have reraised a bit larger to cut down our implied odds. He also should have developed an aggressive image prior to this hand so I could not put him squarely on a premium holding. On the flop, he should have bet to protect against various hands that will only give him action if they improve to a hand better than A-K, such as my 7-7. On the turn when he bets and I raise, he has a bluff catcher, but he continued playing it like it was the nuts.

Despite the absolute butchery of this hand, it is not uncommon to see amateurs make all of these mistakes on a regular basis. Be sure you never commit these errors. They must be avoided if you want to win at poker.

Hand 18

H Q♣-Q♦ S 100,000 B 400/800/100 P SB

4th LAG 40 year old raises to 2,000.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 2,000
- B. Reraise to 3,200
- C. Reraise to 4,000
- D. Reraise to 6,000

I call. BB TP lady (30,000) quickly reraises to 6,800. 4th folds.

Pot = 11,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold

- B. Call 4,800 more
- C. Reraise to 11,700
- D. Go all-in for 23,200 more

I go all-in. BB folds.

This is a weird hand. While I would almost always reraise with Q-Q before the flop, from the small blind against a deep stacked LAG who has position on me, I don't mind calling and keeping the pot small. Remember, you want to create large pots in position and small pots out of position. The fact that I have a premium hand does not mean that I must reraise before the flop. Most of the rules you learn from "A-B-C" poker books go out the window when you are playing with deep stacks against aggressive opponents.

You must make a point to think about what will likely happen if you reraise and your opponent calls or reraises. If he reraises, I certainly don't want to put 250 big blinds in before the flop. When he doesn't reraise, I imagine he will almost always call due to his position. I will then be out of position with super deep stacks against someone who may or may not be capable of taking aggressive postflop lines. Notice on most boards, if I continuation bet and he either calls or raises, I will be in a nasty spot. All of this is avoidable simply by calling preflop with the intention of check-calling down on most

boards.

When the TP lady reraises and the LAG folds, I have to figure out if Q-Q is good enough to get all-in. This situation is eerily similar to the previous hand where I thought my opponent had exactly A-A, K-K, Q-Q, and A-K in his range. After mulling the situation over, I decided to go all-in because I didn't want to play the hand out of position. Notice if I call and check to her on the flop, she will usually continuation bet with her whole range, putting me in a tricky spot on every board. I decided to take the "easy" route and go all-in, recognizing I am against a fairly strong range with little fold equity. I realize I only have roughly 40% equity against her probable range, but I assumed she may reraise a bit wider than only A-A, K-K, Q-Q, and A-K and she may find a snug fold with A-K.

I don't know what she had, but she thought forever before folding. Through table talk, I eventually gathered that she folded A-K, but it is impossible to know for sure. If she had A-K, I despise her fold. It is quite difficult for me to have exactly A-A or K-K. Whenever you are getting decent pot odds when you know you have around 50% equity, you have to call.

Hand 19

H T♠-T♦ S 115,000 B 400/800/100 P Button

2nd LAG 40 year old German (80,000) raises to 1,600.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 1,600
- B. Reraise to 3,200
- C. Reraise to 3,800
- D. Reraise to 4,300

I call. SB TP lady (35,000) and BB world class kid (50,000) call.

This is another situation where I elect to call preflop with a hand most people would reraise in order to keep the pot manageable with a hand that has a decent amount of showdown value if relatively little money goes in the pot. In general, I am opposed to reraising early position raisers, even if they are LAG, when the stacks are deep unless I already have an aggressive dynamic such that I can be happy getting all-in. Since I don't know how hard my opponent plans to fight if I reraise, I much prefer calling.

K♠-9♦-6♣

Everyone checks to me.

Pot = 7,300

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 3,200
- C. Bet 4,800
- D. Bet 6,600

I bet 3,200. Only SB calls.

My flop bet is both for value and protection. One of the blinds could easily call with a 9 or 6. My bet will also make A-Q, A-J, and Q-J fold most of the time. Of course, if I get check-raised, I plan to fold. Checking behind is also an option if I get the read that one of my opponents is overly happy. Betting also makes the hand much easier to play because if I check behind and one of my opponents bets on the turn, I would be in a dicey spot.

K♠-9♦-6♣ 4♦

SB checks.

Pot = 13,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 3,200
- C. Bet 5,000
- D. Bet 9,000

I check.

I assume the SB has either a K, 9, or 6 almost all of the time. She may also have one of the various straight draws. Against that range, the ideal play is to check behind on the turn with the intention of calling most river bets.

K♠-9♦-6♣ 4♦ 4♥

SB bets 6,500.

Pot = 20,200

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,500
- C. Raise to 13,000
- D. Raise to 22,000

I call and beat Q♥-9♥.

Sticking with the plan, when she bets, I plan to call because I think she may overvalue random middle pairs while also bluffing with missed draws. I imagine she could easily have a K a lot of the time, but due to the pot odds, I only need to win 24% of the time to break even. I probably win around 50% or more. This seems like an obvious call.

Hand 20

H 9♣-9♠ S 122,000 B 400/800/100 P 4th

UTG excellent kid (30,000) limps.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 800
- C. Raise to 2,400
- D. Raise to 3,200

I limp. LoJ same TP lady (25,000) raises to 3,200. UTG calls.

Pot = 9,300

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold

- B. Call 2,400 more
- C. Reraise to 6,000
- D. Reraise to 15,000

I call.

Given the initial limper is an excellent kid, I have no clue what to make of his limp. Whenever you are unsure about an early position limper's range, it is often best to call and see what develops, even with relatively strong hands. When the same TP lady from earlier raises, I am starting to think she isn't so tight. She could also be on tilt from recently losing a few key pots. While folding is an option due to her 31 big blind stack, Calling and seeing a flop is almost certainly the right play.

6♣-6♦-4♠

UTG checks.

Pot = 11,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check

B. Bet 3,200

C. Bet 5,700

D. Bet 9,000

I check. LoJ bets 6,000. UTG folds.

Pot = 17,700

What did I decide to do?

A. Fold

B. Call 6,000

C. Raise to 12,000

D. Go all-in for 15,800 more

I push all-in. LoJ folds.

She says that she currently hates me.

This is a similar spot to when I recently had Q-Q. I don't expect her to ever fold an overpair but at the same time, I am not too sure how I can intelligently continue if I check-call her flop bet. If I call her flop bet and check the turn, I will be fairly confused about what to do whether she checks or bets. While I don't love check-pushing in this situation, it is the only play that allows me to not get bluffed on later streets while also forcing her to fold various overcard hands that have a decent amount of equity.

She thought for a while then folded A-K face up. I am lucky she has a difficult time getting dealt paired hands!

Hand 21

H A♥-Q♥ S 140,000 B 400/800/100 P CO

LoJ unknown 35 year old (35,000) raises to 1,900.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,900
- C. Reraise to 3,900
- D. Reraise to 35,000

I call. BB TP calls.

Both reraising and calling are fine options. Hopefully you realize by now that I am a big fan of calling raises with strong hands with which I would not be happy to get all-in before the flop. Even though my opponent has a relatively short stack, I am not sure if A♥-Q♥ is good enough to get all-in versus an unknown player. I much prefer seeing what develops on the flop.

Q♦-7♠-6♠

BB checks. LoJ bets 3,700.

Pot = 10,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 3,700
- C. Raise to 8,800
- D. Raise to 10,200

I call. BB folds.

I view top pair, top kicker as almost the nuts on this flop. My plan is to try to get the money in by the river against my short stacked opponent unless a spade appears on the turn or river. I do not want to raise on the flop because I may allow my opponent to make a big fold with a hand such as T-T or 8-7. Remember to always take lines that allow your opponent to stay in the pot when he is drawing thin. Notice if I raise, I am never going to make one of my opponents fold a flush draw, so I am not too concerned about pricing out those hands.

