






Have an Aggressive Poker Image at the Tables


This hand came up in the \$10,000 PokerStars Caribbean Adventure main event. As usual, I had been playing my standard, fairly loose, aggressive game, which consists of raising a lot of hands preflop and making numerous stabs postflop. There also was a young Brazilian guy across the table from me who happened to be very loose and aggressive. We had tangled a little, with me getting the best of him twice (he bet twice and I called down with middle pair both times), when this hand came up.

He raised from the cutoff to 600 out of his 40,000 chip stack and I, also with 40,000 chips, reraised to 1,600 from the small blind with -. My standard raise in this spot would be slightly larger but I thought the small reraise may induce a re-reraise with a weak hand, as my opponent was overly aggressive. Much to my dismay, he just called.

The flop came --. I decided to check, as betting will usually put me in tricky spots if he calls or raises. The problem with checking is you make your hand look weak, which it is. In general, you want your hand to look the opposite of what it actually is. In this situation, though, I thought Q-Q easily could be the best hand, as long as I made it look like 5-5 or something like that, as he could easily try to bluff me off small pairs. He bet 2,500 and I called.

Some people may see an A-A-x board with a hand such as Q-Q and instantly go into check-fold mode. You basically should never be looking to get away from a spot like this for one or even multiple bets against an aggressive opponent because his range is very wide, especially when he just calls my reraise preflop. His range for calling my preflop bet is probably something like J-J through 2-2, A-K through A-2, K-Q through K-10, and numerous connectors and one-gappers, such as 8-6. Against this range, most of which I expect him to bet on the flop, I am in great shape, as I now lose to the hands with an ace. Also, he probably would re-reraise the worse A-x hands, as those usually play fairly poor postflop.

The turn brought the 5H. I checked and he bet 5,000. At this point, I am still not too concerned with him having me beat, as I think his range for betting the turn is probably only slightly smaller than his range for betting the flop. Notice though, if instead of this loose-aggressive player, I was playing against a tight-passive player, I would instantly fold the turn with very little thought at all, as their range for betting twice in this situation is probably something like an ace or better. Though the hand was starting to look a bit grim, I called.

The river was the . I checked and my opponent bet 12,000. At this point, the pot had around 18,000 in it, so this certainly looked and felt like a value bet, which should make

this a rather simple fold under most circumstances. The problem was he had shown a willingness to fire multiple times at me, plus, I thought he was smart enough to size his bluffs and value bets around the same size, meaning bet-sizing probably doesn't mean too much in this situation. After thinking for a while, I decided to call and he turned up A-K.

Though I lost this hand, it goes to show you how important it is to stay aggressive. If my opponent were a tighter or more passive player, he would have won a much smaller pot, as I would have folded my Q-Q in a heartbeat to his continued turn aggression. By keeping the pedal to the metal, he induced me to call down with any sort of made hand, which won him a pile of my chips.

Looking back at this hand makes me think about how I constantly do the same thing to my opponents. Usually, I will fire one or two bets on every hand, but when I bring out the third, much larger bet on the river, I usually have a monster. Because of this, I should have at least considered folding on the river. I still think my opponent would have bluffed the river if he happened to have air, so I don't really regret my call, though it may have been negative-EV in the long run. This is one of those spots in poker where it's tough to figure out your expectation as well as the correct play.

— Jonathan Little is the Season 6 WPT Player of the Year and is a representative for Blue Shark Optics. If you want to learn to play a loose-aggressive style, which will constantly propel you to the top of the leaderboards, check out his poker training website at FloatTheTurn.com. This article originally appeared in Ante Up Magazine.

Hide the Windows to your Poker Soul

There's a constant debate as to whether poker players should be allowed to wear sunglasses. I have no problem with them. Poker is a game of information. If I know something about my opponent they do not know about me, I will profit in the long run. Sunglasses are important when it comes to concealing quite a few key pieces of information.

The main thing sunglasses do is conceal eye tells. Most players have no control over their pupils. In general, when someone sees a flop, turn or river they like, their pupils will get large. If you pay attention, this will be easily visible on blue- and green-eyed players, though it's tougher to see in brown eyes. Also, larger sunglasses can make it difficult for opponents to tell when you're blinking. In general, blinking indicates a weak hand. Clearly, before using these tells, you need to come up with a baseline, otherwise

the tells will be useless. For example, some players constantly blink, making that tell obsolete. If you don't wear sunglasses, you leave your tells out for everyone to see and use.

