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International Edition • Vol. 12/No. 3 • February 5, 1999



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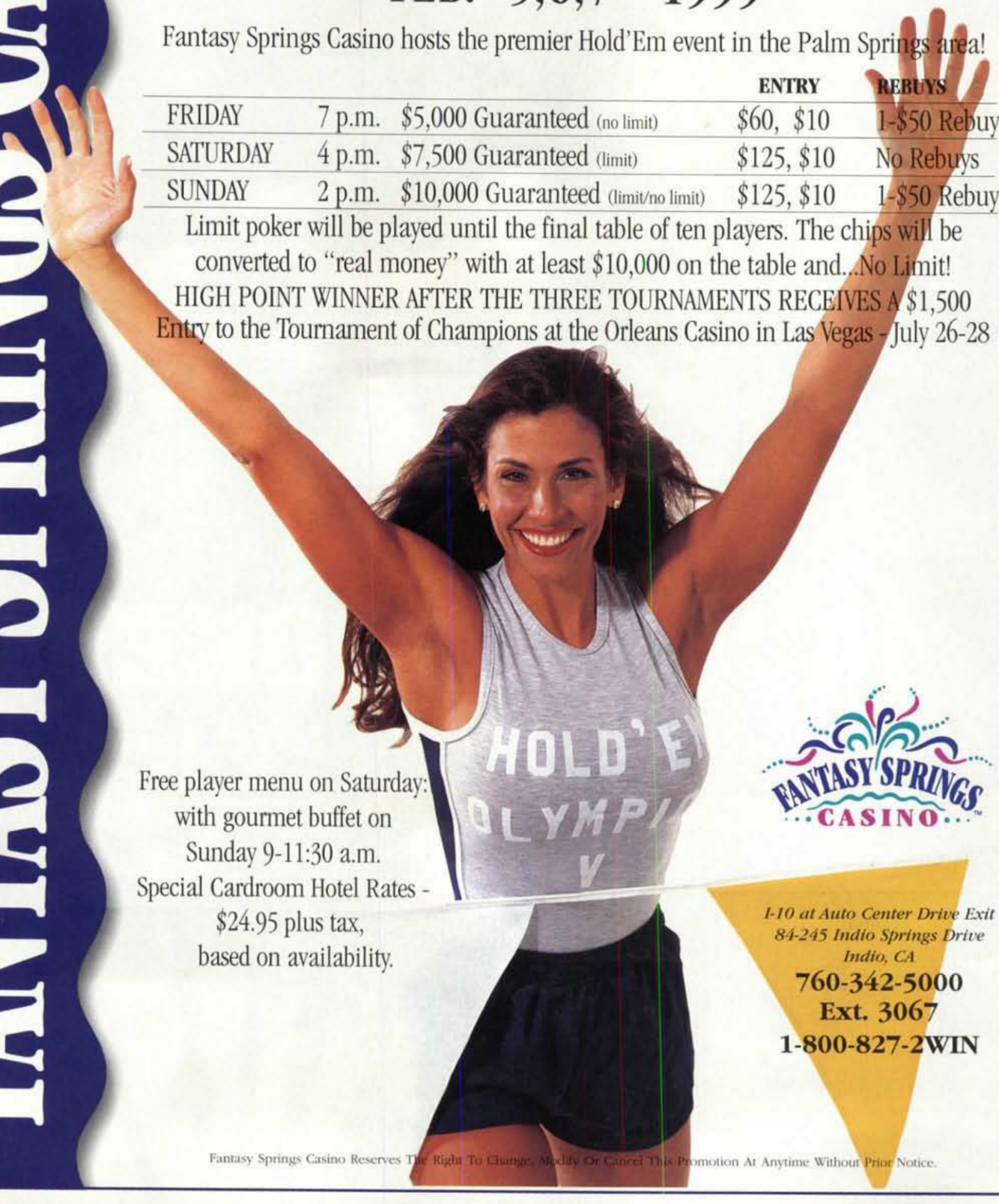

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The Publisher's Pen

Linda Johnson

The second annual *Mills Lane Let's Get It On* poker tournament recently was held at Boomtown in Verdi, Nevada (just outside of Reno). Having never been to Boomtown, I was impressed with the nice facility. The tournament was held in a new conference area that had just been completed days before the event. Renovations were being made throughout the casino and a new hotel tower has increased the number of rooms to more than 300.