Q♦-7♠-6♠ 4♠

LoJ checks.

Pot = 14,400

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 4,500

C. Bet 7,200

D. Bet 10,000

I check.

While I could possibly value bet, the risk of getting check-raised by a premium draw is too high. I decided to check behind with the intention of calling most river bets or value betting if checked to. Even if a fourth spade comes, I will still probably call a river bet because the fourth spade should be an excellent bluff card for my opponent. Of course, if you don't think your opponent would ever bluff on a four flush board, you should fold to a river bet.

Q♦-7♠-6♣ 4♠ 7♣

LoJ bets 6,000.

Pot = 20,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,000
- C. Raise to 14,000
- D. Raise to 22,000

I call. I beat A♣-2♦.

When a fairly safe card arrives on the river, I have a super easy call with my top pair, top kicker. I don't like the line my opponent took in this hand. Notice if I have 9-8 for a busted straight draw, my opponent wins if the river checks through. If I have a flush, Q or 7, I am never folding to any reasonable bet. Perhaps I would fold a 6 to my opponent's river bet, but that is about it. By calling the flop and checking behind on the turn, I induced my opponent to give me 6,000 he normally would not if I took one

of the more “standard” lines.

Hand 22

H 7♥-7♦ S 150,000 B 500/1,000/100 P BB

3rd LAG German 40 year old (70,000) raises to 2,000.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,000 more
- C. Reraise to 4,800
- D. Reraise to 7,000

I call.

Out of position, calling with a medium pair is usually my default play. Reraising is also fine if you expect your opponent to react in a straightforward manner. Given my opponent is a LAG German, I expect him to be capable of making moves. While I will usually end up with a marginal made hand, I would much prefer my opponent to make moves in small pots compared to large pots.

9♣-3♣-2♦

Pot = 5,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 2,000
- C. Bet 3,500
- D. Bet 5,000

I check. 3rd bets 2,600.

Pot = 8,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 2,600
- C. Raise to 6,000

D. Raise to 8,000

I call.

Even though there is an overcard to my pair on the flop, folding to a standard continuation bet is not an option. Calling is my default play because it allows my opponent to continue bluffing on future betting rounds while keeping him in with what is often the worst hand. While raising would make various overcards fold, which would be a fine result, it also builds a large pot when I am crushed. The value of “protecting” my hand against the overcards is not worth the price of building a large pot out of position whenever I have almost no equity.

9♣-3♣-2♦ K♥

Pot = 10,600

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 3,000

C. Bet 5,000

D. Bet 8,700

We both check.

The K is certainly a bad card for my hand and a good card for my opponent's range. His check behind is interesting because if he was bluffing, he should probably continue bluffing on this turn. Always be sure to remember that just because my opponent should continue bluffing does not mean he will. If he actually had a K, he should also strongly consider betting for value because the K should be such a good bluff card for him. Of course, he could also check behind with a K for pot control or with air because he doesn't think I will fold to a bet. At the time, I didn't quite know what to make of his check.

9♣-3♣-2♦ K♥ K♦

Pot = 10,600

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 4,200

C. Bet 7,300

D. Bet 21,000

I bet 4,200. 3rd raises to 9,600.

Pot = 24,400

What did I decide to do?

A. Fold

B. Call 5,400 more

C. Reraise to 9,900

D. Reraise to 21,000

I call and lose to K♣-J♦.

I decided to make a small value bet on the river mainly because the flush draw missed, hoping to get called by worse pairs or A high. Perhaps my bet was optimistic. Check-calling would also be perfectly acceptable. When my opponent made a small raise on

the river, I was sick. Given he is a LAG German, I decided he could take this line as a bluff, hoping to represent that he checked behind with a K on the turn. Of course, he could also just have a K. I didn't think my opponent would take this line with a 9 for value, meaning he was probably polarized to a K or a busted flush draw. The tough part is determining how often he actually takes this line with a busted draw. Seeing how I don't need to win too often, thanks to the excellent pot odds, I decided to call.

If my opponent was fairly straightforward, I would make an easy river fold. By playing a fairly LAG style throughout the day, my opponent got paid off in a spot where tighter opponents would not. This hand demonstrates one of the main advantages you get from playing a LAG style.

Hand 23

H 7♥-7♠ S 150,000 B 500/1,000/100 P UTG

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,000
- C. Raise to 2,200
- D. Raise to 2,800

I raise to 2,200. 2nd new to table kid (50,000) reraises to 5,000.

Pot = 9,600

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 2,800 more

C. Reraise to 9,000

D. Reraise to 15,000

I call.

My preflop raise from UTG is the default for me. I am not a fan of limping in with any hands, although small and medium pairs are prime candidates. I prefer raising because it makes my entire range much more difficult to play against. If I raise with my premium hands and limp with my marginally playable hands, my preflop strategy would quickly become face up to my observant opponents, allowing them to exploit me.

When I get reraised by the player in 2nd position, I am fairly unhappy but I don't see any other reasonable play besides calling due to the large implied odds.

K♥-J♣-7♣

Pot = 12,400

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

- B. Bet 4,600
- C. Bet 5,800
- D. Bet 9,000

We both check.

My default line with premium holdings, especially on boards that could easily connect with my opponent, is to check, allowing him to make a standard continuation bet. Unfortunately, he checked behind. I assumed he had some sort of good, but not amazing, made hand, such as A-J or K-Q, or perhaps a set. Either way, I am not planning to fold my set and will play it as a pure value hand. I am not concerned with running into a larger set. If it happens, it happens.

K♥-J♣-7♣ Q♥

Pot = 12,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 5,200

C. Bet 7,200

D. Bet 9,200

I bet 7,200. 2nd raises to 20,000.

Pot = 39,600

What did I decide to do?

A. Fold

B. Call 12,800

C. Reraise to 32,800

D. Go all-in for 25,000 more

I go all-in. 2nd quickly folds.

I decided to bet the turn for value, hoping to get paid off by various made hands, which should make up most of my opponent's preflop reraising range. When my opponent raised fairly large, I assumed he had a strong hand, such as K-Q or Q-J, that

he would not fold for another 25,000. I was fairly surprised when he quickly folded, which I suppose means he had something like A-J or 9-9 unless he was attempting an insane preflop bluff with a hand such as 9-8 or 5-4.

Given that he was clearly bluffing, perhaps calling the turn was ideal. The main problem with calling the turn is that it should be blatantly clear to my opponent that I am not folding the river unless I have exactly a premium draw. My opponent could also have a premium draw, meaning I should try to get all-in on the turn while I am ahead. If he happened to have a strong draw, he could raise the turn and check behind the river if he missed, saving himself 25,000. Given he had only 25,000 behind, I still think pushing all-in was the only play that made sense.

Day 3

Hand 24

H K♠-7♣ S 140,000 B 800/1,600/200 P Button

Everyone folds to me. SB and BB are probably LAG kids.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,600
- C. Raise to 3,500
- D. Raise to 4,200

I raise to 3,500. SB and BB kids call.

From the button, I am almost always raising K-7.

T♥-8♦-2♣

SB and BB check.

Pot = 12,300

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 4,500
- C. Bet 7,200
- D. Bet 11,000

I check.

Both checking and continuation betting are fine options. In multiway pots on boards containing two connected middle cards, when I have a hand that has almost no equity if I continuation bet and get called, I tend to check behind with the intention of giving up. Perhaps if my opponents both checked to me again on the turn, I would bet with the intention of betting again on the river.

T♥-8♦-2♣ K♥

SB bets 8,500. BB folds.

Pot = 20,800

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 8,500
- C. Raise to 19,000
- D. Raise to 33,000

I call.

When SB bets, I think his range is mostly some sort of made hand or perhaps a random draw. I don't expect him to stone bluff too often. I certainly don't plan to fold top pair at the moment.

T♥-8♦-2♣ K♥ 3♦

SB bets 19,000.