One play I love to make that involves sunglasses is to get out my phone in the middle of key hands I'm not involved in and pretend like I'm not paying attention to the action. When I am in a large hand, I'm keenly aware of who is paying attention and who isn't. I'm sure other good players think about this as well. If someone isn't paying attention, you should generally assume they have no clue what is going on in a hand, no matter how important the hand is to you. I whip out my phone in an attempt to fool the players in the hand that I'm not paying attention, whereas in reality, my attention is focused on the action, not my phone. This will ideally make my opponents make the same play in the future against me because in their mind, it will be the first time I have seen it.

Another reason I'm a big fan of sunglasses is because they help novice players ease into the game. Imagine if you were new to the game and constantly were stared down whenever they're running a bluff. Most players find this situation uncomfortable and may quit if the pressure becomes too much to handle. The last thing I want, as a professional poker player, is for the weaker players to quit because the game is too stressful. I know I'm not a fan of being stared down by players such as Phil Ivey. If you told me I couldn't wear sunglasses when playing with them, I would most likely just not play in those games.

I almost gave up on sunglasses a few years back because in most poker rooms, the lighting is too dark to make dark sunglasses useful. Sunglasses are no good if you can't see through them. I was turned on to Blue Shark Optics by Kathy Liebert. Blue Shark Optics makes glasses that easily let light through while still being reflective, making it near impossible for your opponents to see you blinking or your pupils. The glasses are lightweight and durable. They also have options of getting bifocals or prescription lenses put in the frames. I honestly don't know why every poker player doesn't own a pair.

I suggest everyone give sunglasses a try. With the technology Blue Shark Optics employs, there's no reason to avoid them. Some egotistical poker players think sunglasses are nerdy or for weak players. I'm fine with them thinking this because I will be raking in their money off all of their eye tells. In poker, you have to always be open-minded and willing to try new things. If you don't, you will find yourself behind the curve and out of money.

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How Jonathan Little Deals with Disappointment

Quite often, when playing the major tournament circuit, you'll find yourself with no chips at a final table despite recently having a decent shot at a title.

When you go from having lots of equity to none, crazy things start happening in your mind. I'm going to let you into my world and let you know what I do to stay sane when things go wrong when there is a lot of money on the line.

I had the pleasure of being in this situation twice at the most recent Foxwoods World Poker Finals. I final-tabled the \$500 preliminary event, which had around 250 entrants. When we were down to six players, I got all-in with J-J vs. Q-J but lost to a turned queen to send me to the rail, cashing for \$5,888. All in all, it wasn't a bad payday, but it was nowhere near what I wanted.

A few days later, I found myself playing eight-handed in the \$10,000 World Poker Tour Main Event. I had around average chips and got all-in with K-K vs. A-J for a 60-big-blind pot, which, if I won, would have put me in great shape to make a deep run at the final table. Instead an ace turned and I was down to eight big blinds, which I quickly lost with a standard button push. I ended up cashing for around \$54,000. In both situations, I went from having a ton of equity to none with the turn of a card.

Despite cashing for around \$60,000 total I was unhappy with the result. While you can't change the outcome of the cards, you can control your reactions.

First off, while you're still at the table, you must remain cool and collected, especially if you still have chips left, as I did in the main event. It will do you no good to berate the players, the dealer, or God. Doing this will only make you look like an idiot, which you probably are if you're doing such things.

When you get all-in with 70 percent equity, you have to realize you aren't going to win 100 percent of the time. When you get it in with 70 percent equity for all your chips, you're going to go broke 30 percent of the time. If this isn't acceptable to you, poker probably shouldn't be your game of choice.

After I bust in a spot where I'm generally annoyed with the result, I make a point to make the rest of my day as great as possible. On both days, I went out to David Burke's Prime, which I think is amazing. I had a glass of wine and a delicious dinner. I also watched a few hours of television on my iPad, which helped take my mind off the game. When I busted from the main event, I had enough time to hit the gym and get a massage at the spa. While I'm pretty quick to get over losing a major event, I would guess most people would have a tough time remembering a bad run after a nice, relaxing evening.