Card Player Publisher Linda Johnson (left) and columnist Susie Isaacs (second from right) recently joined Judge Mills Lane (second from left) and Cardroom Manager Joe Bennett (right) for the Mills Lane "Let's Get It On" poker tournament at Boomtown Hotel and Casino in Verdi, Nevada.

Many of you know of Judge Mills Lane from the television show of the same name. Lane turned out to be quite a character with lots of witticisms and jokes — plus he played a great game of poker. Cardroom Manager Joe Bennett was dressed to the nines, a la a riverboat gambler, and seemed to be there night and day to ensure the success of the tournament. During the weekend, I spoke with many of the Boomtown managers who came into the poker room to check things out. There seemed to be a major commitment to poker, and they talked about expanding the tournament next year in order to get more out-of-town participation. For more information on the tournament, see the Reno Report on page 63.

♠ ♥ ♣ ♦

The Rio's second annual *Carnivale of Poker*, which is still under way, is an incredible success. The first tournament, $500 limit hold'em, drew a record 661 participants. Congratulations to Tournament Director Carol Trimble and Tournament Coordinator Steve Morrow and staff for an outstanding event. There is action at all limits and plenty of it! The facility easily houses the 60 poker tables, and although the lists were very long at the beginning of the tournament, it didn't take too long to get into a game if you were flexible about limits and games. As a special treat, sandwiches, fruit, vegetables, and cookies are brought in daily for the players so that they can eat without leaving the table. The *Carnivale* will continue through Jan. 29. Results of the first seven events appear on page 94.

♠ ♥ ♣ ♦

There's good news on Chris McGee's condition: I spoke with Chris last week (Chris was the dealer who was critically injured in a bad fall at Chico's Paradise in Puerto Vallarta during the last cruise). He is expected to return to work very soon and will have no lasting injuries. He asked me to thank all of the passengers and dealers who raised money to help him during his recovery time.

Now, let's play poker.♦

Publisher
Linda Johnson

Chairman and President
Barry Shulman

Volume 12/No. 3
February 5, 1999

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The Magazine For Those Who PLAY TO WIN!

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Pictured on the cover are "The Ladies of Trop Poker Club" at the Tropicana Casino and Resort in Atlantic City as follows (left to right): Patrice Munalo, poker host; Kathy Brown, executive secretary; Kate Dumas, poker manager; Robyn Talvacchio, race/keno manager; and Marie McHugh, director of poker/simulcast facility administration. See the story on page 50.