Pot = 48,300

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold

B. Call 19,000

C. Raise to 40,000

D. Raise to 48,000

I call and lose to K♣-T♦.

When he bets fairly large on the river, I think he is polarized to top pair or better and busted draws. Notice there are a ton of busted draws. Given my opponent is a kid, I don't think I can realistically fold in this situation. If he was an older player or someone I knew to be tight, I would strongly consider folding.

It is always important to recognize what your hand looks like to your opponent. My hand looks exactly like a K with a decent kicker or a marginal busted draw. If my opponent is willing to blast the river, he is either trying to get the maximum amount of value from his premium holding or he is trying to push me off my hand. Since most kids don't expect other kids to fold top pair, perhaps I should have found a snug fold in this situation.

Hand 25

H A♣-T♦ S 100,000 B 800/1,600/200 P HJ

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,600
- C. Raise to 3,500
- D. Raise to 45,000

I raise to 3,500. Button good TAG kid reraises to 10,000.

Pot = 17,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,500 more

C. Reraise to 23,500

D. Reraise to 30,000

I reraise to 23,500. Button calls.

This is another example of me trying to keep the kids to my left in line. While I would normally fold A-T to a sizable reraise, it is perfectly acceptable to get a bit out of line and try to set up a good table dynamic for the future. That being said, if I lose this hand, I could easily lose 40% of my stack. Risking 40% of your stack in hopes of calming down kids may be a bit optimistic.

8♦-8♣-6♣

Pot = 51,200

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 20,000

C. Bet 25,000

D. Bet 30,000

I bet 20,000. Button folds.

In four-bet pots, there is no reason to continuation bet large because I will easily be able to get my stack in by the river when I have a premium hand. You will be surprised at how often your opponent folds to small continuation bet in this situation, even getting good odds in position. Don't be afraid to follow through with your bluffs.

Hand 26

H A♠-T♦ S 160,000 B 800/1,600/200 P SB

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 800 more
- C. Raise to 4,000
- D. Raise to 4,700

I limp. BB perhaps LAG kid checks.

While I am normally not a fan of open limping, this is one of the abnormal situations where I think limping is ideal. I was a bit concerned that this LAG kid may reraise if I decided to raise from the small blind, putting me in a tricky situation. I am certainly not trying to get all-in for 100 big blinds with A-T. I also don't want to four-bet with the intention of folding to a five-bet or raise to 3 big blinds and call a reraise. I don't mind limping and seeing a cheap flop or calling a 3 big blind raise, also allowing me to see a cheap flop. Since raising may lead to tricky spots and limping will lead to spots I don't

mind, I much prefer limping.

A♣-Q♠-2♦

Pot = 5,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 1,600
- C. Bet 2,500
- D. Bet 3,600

We both check.

I decide to get a bit tricky and hopefully induce either a bluff on the flop or a light call down on the turn and river. My plan was to check-call the flop if my opponent decided to bet.

A♣-Q♠-2♦ 4♥

Pot = 5,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 1,600
- C. Bet 2,500
- D. Bet 3,600

I bet 2,500. BB calls.

This seems like a reasonable spot to bet, especially when my opponent shows weakness on the flop. Most kids will realize they look weak and will call with any sort of pair, draw, and perhaps K high.

A♣-Q♠-2♦ 4♥ Q♣

Pot = 10,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check

- B. Bet 3,600
- C. Bet 5,200
- D. Bet 7,800

I bet 5,200. BB folds and says “I don’t think you ever bluff there.”

I decided to value bet again on the river, although checking could easily be the right play to induce a bluff from K high hands. I decided to bet because I thought this opponent would check behind most of the time with a 4, 2, or K high. I thought he could also make a tight check with an A. I decided that if I made a reasonable value bet sized such that it looks like I was trying to steal the pot, he may call with all of his marginal made hands. I was prepared to fold if my opponent raised, assuming he probably has a Q. Notice I would also play a Q in this exact manner, making a bluff raise from my opponent unlikely.

His comment of “I don’t think you ever bluff there” is interesting because it is probably true. If the statement is true, perhaps I need to reassess my river betting lines.

Hand 27

H Q♣-Q♥ S 165,000 B 800/1,600/200 P 3rd

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 1,600
- C. Raise to 3,200
- D. Raise to 3,500

I raise to 3,500. SB good LAG kid calls.

T♣-9♠-3♠

SB checks.

Pot = 10,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 2,500
- C. Bet 4,000
- D. Bet 6,000

I bet 4,000. SB raises to 10,000.

Pot = 24,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,000 more
- C. Reraise to 16,000
- D. Reraise to 17,600

I call.

When my opponent check-raised to 2.5 times my continuation bet, I thought he had a fairly standard LAG kid check-raising range of all hands better than top pair and draws. Seeing how I am in reasonable shape against this range, mainly because there are so many draws, I decided to call.

T♣-9♠-3♠ 4♠

SB bets 12,000.

Pot = 42,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 12,000
- C. Raise to 27,000
- D. Raise to 32,000

I call.

The 4♠ is a fairly bad card for me because I now lose to all flushes. His sizing is also concerning because it seems like he is trying to rope me in. Despite this, I decided to call one more time with the intention of folding to most river bets.

T♣-9♠-3♠ 4♠ 7♠

SB checks.

Pot = 54,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 26,000
- C. Bet 47,000
- D. Go all-in for 139,500

I check and lose to T♥-T♦.

I strongly considered bluffing with my overpair on the river when the fourth spade fell when my opponent checked to me. I decided not to bluff because I thought my

opponent would probably look me up with all of his set and two pair hands. I also beat the sporadic top pair handed he decided to play aggressively on the flop.

Assuming you have an aggressive image, it is often not a good idea to bluff on four-flush rivers unless you are confident your opponent will play blatantly straightforward, folding all hands worse than a flush. Given my aggressive image, I thought my opponent would call with most of his flop raising value hands. I decided to give up, accepting that I am usually going to watch the pot be pushed the other direction.

Hand 28

H K♠-K♣ S 133,000 B 800/1,600/200 P UTG

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 1,600
- B. Raise to 3,200
- C. Raise to 3,500
- D. Raise to 9,000

I raise to 3,500. CO TAG and BB unknown TP calls.

9♥-7♥-2♠

BB checks.

Pot = 13,100

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check

- B. Bet 3,500
- C. Bet 6,200
- D. Bet 9,000

I bet 6,200. CO folds. BB calls.

This is my standard continuation bet size into two players on a draw heavy board. In general, you should bet a touch larger when there are a high number of possible drawing hands. If the board was $9\spadesuit-5\heartsuit-2\clubsuit$, I would probably bet around 4,500 with my entire flop continuation betting range.

$9\heartsuit-7\heartsuit-2\spadesuit\ 9\spadesuit$

BB leads 9,500.

Pot = 35,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 9,500

C. Raise to 19,000

D. Raise to 24,000

I call.

I am super unhappy when the big blind leads into me. I assume his turn leading range contains 9s, marginal made hands he did not want to check with, such as A-7 or 8-8, and strong draws. If I thought my opponent would only lead with a 9, folding would be the only play that makes sense.

I have found that I have a difficult time believing that my opponents are so blatantly straightforward that they will only lead with a 9 in this situation. However, it is becoming crystal clear to me that against the most straightforward, passive opponents, it must be the case. I must accept this fact and progress accordingly if I want to maximize my equity when playing against overly soft competition.

9♥-7♥-2♠ 9♠ A♥

BB bets 6,000.

Pot = 50,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,000
- C. Raise to 19,000
- D. Raise to 44,000

I call and lose to 9♦-8♥.

My river call was certainly bad, given I now lose to all flush draws, all 9s, and all As. I assumed the tiny bet was some sort of a blocking bet and I assumed my opponent would not fear a flush if he had trips. I incorrectly assumed my opponent was making a scared blocking bet with a junky made hand but in reality, he was making a scared blocking bet with a strong hand. I incorrectly assessed what my opponent would view as a “weak hand.” This was a bad call.