It should be noted I think you should avoid playing poker or gambling in the casino after a major loss. Sure, you will win sometimes, but I would bet good money that on average, after busting from a major tournament when lots of money was on the line, the average player is a huge loser for the next 24 hours.

The best course of action is to simply avoid gambling and find something else to occupy your time. While this may not be the most fun way to spend your day, especially if you like being in action, it will save you a lot of money in the long run. You can just assume this is part of tilt control you should master before considering yourself a great poker player, as poker isn't played only on the felt.

One final concept worth mentioning is you shouldn't beat yourself up too hard when you bust in a bad way. I recently busted from a tournament where I know my bustout hand was bad. I simply did the math wrong at the table and came up with the wrong conclusion, causing me to bubble one of the biggest tournaments of the year. While I was definitely sad about the result, I made a point to learn from my mistake and move on.

Next time a similar situation arises, I will make the optimal decision, which is all that really matters. As long as you learn from your mistakes and don't repeat them, busting, even in a fairly bad way, isn't all that bad.

There will be many more tournaments in your future. Letting one bad day alter your mood for the next month will only make you miserable. Being miserable is the real disaster, as playing poker should be an activity that makes you happy and enriches your life.

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How Much Can a Pro Expect to Win?

Every time I do a webinar, where members of my training site, FloatTheTurn.com, can log in and ask me questions, I find myself answering one specific question every time. It is, *“When should I become a professional poker player?”* To hopefully avoid re-answering the same again in the future, here are my thoughts on the subject.

Let's assume you play \$2-\$5 no-limit hold'em at a local cardroom, which is around the stakes most people play that ask the question. The reason this is the general stake is because it's the highest level played at most local cardrooms and most players that can beat this game feel like they are awesome at poker. Let's assume you make \$50 per hour. When I played \$5-\$10 at Bellagio a few years back, over the course of a summer, playing around 60 hours per week, I made around \$100 per hour. Seeing as \$2-\$5 is half as big as \$5-\$10, we can assume \$50 per hour is a decent, while sustainable win rate. So, if you play 40 hours per week, you will make around \$8,000 per month, which sounds great.

There are a few problems with this nice \$96,000-per-year salary. First, no one wants to play 40 hours per week. I found myself constantly wanting to take days off or cut sessions short because I simply didn't enjoy sitting at the table for numerous hours. Also, most players feel a desire to take time off when they're winning or losing. Because of this, you will probably only be able to get in 30 hours per week. We're now looking at \$72,000 salary.

Next, you have to pay taxes. Assuming you pay your full 20 percent or so, you'll actually bring in \$57,600 or so, which still isn't too shabby. You'll probably need to buy medical insurance, which will cost around \$200 per month, bringing your profit to \$55,200 a year. While this doesn't sound bad, you also need to set aside money for retirement, which will set you back around \$10K per year, though you'll eventually get that back at some point. You'll be left with around \$45K per year to live off and spend while trying to grow your bankroll.

It should be noted that it is suicide to try to become a professional without at least a year's worth of living expenses set aside and a nice bankroll, at least 50 buy-ins for cash games. So, if you spend \$3K per month, you need at least \$61,000 before even considering becoming a pro.

There are numerous factors that should greatly weigh on your decision to become a pro player. If you have a family, your expenses will be much more and probably will increase as time goes forward, especially if you have young children. You'll also find it hard to justify putting in numerous hours at the table while you miss your child growing

up. This will often result in playing during non-peak hours, which will dramatically cut your win rate. If you have a job that pays well, you'll also find a tough time justifying the move. If you make \$40 per hour at your job, which is a nice, secure paycheck, there is really no reason to rely on poker, even if your actual hourly rate will be slightly better.

One thing most players don't consider when going pro is you may not be as good as you think you are. If you don't have a long track record of winning, you shouldn't even consider it. I would estimate that you need at least a 500-hour sample in the given game you plan on playing before going for it. These 500 hours will also have let you grind up an adequate bankroll for the game. Ideally this will let you know what your win rate it is.



You may find you enjoy poker as a hobby and not a job. I suggest taking some vacation time and play poker as you would if you were a professional before quitting your job. This will hopefully let you know what it feels like to play poker every day.

In the end, if someone hates their 9-to-5 job and wants to play poker, they are probably going to do it. Make sure the decision is the correct one, because if you're wrong you may be left with a wasted year and no bankroll. If you have any questions or comments please email me at support@jonathanlittlesecrets.com.

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How to Deal with Cold Four-Bets at the Poker Table

I recently had the pleasure of having to handle multiple cold four-bets in the \$25,000 high-roller event at the PokerStars Caribbean Adventure. My table was fairly aggressive so I was doing a decent amount of reraising when I was in position while playing a tight game out of position. When you're playing a huge buy-in event, you need to make a point to abuse your position as much as possible while making sure you don't get abused when you're out of position.

A hand came up where Vivek Rajkumar raised from the hijack seat to 4,000 out of his 120,000 stack when we were playing 800-1,600-200. I reraised with - to 11,000 out of my 100,000 stack and Erik Seidel, who had more chips than me, four-bet to 28,000 from the big blind. I didn't think much of this hand and quickly folded.

An orbit later, Vivek raised from the button to 4,000 and I made it 12,800 out of my 90,000 stack from the small blind with **A♥-J♥**. Normally, calling in this situation should always be a strong consideration because if you get four-bet, you will be in a tricky spot. That being said, because I was reraising so often, I was fairly confident I could profitably get all-in against Vivek for 90,000 if he decided to four-bet me. To my surprise Anthony Gregg, who was playing fairly tight and aggressive, four-bet to 26,000. He had me covered. When this hand came up, I didn't know much about Anthony besides he made it deep in the PCA a year or two earlier, so I assumed he couldn't be a super nit. He also is young and seems smart. Because of this, I thought he could easily realize Vivek was raising the button a ton so to combat this, I was going to reraise a lot.

So, what should I have done? I was getting something like 2.5-to-1 so calling should always be considered. The problem is that I would be unsure on how to play basically every flop, as he could have A-K and I would certainly go broke on an A-x-x board. Or he could have Q-Q and I would go broke on a J-x-x board. Also, he usually will make a continuation bet postflop, meaning he will win a lot of pots with the worst hand, assuming he has some bluffs in his range. Folding would certainly be fine if I assume he's never making a play, as **A♥-J♥** has something like 32 percent equity against a range of 10-10-plus, A-Q-plus. If I think he has a decent amount of bluffs in his range, which I thought would happen some percent of the time, things could get tricky.

I imagine his calling range if I decided to go all-in would be 10-10-plus, A-Q-plus basically every time. If I thought he was four-betting with something like 7-7-plus, A-9-plus, K-Q, K-J suited-plus, and suited connectors 7-6-suited and better, he will be folding around 66 percent of the hands he is four-betting, as he will call with 5 percent of hands but raising 14 percent. It should be noted that all players will four-bet bluff with different ranges. For simplicity, this range will work. Knowing that, we can come up with the following equation to figure out my equity.

Profit = (percent both players fold)(pot I win) + (percent Anthony calls)(equity in pot – amount put in pot) + (percent Anthony folds and Vivek calls)(equity in pot – amount in pot)

For simplicity, I'm going to assume Vivek will only call around 8 percent of the time. I'm also going to ignore the times they both call, as it will rarely happen. We know my equity in the pot because we generally know his calling range and how well A-J does against it.

So, we have:

$$\begin{aligned} &.61(46,800) + (.33)(60,160-90,000) - .08(68,480 - 90,000) \\ &= 28,548 - 9,847 - 1,721 \\ &= 16,980 \end{aligned}$$

This means we will win 16,980 or so every time we make this play, assuming all the ranges listed above are correct. This is a huge amount of profit, especially since we're only playing 800-1,600-200. If he's playing tight, though, the equation would look something like this, as we'll no longer have much fold equity:

$$\begin{aligned} &.2(46,800) + .71(60,160 - 90,000) - .08(68,480 - 90,000) \\ &= 9,360 - 21,186 - 1,721 \\ &= -13,547 \end{aligned}$$

This means when he's rarely four-bet bluffing, I'm in bad shape. All we have to do now is guess how often he is four-betting with a wide range and how often he is four-betting with a tight range. If we think he'll have a wide range something like 25 percent of the time and a tight range 75 percent of the time, we wind up with:

$$\begin{aligned} &.25(16,980) + .75(-13,547) \\ &= 4,245 - 10,160 \\ &= -5,915 \end{aligned}$$

You should be able to see the number would be positive if we thought he would be bluffing often. There's a lot of guesswork involved in poker. In this spot, we need to guess what his range is going to be then guess how often he will have each range. This is why it's so important to know your opponent. If you think he'll only four-bet with the nuts, you have an easy fold. If you think he'll bluff often, you have an easy push.