I am really unhappy with how I played this hand. I made the same mistake as earlier when I had T-7 versus the TP’s T-9 on T-9-6 in that I did not believe my opponents would play blatantly straightforward. I must plug this leak.

You must realize that I rarely play against opponents who are so blatantly straightforward. Almost everyone I play against in high stakes tournaments is at least

somewhat capable of bluffing and mixing up their game. Calling against those opponents is usually an acceptable, if not good, option. This leak is an example of failing to adjust to a rare opponent type I typically only encounter at the WSOP.

Hand 29

H A♣-Q♠ S 100,000 B 1,000/2,000/300 P CO

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 2,000
- C. Raise to 4,500
- D. Raise to 6,000

I raise to 4,500. B LAG and BB splashy straightforward calls.

A♥-T♠-T♦

BB checks.

Pot = 17,200

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 6,500
- C. Bet 9,000
- D. Bet 13,500

I check. Button checks.

I got the vibe that BB had a hand he thought was strong. From playing with him in the past, I knew that he likes to check-raise the flop with any hand he perceives as “good” with the intention of betting the turn and river. If he has an A, I can happily check behind on the flop then call down, avoiding the risk getting blown off my hand by a flop check-raise. Of course, if he has a T, I am going to lose, but at least I don’t allow the pot to get gigantic.

A♥-T♠-T♦ 2♣

BB bets 12,000.

Pot = 29,200

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 12,000
- C. Raise to 26,000
- D. Raise to 32,000

I call. Button folds.

His fairly large bet on the turn is concerning, but I am confident this particular opponent would make this same play with any A.

A♥-T♠-T♦ 2♣ 9♦

BB bets 16,500.

Pot = 57,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 16,500

C. Raise to 35,000

D. Raise to 50,000

I call and lose to T♥-8♣.

I thought my opponent could easily pick this bet size on the river with any A or T. Of course, betting an A on this river would be fairly bad, but I assumed my opponent would make that error. I also thought he may bet a bit larger with a T, expecting me to call with any A, which should make up most of my river calling range. I think my river call is the only play that is justifiable.

It is interesting that on the previous hand, I was incredibly unhappy with my turn and river call, but in this hand, I am perfectly fine with my calls. It is always important to accurately assess each situation independently from each other when determining if a particular play is good or bad. Even though I lost this hand, I am confident I played it at least somewhat well.

Hand 30

H 9♠-9♦ S 77,000 B 1,000/2,000/300 P LoJ

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 2,000
- B. Raise to 4,500
- C. Raise to 5,200
- D. Raise to 5,700

I raise to 4,500. CO good TAG kid (probably not messing around) reraises to 11,000.

Pot = 21,200

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,500 more

C. Reraise to 24,000

D. Go all-in for 66,000 more

I call.

The TAG kid is the same player who I four-bet with A-T earlier. He has not messed around against me since then. In terms of big blinds, my stack is starting to shrink. I would normally consider going all-in because my stack is around seven times my opponent's reraise. However, since I thought he actually had a strong hand, I think the best line is to call preflop with the intention of being somewhat sticky postflop as long as the board doesn't get too scary. Notice if my plan was to fold whenever I failed to make a set, I should fold to the preflop reraise due to the lack of implied odds.

Q♣-8♣-2♥

Pot = 27,700

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 8,000

C. Bet 11,000

D. Bet 16,000

I check. CO bets 12,500.

Pot = 40,200

What did I decide to do?

A. Fold

B. Call 12,500

C. Raise to 30,000

D. Raise to 42,000

I call.

I don't think I can simply fold to a standard-looking continuation bet. I never like being in a situation where my plan is to check-fold the turn if my opponent bets again, but I don't see any other good option. It is worth noting that I would play a set, overpair, or

top pair in exactly the same manner.

Q♣-8♣-2♥ 3♥

Pot = 52,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 12,500
- C. Bet 19,000
- D. Bet 37,000

I check. LoJ goes all-in for 53,500.

Pot = 106,200

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold

B. Call 53,500

I fold.

Sticking with the plan, I found a fold. Too bad I didn't have 8-8 instead. My opponent's all-in is a bit confusing because it is so large, which makes me think he may be bluffing with overcards, but I don't think calling is worth the risk of being eliminated when I am wrong.

Hand 31

H J♣-7♣ S 38,000 B 1,000/2,000/300 P CO

I blinded off for two orbits.

HJ LAG euro kid raises to 4,500.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 4,500
- C. Raise to 9,800
- D. Go all-in for 33,500 more

I go all-in. HJ folds.

This is a common situation that comes up quite often in “regular” poker tournaments where the stacks are shallow. While the average chip stack is usually quite deep in the WSOP Main Event, you may find yourself with very few chips. This hand is a prime example of an excellent pushing spot. Given I have been tight, my opponents will likely assume I have been waiting for a strong hand. My opponent’s loose image means he is

almost certainly raising with a wide range of hands, meaning he will usually fold to my all-in. If you fail you go all-in in these situations, you will quickly blind off, destroying your equity.

Hand 32

H A♠-8♣ S 47,000 B 1,000/2,000/300 P 3rd

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 2,000
- C. Raise to 4,000
- D. Raise to 4,500

I raise to 4,000.

Button TP, SB TP, and BB super TP call.

From early position, you should almost always fold junky A-x hands. However, given my tight image, I decided to attempt to steal the blinds because the Button, SB, and BB were all tight players who rarely put money in the pot without a strong hand. This raise is speculative.

J♣-6♠-5♥

SB and BB check.

Pot = 18,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 4,000
- C. Bet 7,000
- D. Bet 16,000

I bet 7,000. Button folds. SB and BB call.

Continuation betting when you miss into three opponents is usually not advisable. Because my opponents were so tight and straightforward, I decided to take a stab because I thought they would fold unless they had a J or better. Even though it is somewhat likely that one of my opponents has a J, notice I made a small bet compared to the size of the pot, meaning I was risking very little to win a decent amount. When two players call my bet, I assume I am in bad shape and should proceed with extreme

caution.

J♣-6♠-5♥ Q♦

SB and BB check.

Pot = 39,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 13,000
- C. Bet 23,000
- D. Go all-in for 36,000

I check.

I decided to give up on the turn because I thought it was very likely one or both of my opponents had a J and would not fold, given my small stack. It is also fairly likely that one of my opponents has exactly Q-J and will never fold to any amount of aggression.

J♣-6♠-5♥ Q♦ K♣

SB and BB check.

Pot = 39,700

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 13,000
- C. Bet 23,000
- D. Go all-in for 36,000

I check.

SB wins with A♦-J♥. BB shows J♦.

I almost went all-in on the river but I chickened out, thinking one of my opponents could easily have two pair and refuse to fold. I felt like the odds that one of my two opponents had exactly K-J or Q-J was simply too high to justify going all-in. Maybe I should have gone for it because both of my opponents checked both the turn and the river. This is a nasty spot.

This entire debacle could have been avoided by simply folding preflop. Fancy play got the best of me.

Hand 33

H Q♠-J♦ S 45,000 B 1,200/2,400/400 P SB

3rd kid raises to 5,000.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 5,000
- C. Reraise to 10,000
- D. Go all-in for 45,000

I fold.

I decided to make a somewhat tight fold. I thought my opponent would primarily raise from early position with fairly strong hands. If I had a tight image and I thought my opponent would raise a wide range from early position, I would at least consider going all-in.

Notice you don't have to go all-in every single time you get a reasonable pushing opportunity. Sometimes it is fine to fold. Also notice I did not call, hoping to flop well.

When you have around 20 big blinds or less, your only realistic options when someone raises in front of you are to fold or go all-in.

Hand 34

H 6♠-5♠ S 45,000 B 1,200/2,400/400 P Button

3rd 40 year old unknown raises to 5,200.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 5,200
- C. Reraise to 10,200
- D. Go all-in for 45,000

I fold.

This is a similar situation to the previous example except now I have a hand that is less likely to be dominated when I get called. However, my opponent is an unknown 40 year old, who I must, at least initially, assume to be somewhat straightforward. If a

straightforward player raises from 3rd position, pushing for around 18 big blinds with middle suited connectors is a bit too loose.

Hand 35

H A♠-A♦ S 44,000 B 1,200/2,400/400 P UTG

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 2,400
- B. Raise to 4,800
- C. Raise to 5,800
- D. Go all-in for 44,000

I raise to 4,800. BB LAG kid maybe tilty calls.

A♣-9♠-2♣

BB checks.

Pot = 14,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check.

- B. Bet 4,600
- C. Bet 5,400
- D. Bet 7,000

I check.

Both betting and checking are fine options. While I normally do not like to slow play, this is an acceptable situation because I have so little money left to put in the pot by the river. I think it is worth it to let my opponent improve to a one pair hand or perhaps attempt to bluff me on the turn. The only “bad” cards for me on the turn are clubs, but even then, the odds of being against a flush are low.

A♣-9♠-2♣ 7♣

BB bets 8,500.

Pot = 22,900

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 8,500

B. Raise to 17,000

C. Raise to 21,000

D. Go all-in for 30,700 more

I go all-in for 30,700 more. BB folds.

When my opponent bets the turn, I think going all-in is slightly better than calling. Notice if I call, quite often, my opponent will have around 20% equity. By pushing, I can make him fold most of those hands and pick up a sizable pot with no risk of getting outdrawn. Of course, it will be fairly obvious to me on the river if a club comes that I could be beat, so perhaps calling is ideal.

Whenever the draws are obvious, against straightforward players, it is not a bad idea to call because you will know on the river if you have the best hand or not. That being said, I was not sure I could confidently fold if my opponent bet on a club river because he may be capable of bluffing on a four flush board. That is the main reason I went all-in.

Hand 36

H T♠-T♦ S 66,000 B 1,200/2,400/400 P CO

3rd LAG kid raises to 5,200.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 5,200
- C. Reraise to 11,200
- D. Go all-in for 60,800 more

I reraise to 11,200. Button TP goes all-in for 30,000. 3rd goes all-in for 66,000 total.

Pot = 114,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold

B. Call 54,800 more

I fold.

3rd loses with A♠-Q♦. Button wins with K♥-K♦.

My plan was certainly to get all-in against the 3rd LAG kid. When you pick up a strong hand with a short stack against a LAG, you can't be afraid to risk elimination. While a 25 big blind stack is normally not considered to be short in most shallow stacked tournaments, in the main event where the average stack size is around 75 big blinds, you simply cannot wait for the nuts if you want to have a legitimate shot to make a deep run, especially against aggressive opponents.

When the Button TP pushes, I have to assume he has a premium hand. If 3rd folded, I would make a crying call against the Button due to the amazing pot odds. Once 3rd pushes as well, I have a fairly easy fold, allowing me to get off the hook in what could have easily been a bad situation.

I think 3rd made a large error by pushing all-in over the Button's all-in. While 3rd doesn't have to assume that I have a premium hand, he must assume the Button has a premium hand. Combined with the fact that I could actually have a strong hand, A-Q is almost certainly in terrible shape. His error saved me. This is another spot where I got

lucky.

Hand 37

H 5♠-4♣ S 74,000 B 1,200/2,400/400 P BB

CO bad splashy kid raises to 5,300.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 2,900 more
- C. Reraise to 10,000
- D. Reraise to 13,000

I call.

Defending in this situation is certainly marginal, but given the amazing pot odds and the fact that the pot is guaranteed to be heads up, I opted to speculate. Whenever the ante is proportionally larger than normal, as it typically is at the 1,200/2,400-400 level, I am more prone to see a flop with junk from the big blind in a heads up pot. That being said, folding is also a perfectly acceptable play.

T♣-9♣-2♠

Pot = 15,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 4,500
- C. Bet 7,000
- D. Bet 8,800

We both check.

When my opponent checks through the flop, I am usually going to bet on the turn, especially if it brings a scary card. If my opponent calls my turn bet, I will strongly consider bluffing again on the river.

T♣-9♣-2♠ 5♥

Pot = 15,400

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 4,500
- C. Bet 7,000
- D. Bet 8,800

I bet 7,000. BB folds.

Once I turn a bad pair, I think the best play is to bet both for value and protection. If I check the turn and my opponent bets, I will be in a tough bluff catching spot, which isn't where I want to be when my entire stack is on the line. Betting the turn allows me to fold if my opponent raises while also avoiding having to bluff catch if I check and my opponent bets.

Hopefully it is clear that when I call with junk from the big blind in heads up pots when getting amazing pot odds, I am not going to check-fold every time I miss the flop. The plan is to selectively attack flops that should be good for my range and bad for my opponent's. This is an excellent example of that. Notice if I did not turn a pair, I would have bet and likely picked up the pot.

Hand 38

H Q♦-J♠ S 88,000 B 1,500/3,000/500 P Button

2nd LAG (800,000) raises to 6,000.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,000
- C. Reraise to 13,000
- D. Reraise to 17,000

I reraise to 13,000. 2nd calls.

With a stack of around 30 big blinds, I stop calling raises, even in position, with marginal hands. Instead, I either reraise or fold. I want to make it perfectly clear that both reraising and folding are vastly superior to calling in this situation due to my stack size. If you often call early position raises with junky big cards with a 30 big blind stack, you will quickly find yourself in a reverse implied odds situation when both you and your opponent flop top pair. You will usually be the player with kicker problems. A

much better play is to either fold or turn your hand into effectively a semi-bluff by reraising. This time, I elected to reraise.

9♦-7♦-2♥

2nd checks.

Pot = 35,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 13,000
- C. Bet 16,000
- D. Bet 19,000

I bet 13,000. 2nd folds.

As in all reraised pots so far, I make a fairly small stab at the flop. Of course, if my opponent raises on the flop, I am going to fold. If he elects to call and the turn is an overcard to the board, I will probably bet around 17,000. If the turn either pairs the

board or brings an undercard, I will give up usually.

Hand 39

H 7♠-7♥ S 65,000 B 1,500/3,000/500 P SB

UTG LAG South American 50 year old raises to 6,500.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,500
- C. Reraise to 13,000
- D. Go all-in for 58,500 more

I go all-in for 58,500 more. UTG instantly calls with A♠-8♣. I win the flip.

Middle pairs are usually good enough to get in all-in with for around 20 big blinds before the flop if you think the initial raiser has a wide open raising range. Despite my opponent's early position, this all-in seems super standard because my opponent is a LAG. If my opponent was TP instead, I would probably call and try to flop well.

I think my opponent's call is fairly optimistic. My pushing range in this situation is going to be roughly most pairs, all big As and a few strong Broadway hands. A-8 only

has around 40% equity against that range, meaning my opponent should fold because he is not getting the proper pot odds.

Hand 40

H K♠-J♠ S 134,000 B 2,000/4,000/500 P HJ

UTG tight unknown raises to 10,500.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 10,500
- C. Reraise to 17,000
- D. Go all-in for 123,500 more

I fold.

He shows J♦-J♥.

While I would normally call and see a flop in this situation, alarm bells were going off in my head because UTG had been so tight. I thought his range was mostly strong pairs and premium Broadway hands. Even in position, I think my K♠-J♠ is a close fold.

I am not sure why, but my opponent turned his J-J face up after everyone folded. It is

always nice when your opponent confirms your tight fold was correct.

Hand 41

H K♠-K♦ S 130,000 B 2,000/4,000/500 P LoJ

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 4,000
- B. Raise to 8,000
- C. Raise to 10,000
- D. Raise to 12,000

I raise to 8,000. CO maniacal (maybe tilty) South American calls.