All of this being said, I decided to go all-in. He called with A-Q and I was out. Looking at the math in this article, I think I should've folded and waited for a better spot.



Analyzing your play away from the table is something everyone should do. If you'd like an extensive lesson on this topic and many others, pick up my new book, *Secrets of Professional Tournament Poker*.




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How to Play Against Uncle Tilty

When you beat an opponent out of a pot and make them feel dumb, don't be surprised if they go on tilt and compound their error by making another one shortly after the first. These two hands came up in a \$1,500 multitable tournament at Beau Rivage in Biloxi, Miss.


On the third hand of the tournament, I took a pretty standard bet-bet-bet line on 10-8-7-9-9 when I had 6-5 against an older amateur player. He was clearly upset, because he lost to a "bad" hand like 6-5 or because he paid me off on three streets with something that couldn't beat a fairly weak hand. It should be noted you should never get upset at your opponents for playing hands that aren't premium. When you hear someone complaining about someone's starting-hand requirements, you should instantly know they are a weak player.

On the fourth hand of the tournament, I raised - to 150 on the button out of my 12,000 stack at 25-50 and the big blind, the same older amateur player, called. He had around 9,000 chips.

The flop came --. He checked and I made a standard continuation bet of 225. He instantly made it 600. This is now a great situation for me because if I hit my draw, I will almost certainly win a pile of chips, as my opponent was clearly upset. So, I made the call.

The turn was the . He bet 600 again, so I called. When he bet 600 again, he gave me excellent odds to call, which was nice of him. If he bet more, around 1,000 or so, I would've still called simply because I think my implied odds were huge. The river was the . He bet 1,100 almost before the  hit the felt.

It was almost as if he was planning on betting no matter what card came on the river. This is usually a sign of extreme strength or weakness, and seeing how he was probably on tilt, it most likely meant weakness. Also, most players would be quite scared of the six on the river, as any four now makes a straight. With most strong hands, many players will simply check-call the river, as if they bet and get raised, they are usually beat.

The  also made basically every flush draw miss, while giving me a decent bluff-catcher. In this spot, I don't think there is much of a difference between something like 8-6 and 10-10, as both are something like middle pair. Unless my opponent caught the jack on the turn, we are probably way ahead, as our opponent's range simply has to be

weighted toward bluffs, as there are many more combinations of bluffs than nut hands, especially since I have one of the sixes blocked and another just came on board.

So, seeing as I think his range is weak, he is on tilt, and he gave off a pretty clear tell, I think I have a simple call, which is what I did. He turned up **A♦-2♣** in disgust and I picked up another nice pot. It is always interesting to see players turn over stone bluffs in spots like this because I usually assume they must have some sort of draw to make a play. This goes to show you that when a player is on tilt, they sometimes go off randomly.

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Tips for Surviving Major Poker Tournaments

If you gamble on random things, such as blackjack or sports, you'll find when you lose, you're on tilt from losing and when you win, you would rather be doing those things than playing poker, both of which are terrible for your concentration.

Every summer, poker players from all over the world flock to Las Vegas for the World Series of Poker. Luckily for the professional players, most of these visitors have little to no chance to actually come away with a big score simply because they set themselves up to fail from the start. To last the seven weeks at the WSOP you must remain focused and ready to play the entire time.

I've come up with a few tips that will greatly increase your expectation at a tournament series without even mentioning how to play. It should be noted these are tips for players who want to have the highest expectation possible during a long series and only care about poker.

If you're coming to Vegas to party and to play a few tournaments on the side, these tips probably aren't for you. Then again, neither is the life of a poker tournament professional.

Get a lot of sleep

I decided this year that I was going to take around four days off during the seven weeks of the WSOP. To show up at noon every day you simply have to get a lot of

sleep. I make a point to get home as soon as the tournament is over each day or around midnight, whichever comes last.

For example, if I play a \$1,500 tournament and bust in the first hour, I will play satellites or cash games until midnight and then go home. If I play the same \$1,500 tournament and last the entire day, I will go home when play ends, usually around 1 a.m. When I get home, I generally go straight to sleep. I don't sit around and have dinner and watch a movie. I get sleep so I'm ready to go the next day.

Play side games

Before this year, I never really played the side games during the WSOP. I now realize just how much money I was missing out on. I've played mostly \$500 and \$1K single-table satellites in my spare time and have been happy with my results.

I also hear the cash games are excellent. I used to simply go home whenever I lost a tournament, which would often waste an entire day. Now, I'm hopefully earning something like \$200 an hour.

Assuming you play four hours of side games per day, you will find you profit something like \$40K by the end of the series. That's a nice way to supplement the daily tournaments. It can turn a losing series into a break-even one and a break-even series into a decent winner.

Obviously this will take time away from goofing off or enjoying the outdoor world, but seeing how the profitability of poker has been shot in the foot because of the recent problems with online poker, you simply have to make the most of every tournament series.

Eat right

Over the past two years, I've lost around 40 pounds simply through eating right and exercise. Throughout the year, I always wake up and eat a few eggs, some veggies and some lean meat.

During the WSOP, there are a few food delivery services that will bring healthy food to the table. I have my healthy breakfast plus two meals delivered to my table each day. This allows me to not take dinner breaks, which will make me slightly more profitable, and it allows me to stay in decent shape, especially since I have to cut out a little bit of my normal workout time.

That being said, I still try to get in the gym at least twice per week, even during the WSOP. Also, for those looking to quickly lose fat and keep it off, simply stop eating sugar, fatty foods and starches. This means no smoothies, potatoes, rice, yogurt, fatty

meats and bread. If you cut these foods out of your diet, the weight will drop. Realize though, this isn't a diet, it's a way of life.

Avoid your vices

My past vices have been drinking and degenerate gambling. I never really had a problem with either, but I realized they cut into the profitability of poker. If you have a few drinks at night you'll find you won't sleep as well and will wake up with a mild hangover, which will make you play worse during the day.

If you gamble on random things, such as blackjack or sports, you'll find when you lose, you're on tilt from losing and when you win, you would rather be doing those things than playing poker, both of which are terrible for your concentration. My advice is to cut these activities out of your life, and not just for during the tournament series. If you do, you will find yourself a much happier person in the long run.

There are many more things I could write about, but sadly, I am out of space. Please feel free to email all questions and comments to support@floattheturn.com.

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Watch Out for Poker Playmakers

Often while playing poker, especially if I've been overly aggressive or simply not showing down many hands while winning a lot of uncontested pots, I'll look across the table and see one of my opponents glaring at me. When you spot someone giving you "the look," you can be fairly confident they're going to make a play at you sometime in the near future. Knowing they're going to attack you ahead of time can turn normally easy folds into snap calls. You also need to be sure to let your opponent bluff you. If you pile the money in against them, they will be forced to fold but if you make any sort of made hand, you should be confident going into check-call mode.

The following hand came up during a \$2,000 event at the PokerStars Caribbean Adventure. As usual, I was playing my standard aggressive strategy, though I was never too far out of line.

A young European player across the table was giving me “the look,” though he had yet to play a pot with me. I raised with a random hand, made a continuation bet and took down a small pot. On the very next hand, with the blinds 300-600 and a 75 ante, I raised to 1,400 with $J\heartsuit-10\clubsuit$ from middle position. My European friend in the small blind reraised 3,400. I had around 45,000 and he had around 34,000. Seeing as I was getting decent odds and thought my opponent easily could be making a play, I decided to call with the intention of calling down if I hit a decent flop.

The flop came $J\heartsuit-6\clubsuit-2\diamondsuit$. My opponent bet 4,600 and I called. At this point, I could be way ahead or way behind, but I certainly am never folding when I have top pair and I think my opponent’s range is wide open.

Notice raising here doesn’t make much sense because he will fold most of his air and call with all better hands. The turn was the $6\clubsuit$. He bet 7,000 and I called. The same logic I used on the flop applies on the turn. If he has a better hand he’ll always call if I raise. If I raise, I also blow him off all of his bluffs, which I keep in his range by simply calling.

The river was the $8\clubsuit$. He bet 7,600 fairly quickly out of his 18,000 remaining stack. When players throw out a bet really fast on the river, it means they usually planned on betting regardless of the river card. I always wait around 20 seconds to call in spots like this just in case my opponent gives off a tell I can use later. In this case, since his range should be made up of mostly bluffs and a few nut hands, I think I have an easy call. I made the call and beat his $A\clubsuit-9\clubsuit$.