My opponent is the same guy who just called my all-in with A-8.

A♠-8♠-4♠

Pot = 26,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 7,000
- C. Bet 8,500
- D. Bet 12,000

We both check.

My default play against most players is to continuation bet, accepting the fact that I may have to get all-in. Since my opponent has proven he is overly splashy and perhaps on tilt, I decided to check to hopefully induce him to lose his mind, allowing me to happily put a lot of money in the pot with my middle pair and nut flush draw. I feared that if I made a standard continuation bet, my opponent would simply fold hands that are drawing dead, such as Q♦-J♦. By checking, I force him to stay in the pot and I give him to opportunity to do something silly.

A♠-8♠-4♠ 7♦

Pot = 26,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 7,000
- C. Bet 8,500
- D. Bet 16,000

I check. CO bets 13,000.

Pot = 39,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 13,000
- C. Raise to 26,000
- D. Raise to 34,000

I call.

I decided to check again on the turn to again induce a bluff. I am not sure if it worked, as he possibly had an A, but at least I got what I wanted. I seriously doubt I was behind at this point.

A♠-8♠-4♠ 7♦ T♠

Pot = 52,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 10,000
- C. Bet 18,000
- D. Bet 32,000

We both check. I win.

Betting is certainly an option but I thought my opponent may assume I have a marginal made hand worse than a flush and bluff off a huge amount of chips. Sadly, he checked behind and conceded the pot.

While my “trap” didn’t work out this time, it is important to give your overly aggressive opponents the opportunity to make a huge ill-timed bluff. Sometimes they will go for it and sometimes they won’t.

Hand 42

H 7♠-7♦ S 160,000 B 2,000/4,000/500 P BB

CO unknown kid (800,000) raises to 11,000.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 7,000 more
- C. Reraise to 23,000
- D. Reraise to 40,000

I call.

Both calling and reraising to around 25,000 are fine options. I decided to call because I was unsure how my unknown opponent would react to a reraise. If I thought he would aggressively four-bet, I would strongly consider reraising with the intention of pushing all-in over a four-bet or calling off if he elected to shove. Since I am unsure if that is a good line, I decided to call instead.

T♥-4♠-4♦

Pot = 28,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 8,000
- C. Bet 12,000
- D. Bet 16,000

I check. CO bets 8,500.

Pot = 37,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 8,500
- C. Raise to 18,000

D. Raise to 23,000

I call.

I don't think folding is an option on this flop. I imagine most opponents will make a standard continuation bet on this board. Notice my opponent's flop bet size is fairly small. I am not sure if this is his default bet size, if he is trying to rope me in, or if he is trying to run a cheap bluff. Playing against someone who could be decent is tough because I have no clue what this bet means, if it means anything at all.

T♥-4♠-4♦ 5♠

Pot = 45,500

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 8,500

C. Bet 12,000

D. Bet 15,000

I check. CO bets 12,000.

Pot = 57,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 12,000
- C. Raise to 26,000
- D. Raise to 39,000

I call.

I am sticking with the flop plan of trying to cheaply get to the showdown with my marginal made hand. I think folding would be too weak.

T♥-4♠-4♦ 5♠ K♦

Pot = 69,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 15,000
- C. Bet 23,000
- D. Bet 32,000

I check. CO bets 19,000.

Pot = 88,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 19,000
- C. Raise to 40,000
- D. Raise to 62,000

I call and lose to T♠-T♣.

I decide to call one more time on the river, assuming the K must be a decent bluff card. In the long run, I think this call is fine versus an unknown kid.

Clearly my opponent had the nuts the entire way. His small flop bet was designed to keep me in the pot with my entire range. While my opponent probably thinks he was clever to get three streets of value, especially with my hand, I would have happily paid off much larger bets, at least on the flop and turn. By betting tiny in this exact situation, he left a lot of money on the table.

Hand 43

H A♣-A♦ S 100,000 B 2,000/4,000/500 P Button

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 4,000
- B. Raise to 8,000
- C. Raise to 9,500
- D. Raise to 12,000

I raise to 8,000. BB South American maniac reraises to 19,000.

Pot = 33,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Call 11,000 more
- B. Reraise to 40,000

C. Reraise to 54,000

D. Go all-in for 81,000 more

I call.

I decided to call preflop because I thought the BB, the same LAG guy from the previous few hands, could easily be bluffing with a wide range. The last thing I wanted to do was four-bet and let him off the hook. Remember, when your stack is somewhat short, you do not have to take aggressive lines that turn your hand face up as “strong” because you will easily be able to get your stack in by the river with a passive, weak-looking line.

9♣-8♠-5♦

BB checks.

Pot = 44,500

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 16,000

C. Bet 20,000

D. Bet 42,000

I bet 16,000. BB calls.

When my LAG opponent checks, I decided to make a small bet, hoping to look weak and induce him to do something silly. Also, if he happened to have a made hand, I thought he could be looking to check-raise all-in, which would be fantastic for me. I did not think he was looking to check-fold.

9♣-8♠-5♦ 5♥

BB checks.

Pot = 76,500

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 21,000

C. Bet 32,000

D. Bet 42,000

I bet 21,000. BB instantly goes all-in for 41,000 more.

Pot = 159,500

What did I decide to do?

A. Fold

B. Call 41,000 more

I call and beat T♠-3♦.

I decided to make another small bet on the turn to hopefully induce him to do something silly. Luckily, this time he did.

Against this specific player, there is absolutely no merit at all in folding to his turn check-raise. If he was weak, tight, and passive, I could see finding a super tight fold, but even then, I would probably call off reluctantly.

Hand 44

H 9♣-9♦ S 210,000 B 2,000/4,000/500 P HJ

3rd super TP (60,000) raises to 10,500.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 10,500
- C. Reraise to 17,000
- D. Reraise to 52,000

I fold.

He proudly showed A♠-A♦.

Again, I found another preflop hero fold. Folding this one pained my soul but my opponent was so incredibly tight and passive that I thought, with his tiny stack, he was only raising with the intention of getting all-in. If he is willing to get all-in, he probably has a big pair or two big cards. Against that range, 9-9 is in bad shape. Given I am not getting the proper implied odds to call and set mine, folding is the only intelligent

option.

Day 4

Hand 45

(743 people remain, 693 get in the money)

H A♠-J♦ S 180,000 B 2,000/4,000/500 P LoJ

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 4,000
- C. Raise to 8,000
- D. Raise to 9,000

I raise to 8,000. SB European kid (200,000) calls.

I assumed the SB would usually reraise or fold, but he elected to call. I didn't know what to make of his call. His range could easily be super premium hands or junky hands he thought were too weak to reraise.

Q♥-7♠-2♥

SB checks.

Pot = 24,500

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 8,000

C. Bet 10,000

D. Bet 13,000

I bet 8,000. SB calls.

This is a standard flop continuation bet. I like the small sizing because I don't particularly want to put my stack at risk as we near the bubble. I would make this same bet with my entire range.

Q♥-7♠-2♥ Q♠

SB checks.

Pot = 40,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 12,000
- C. Bet 22,000
- D. Bet 32,000

I bet 22,000. SB calls.

I decide to pound the pot in hopes that my opponent would fold all hands worse than a 7 or a flush draw. Notice if he calls with a flush draw, my bet functions as a value bet. If he happens to have a made hand worse than a Q, I likely have six fairly clean outs.

Q♥-7♠-2♥ Q♠ J♠

SB checks.

Pot = 84,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 18,000
- C. Bet 32,000
- D. Bet 63,000

I check and beat 9♣-9♦.