Notice if I raised the flop or turn, he would’ve most likely folded, unless he was an absolute maniac. I think the optimal line in these situations is to simply call down.

If I had something like A-A in the previous hand, I still would have taken the check-call line. I would not raise the river because again, he will usually only call when you’re beat.

By playing hands like this in these situations, you keep all the bluffs in your opponents’ range while making it impossible for him to bluff you. You also make it tough for your opponent to get a lot of value when he actually makes a hand because you never put in a raise. Hopefully next time this situation arises, you will take this line and allow him to bluff off his stack.

— Jonathan Little is the Season 6 WPT Player of the Year and is a representative for Blue Shark Optics. If you want to learn to play a loose-aggressive style, which will constantly propel you to the top of the leaderboards, check out his poker training website at FloatTheTurn.com. This article originally appeared in Ante Up Magazine.

You Can't Play Poker Without Money

Welcome to my first strategy column for *Ante Up*. I constantly am asked why most players fail at poker. The answer is simple: bankroll management.

If you don't have a bankroll, you can't play. Even if you're the most skilled player in the world, if you have one buy-in to your name, you won't be able to make money unless you run very hot.

On the other hand, if you're smart with your money and always keep a decent bankroll, you'll maximize your potential to grow as a poker player and build your bankroll along the way.

I started playing \$.25-\$.50 limit hold'em when I was 18 years old. While I only had 100 big bets, I managed to run hot enough to grow my bankroll and slowly move up. It was common knowledge that you need 300 big bets to play limit poker with little chance of going broke if you're a skilled player, so I followed this guideline until I reached \$15-\$30.

Most people think it takes a long time to build a bankroll from scratch, but in reality, it doesn't take too long as long as you're willing to put in some hours at the table.

Assuming you can play four tables at a time online, which is the minimum I suggest, you will be able to play around 250 hands per hour. Assuming, at limit hold'em, you win two big bets per 100 hands, you'll win five big bets per hour. If you have 300 big bets in your current game then that means you have 150 big bets at the next level. So, it will take you around 30 hours to double your bankroll and move up.

When it comes to no-limit hold'em, which is by far the most popular game, I suggest keeping at least 50 buy-ins, assuming if you go broke, you can never deposit again. This also assumes you're buying in for 100 big blinds. If you buy in for less than that, which I only recommend if you realize you're outmatched (which usually means you shouldn't be playing in the first place), you'll need a larger number of buy-ins because you will be forced to get all-in more often.

In no-limit hold'em, a good player can win around 10 big blinds per 100 hands. So, assuming you can play 250 hands per hour, you can win 25 big blinds per hour. Every four hours you'll win a buy-in meaning it will take you around 100 hours to double your bankroll. If you play full-time, you could potentially double your bankroll in less than three weeks.

For multitable tournaments, keep around 100 buy-ins for your current level. There's more variance in multitable tournaments than most forms of poker as you only win a

significant amount when you cash in the top 1 percent of the field, which is tough to do. For sit-n-go tournaments, keep around 50 buy-ins.

If you plan on playing professionally, you should keep around two times the numbers I suggested. Also, if you play many more tables at a time, you'll need a larger bankroll as well. If you're playing in tough games where your win rate will be less, you should keep a larger bankroll. Basically, as games get worse and you play more hands per hour, the minimum bankroll requirement will increase.

I recently decided to put these bankroll management guidelines to the test by starting with a \$300 bankroll. I wanted to prove you can build a bankroll playing low-stakes no-limit hold'em if you follow these bankroll management guidelines. Seeing as I was starting with \$300, I decided to play \$.05-\$.10 NLHE and always keep 30 buy-ins in my bankroll. I also decided to record every hand I play so you can see not only that it is possible to build a bankroll, but exactly how to do it.

I've been playing around one hour per week for this challenge, and the results so far have been decent, though very swingy. If you'd like to get the first video from my Bankroll Builder Challenge for free and follow my results, check out www.bankrollbuilderseries.com.

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You Can't Wait Around for Pocket Aces

Editor's note: This is one in an ongoing series of poker-book excerpts in Ante Up. The following is from Jonathan Little's Secrets of Professional Tournament Poker, Vol. 1.

There is much discussion over which style of play is better, one where you try to play lots of small pots, called "small ball," or one where you try to play a few large pots, called "long ball." You have to play a decent number of pots if you want to make it in poker tournaments. Waiting for A-A, hoping to double up every time you get it, will not work in the long run. There are three main reasons for this.

First, if you play only premium hands, you will be playing about 7 percent of hands, which is much less than you need to play to maintain your chip stack.

Second, most opponents are observant enough to realize how tight you are playing, so you will rarely get action when you pick up a good hand. On average, you will lose the blinds every orbit but will only win the blinds every 0.7 orbits, meaning that you should expect to lose 0.3 sets of blinds on every orbit. This will clearly cause you to go broke over time.

Finally, even if you are patient and get all the money in as a 2-to-1 favorite, you will usually have blinded off your stack so much that even if you win the hand, you will just be back at the stack you started with. For example, say you have 20 big blinds and decide to blind off until you get a premium hand. If you blind down to 10BBs and get all-in with A-A vs. 4-4, you will double up 80 percent of the time to 20BBs, which is where you started, and 20 percent of the time you will go broke.

Waiting for a big hand is a sure way to go broke in no-limit hold'em tournaments. Weaker players often say that if they didn't constantly suffer bad beats, they would do well in tournaments. They fail to realize that everyone will lose hands as a huge favorite throughout a tournament. You have to build up a large chip stack to survive these beats and still have a chance to win. If you are blinding off and waiting for a big hand, you are setting yourself up to get all-in, which leads to going broke. If you can avoid ever being all-in throughout a tournament, it will be tough to go broke.

That does not mean you should raise to three big blinds out of your 10BB stack and fold to an all-in reraise. It means that you should keep a large stack and maintain the aggression, picking up numerous small pots while still getting large amounts of money in as a favorite. Small ball is so effective because people fold too often. If you can make most opponents fold by raising to 2.2BBs preflop, and then betting 2.5BBs on most flops, by all means do it.

In the high-stakes tournaments, though, most players realize that when they're getting 5-to-1 to see a flop, they should usually take it. Also, when they are getting 3-to-1 on the flop, there are huge odds to call or bluff. Because of this, the extreme version of small ball that is preached by a few of the big tournament winners does not work too well in high-stakes tournaments. I have figured out that if, instead of basically min-raising preflop, you raise to 2.5BBs and make reasonably-sized continuation bets, you will accomplish all the goals of small ball, while still getting some of the respect of a long-ball player.

When you raise more than your fair share of pots, people will eventually start to call. This isn't a problem if you will be in position in most hands and can induce your opponents to fold postflop. Because of this, you need to size your raises preflop a little larger so you can later make flop and turn bets a little larger, which will get you many

more folds. You need to be in position. If you are constantly raising hands out of position, you are destined to lose.

Another huge benefit of this hybrid style that I play is that when you actually get a good hand, instead of winning only a decent amount of chips, you can usually get your opponent's entire stack. If you min-raise preflop and then bet half-pot on the flop, you will find it tough to get your entire stack in if you make a strong hand. If you raise just a tiny bit more preflop, you can get all-in as long as your stack is around 80BBs or less, which it will be once you get to the middle stages of most tournaments, because the pot tends to grow exponentially in no-limit hold'em. People generally bet around the size of the pot or a bit less, so you tend to make small bets if the pot is small and larger bets as the pot grows. You don't have to make larger bets. But it's an option. It's well worth the risk of raising by 0.3BB more before the flop to give yourself more options throughout the hand. Because you are raising to a slightly larger amount preflop, you should tighten your range. You need to win a higher percentage of pots preflop because you're giving yourself slightly worse odds to steal the blinds. This is usually negligible though, as the extra 0.3BB you raise over a normal small-ball strategy will win the blinds a higher percentage of the time.

All winning poker players are aggressive. If you take the passive route on most hands, you will find yourself losing money. If a winning player thinks a play is profitable, he will make the play. In fact, not making aggressive plays that you know you should make is similar to burning money. In order to take home first prize, unless you get a great run of cards, you are going to have to take some risks. The best way to take risks is to be aggressive. This will give you a chance to play some big pots, and pick up numerous small pots along the way.

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