I decided to check behind on the river because I thought my opponent would fold most hands worse than a J to any reasonably sized bet. While I probably gave up a bit of value from exactly his 9-9, I think checking behind is the best play because it allows me to frequently scoop the pot, almost ensuring I can get in the money without taking any additional significant risks. Checking also doesn't allow my opponent to check-raise all-in, putting me in a miserable spot.

Hand 46

H A♦-Q♣ S 220,000 B 2,000/4,000/500 P 2nd

UTG possibly LAG (240,000) 40 year old raises to 8,000.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 8,000
- C. Reraise to 16,000
- D. Reraise to 21,000

I reraise to 21,000. UTG calls.

I discussed earlier that I do not like reraising early position raisers, but nearing the bubble, I thought I would get extremely accurate information from my opponent, who probably really wanted to get in the money. If he four-bet, I would happily fold. If he called, I would be in a nice spot to pick up the pot with a continuation bet. If I thought my opponent would frequently four-bet with a wide range, I would call preflop to ensure I would not get bluffed off my reasonably strong hand.

K♦-8♥-6♥

UTG leads 22,000.

Pot = 74,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 22,000
- C. Raise to 44,000
- D. Raise to 55,000

I raise to 55,000. UTG folds and claims a big pair.

Facing my opponent's lead, I decided to "put him to the test" by raising to an amount that looks as if I don't plan on folding if he reraises. I thought most of my opponent's leading range was pairs worse than a K, draws, and perhaps weak Ks, although weak Ks don't make too much sense based on his preflop play. I thought it was somewhat likely my opponent would fold almost this entire leading range, not wanting to risk going broke on the bubble.

If you can find situations where you think your opponent will fold almost his entire range to a little aggression, it is usually smart to pull the trigger.

Hand 47

(705 people remain, 693 get in the money)

H T♥-8♥ S 260,000 B 2,000/4,000/500 P Button

3rd possibly TAG (120,000) raises to 8,000.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 8,000
- C. Raise to 16,000
- D. Raise to 21,000

I call. BB LAG online kid calls.

Calling is speculative but I thought I would be able to push 3rd around on most low and middle card boards because we were almost in the money.

T♠-4♥-2♠

BB and 3rd check.

Pot = 30,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 7,000
- C. Bet 15,000
- D. Bet 24,000

I bet 15,000. 3rd calls.

When checked to, I made a fairly standard value/protection bet. When 3rd check-called, I assumed he had some sort of marginal made hand or strong A high he didn't want to release for only one bet. I assumed I had the best hand at the moment.

T♠-4♥-2♠ 5♦

3rd checks.

Pot = 60,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 18,000
- C. Bet 22,000
- D. Bet 44,000

I check.

I elected to check behind to hopefully allow a river value bet to get paid off on safe rivers while also saving a bet if I happen to get beat. I didn't think there was a good reason to bet for protection because I thought I could realistically fold if my opponent bet into me on a scary river card.

T♠-4♥-2♠ 5♦ 7♣

3rd checks.

Pot = 60,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 18,000
- C. Bet 22,000
- D. Bet 44,000

I bet 22,000. 3rd calls with A♦-A♣. I lose.

When my opponent checks for the third time, I assumed I had the best hand. I placed a small bet to ideally get called by most marginal one pair hands and perhaps A-K and A-Q.

I was surprised when my opponent turned up A-A but it makes sense that someone who desperately wants to get in the money would play aces in this manner. Instead of trying to maximize chips, my opponent decided to maximize his chances of cashing for the minimum by playing in such a manner that the only way he could go broke on the bubble would be if he played two premium hands conservatively and lost both. It worked. He eventually min-cashed then went broke.

Hand 48

(700 people remain, 693 get in the money)

H Q♦-T♦ S 245,000 B 2,500/5,000/500 P CO

HJ LAG (240,000, guy I bluffed with A♦-Q♣) raises to 12,000 into TP blinds.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 12,000
- C. Reraise to 26,000
- D. Reraise to 32,000

I reraise to 26,000. HJ reraises to 62,000.

Pot = 100,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold

- B. Call 36,000 more
- C. Reraise to 98,000
- D. Go all-in for 183,000 more

I fold.

I decided to get a bit frisky and reraise with a fairly strong drawing hand, thinking my opponent would only four-bet with a premium hand because we were on the bubble. If my opponent called my reraise, I would certainly make a standard continuation bet on the flop. Calling would also be an excellent preflop option. When he reraised fairly small, I almost called and saw a flop but I instead elected to take the passive route and avoid a huge confrontation. This felt overly tight in the moment but it was probably fine.

Hand 49

We are now in the money!

It is important to understand and accept that in the WSOP Main Event, the payout jumps are essentially irrelevant once you get in the money. In order to earn one more buy-in, cashing for three buy-in's total, you must outlast 342 of the remaining 693 players. The average chip stack at that point will be 600,000. Especially if you have a short stack, this should lead you to take aggressive lines because you must get chips if you want a realistic chance to make a deep run, allowing you to perhaps cash for 100 buy-in's or more. It is time to gamble!

H K♣-8♣ S 210,000 B 2,500/5,000/500 P BB

I get moved to a new table.

LoJ LAG-looking kid (800,000) raises to 10,000.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 5,000 more
- C. Reraise to 23,000

D. Reraise to 28,000

I call.

I decided to call my opponent's minraise with a hand that flops decently well. Folding would be a bit too tight, given my hand is fairly strong and I am getting amazing pot odds. I could also reraise if I thought my opponent would frequently fold or play straightforward after the flop, but out of position with a 40 big blind stack, calling is often ideal.

J♦-9♠-7♣

Pot = 27,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 10,000
- C. Bet 15,000
- D. Bet 20,000

We both check.

I was probably going to check-raise this board because it should be much better for my range than my opponent's range. I also have numerous backdoor draws, which help. When my opponent checked behind, I assumed he either had nothing or perhaps a marginal made hand he was trying to get closer to showdown. Either way, my plan for the rest of the hand is to bet on the turn and river, hoping to get my opponent off most of his range.

J♦-9♠-7♣ 3♥

Pot = 27,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 10,000
- C. Bet 15,000
- D. Bet 20,000

I bet 15,000. LoJ calls.

I am sticking with the plan to bet the turn and river.

J♦-9♠-7♣ 3♥ T♦

Pot = 57,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 15,000
- C. Bet 25,000
- D. Bet 35,000

I check. LoJ bets 27,000.

Pot = 84,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold

B. Call 27,000

C. Raise to 54,000

D. Go all-in for 158,000 more

I call and beat T♣-9♣.

The river is interesting because it effectively gives me the nuts. Since I thought my opponent would usually fold to a river bet with most of his marginal one pair and unpaired hands, I decided to check to induce a bluff. I don't think there is much merit in check-raising once my opponent bets because I doubt he calls my check-raise with worse than a straight, meaning I am only getting called when we chop or when I am beat. If I thought my opponent was a calling station who would not bet with a wide range when checked to, I would certainly bet the river. Check-raising a calling station is also an option, assuming I think he will bet the river with a wide range when checked to.

Hand 50

H 8♣-8♠ S 265,000 B 2,500/5,000/500 P 3rd

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 5,000
- C. Raise to 10,000
- D. Raise to 12,000

I raise to 10,000. CO, Button, and BB call.

Raising is the only realistic option. I am still not limping.

7♣-7♦-4♦

BB checks.

Pot = 47,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 10,000
- C. Bet 22,000
- D. Bet 35,000

I bet 22,000. CO calls. Button folds. BB calls.

I decide to continuation bet the flop even though I expect to face at least some resistance from various one pair, A high, and overcard hands. When both CO and BB call, I become quite concerned that one of them could have a 7.

7♣-7♦-4♦ 2♥

BB checks.

Pot = 113,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 22,000
- C. Bet 36,000
- D. Bet 50,000

I check. CO bets 45,000. BB calls.

Pot = 203,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 45,000
- C. Raise to 90,000
- D. Go all-in for 188,000 more

I fold.

CO bets again on the river with Q♠-Q♦ and loses to BB's 7♠-5♦.

My plan on the turn was to check-fold versus a CO bet. When CO bet and BB called, I found a fairly easy fold. This is beautiful example of recognizing when a normally strong hand is a bluff catcher. In this situation, one of my two opponents has a 7 or better almost every time. Unless they are both losing their minds, my 8-8 is beat.

I was shocked to see CO bet the river with Q-Q when checked to. I don't mind his turn bet, but when SB calls again, CO must assume SB has a 7 a huge percentage of the time. Checking behind on the river is almost certainly the best play unless he thinks SB is a huge calling station.

Hand 51

H K♠-Q♣ S 230,000 B 2,500-5,000/500 P SB

CO LAG kid raises to 10,000.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 10,000
- C. Reraise to 18,000
- D. Reraise to 24,000

I reraise to 24,000. CO calls.

I could also call from the SB but I decided to take an aggressive line. Before I reraised, I decided that if CO four-bet, I was going all-in. This decision was a function of my image, my opponent's image, our positions, and my stack size. Always be sure to have a plan before you make any decision. If I would be unsure about what to do if my opponent four-bet, I would tend to call preflop instead.

J♣-2♠-2♦

Pot = 57,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check
- B. Bet 17,000
- C. Bet 23,000
- D. Bet 38,000

I bet 23,000. CO calls.

I decided to make a fairly standard continuation bet, expecting to get called by various one pair and A high hands.

J♣-2♠-2♦ 6♠

Pot = 103,500

What did I decide to do?

- A. Check

B. Bet 23,000

C. Bet 45,000

D. Bet 66,000

I bet 45,000. CO calls.

I elected to bet again on the turn, hoping to make my opponent fold all hands worse than a J. I could have also conceded the pot but due to the texture of the board, I thought my opponent's range was too wide to simply give up. I also thought that if I made a sizable bet, my opponent would assume the rest of my stack was going in the pot on most rivers, perhaps in his mind, making him risk his entire stack if he wanted to call this 45,000 turn bet.

J♣-2♠-2♦ 6♠ 5♣

Pot = 193,500

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 44,000

C. Bet 66,000

D. Go all-in for 138,000

We both check. I lose to 7♠-7♦.

I could have pushed all-in on the river, or perhaps made a tricky bet of around 55,000, but I decided my opponent had a J too often to justify the risk. If I thought my opponent would somehow fold a J on the river, I would have certainly gone all-in, but I did not think that was a realistic possibility.

If I knew my opponent had exactly 7-7, I probably would have fired off the last barrel. That being said, considering that he called my sizable turn bet, if I had attempted the river bluff, I would probably be out.

Hand 52

H K♠-Q♦ S 105,000 B 3,000/6,000/1,000 P CO

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,000
- C. Raise to 12,000
- D. Raise to 13,000

I raise to 12,000. Button possibly TAG kid reraises 29,000.

Pot = 59,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 17,000 more

C. Reraise to 42,000

D. Go all-in for 76,000 more

I go all-in for 76,000 more. Button folds.

Even though my opponent was probably TAG, going all-in is the only reasonable play, given my stack size and our positions. If I call Button's reraise, I will be out of position without initiative. I will miss the flop around 2/3 of the time, forcing me to check-fold. If I go all-in, while I will occasionally be crushed, he will fold a decent amount of the time and when he does call, I will have a decent amount of equity. If I was convinced my opponent was super tight and straightforward, I would consider folding. When you only have 17 big blinds, you should not be folding strong hands.

Hand 53

H A♠-3♦ S 135,000 B 3,000/6,000/1,000 P Button

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

A. Fold

- B. Call 6,000
- C. Raise to 12,000
- D. Raise to 43,000

I raise to 12,000. SB TAG kid and BB LAG kid (145,000) call.

Even though A-3 is not a premium hand, it is still worth raising from the button into almost all player types.

7♠-6♠-6♦

SB leads 17,000. BB folds.

Pot = 62,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 17,000
- C. Raise to 37,000

D. Raise to 43,000

I call.

I didn't quite know what to make of SB's lead but I thought it could easily be a draw or a weak attempt to steal the pot with random overcards. I decided to get a bit tricky and float the flop with the intention of betting the turn if checked to or perhaps finding an insane call-down if my opponent's betting line and physical actions looked overly suspicious. Having the backdoor nut flush draw and an overcard helped make this play possible.

7♠-6♠-6♦ Q♠

SB checks.

Pot = 79,000

What did I decide to do?

A. Check

B. Bet 15,000

C. Bet 28,000

D. Bet 44,000

I bet 28,000. SB folds.

Sticking with the plan, when my opponent checked the turn, I decided to bet to get him off most of his air and perhaps weak pairs. If he decided to check-call with his draws, I get a bit of value as my A high beats all unpaired draws. If he check-called with a made hand I am currently behind, I still have plenty of equity with my flush draw and overcard. If he check-pushed, I would reluctantly fold.

Hand 54

H 7♣-7♦ S 150,000 B 3,000/6,000/1,000 P CO

Everyone folds to me.

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 6,000
- C. Raise to 12,000
- D. Raise to 22,000

I raise to 12,000. BB world-class TAG kid goes all-in for 138,000 more.

Pot = 174,000

What did I decide to do?

- A. Fold
- B. Call 138,000

I call and lose to J♣-J♠.

In this spot, most amateurs would assume I am either flipping versus overcards or behind a pair and would fold with little thought. That is exactly the wrong way to go about assessing this situation.

When my opponent pushes all-in, I have to assign him a range and see if I am getting the correct pot odds to call. I have to call 138,000 to win a pot of 174,000, meaning I need to win 44% of the time to break even. Of course, there is a bit of value in surviving, but with my short stack of only 23 big blinds, which is around 40% of the average stack size, moving up the payout structure is not too important. There is a bit of merit in having the opportunity to get a sizable stack that will allow me to maneuver postflop in the future. If I fold, I will be left with a 21 big blind stack that forces me to play a tight, somewhat straightforward strategy.

If my opponent's range is 8-8+, A-J+, and K-Q, I have 40% equity and an easy fold. I strongly doubt a world-class kid is this tight.

If my opponent's range is 6-6+, A-T+, K-J+ and Q-J, I have 45% equity and should find a very close call. This could certainly be my opponent's range.

If my opponent's range is 2-2+, A-8+, K-T+, Q-T+, J-T, and a few suited connectors, I have 51% equity and an easy call. My opponent probably isn't this loose but he may

have decided that I would not want to risk my stack without a premium hand, allowing him to push a slightly wider range than normal.

I estimate I will have roughly 47% equity on average. I don't think my opponent is pushing an overly wide range, but at the same time, I don't think he is super tight. It is worth mentioning that he may play A-A, K-K, Q-Q, and A-K differently, perhaps calling to slow play or reraising a small amount. If he has fewer premium hands in his pushing range, my call becomes much better. I think the only reasonable play is to make a reluctant call.

I am sure you may think my call must be terrible because he had J-J. You must notice that J-J was in every range I assigned. The fact that he had J-J doesn't tell me anything at all about his range, except that he doesn't slow play J-J in this situation. When dealing with a situation you will only play one time, when you call and are shown the top of a pusher's range, you don't learn anything. If he had A-5 instead, I would have learned a ton.

Do not fall into the habit of being result-oriented when you make what may appear to be a "bad" call. In reality, this call is either slightly bad or very good.

I busted in 490th place, cashing for \$22,678.

Conclusion

I hope you enjoyed getting into my mind and seeing how I tackle a high stakes live poker tournament. While I did not play as well as I would have liked, I think I generally did a good job. I also learned a few things both about the game and about myself. I hope you did as well.

Remember, if you have any questions or comments, feel free to post them on the [FloatTheTurn.com forums](https://floattheturn.com/forums).

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Good luck at the tables!