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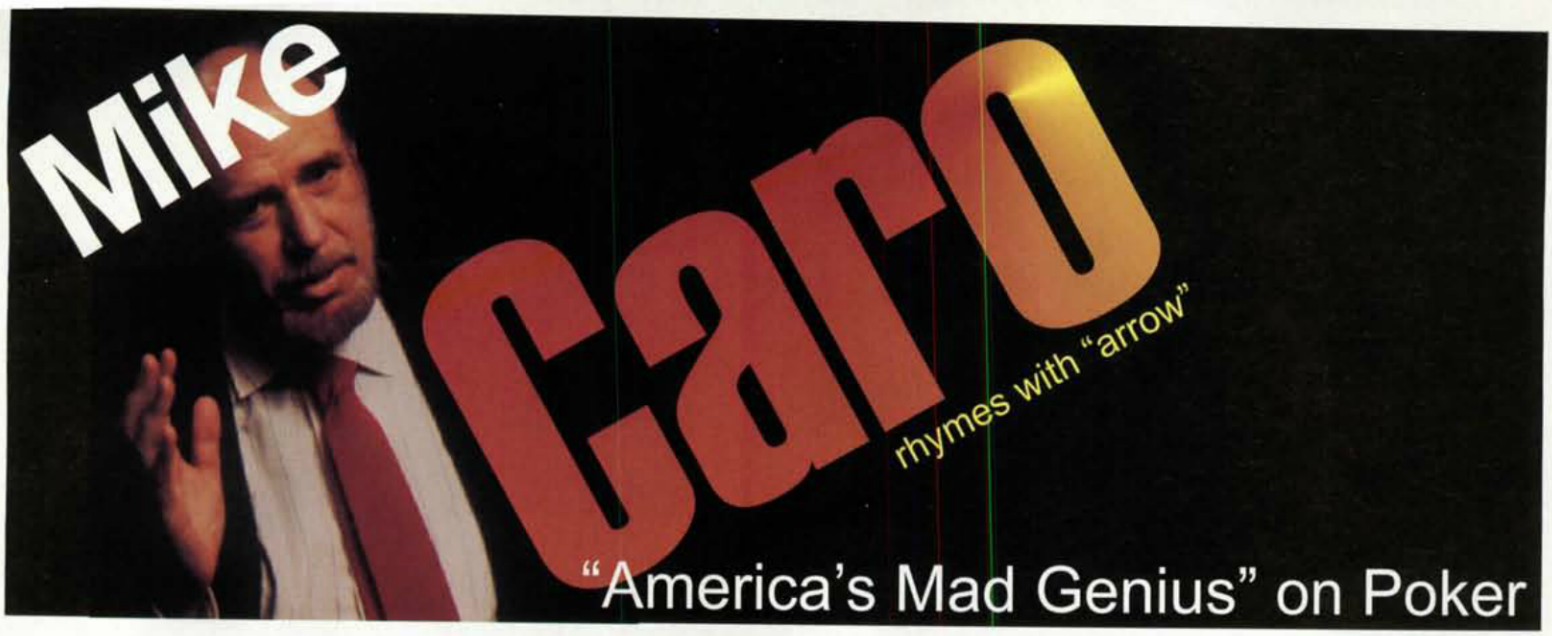

More From the Classroom: Major Tips

Recently, I have been using this column to expand my speaker notes from my Tuesday Sessions at *Mike Caro University of Poker, Gaming, and Life Strategy*. These classroom lectures last 30 to 40 minutes and present a new weapon each week that you can add to your poker arsenal.

Today, we'll look at the third Tuesday Session on Oct. 13, 1998. The title was, "Major Tips for October."

➢➢➢ **Major tips to try.** It's tempting to get into an ego war with a poker bully — someone who wants to establish dominance by "bullying" the game. Sometimes, it's a good idea to fire back with a few raises and sandbags (check-raises), especially if it will make the bully "behave." This is good strategy if the bully is a winner.

But, most often, the bully is not a winner. In that case, your best strategy is to simply call and let the bully "declare" his dominance. His declaration will not match his results.

This is a very important topic. You see, most players do not know how to react when an opponent tries to control the game through superaggressive play. The solution is simple. If he's a strong opponent, it is in your best interest to neutralize this behavior. Raising back will do this. If he's a weak opponent, your maximum profit comes from letting him "rule."

By letting your weak opponents rule, you are allowing them to increase their most common mistakes — betting too much, raising too much, and bluffing too much. You should tend to simply call. If you raise or use other counterstrategy to make their poker lives miserable, you are likely to bring them back in line. They may become wimps. They may stop their poor and unprofitable bets and raises — and your bankroll will suffer.

There are some words of caution here. Letting someone else rule the game runs contrary to my general philosophy of establishing an image that makes you the one force to be reckoned with at the table. For this reason, I will let *only* weak opponents rule with bad bets and raises. I will tend to counterattack *both* strong

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opponents and break-even opponents who try this tactic. Also, position comes into play here. If you're sitting one or two seats to the right of the opponent, you are not in a good position to declare war. You should be much more willing to launch counter-attacks if you're on the left of that opponent, giving you a positional advantage.

♠ ♣ ❤ ◆

The middle position is frequently misplayed on final betting rounds — even by seasoned professionals. If you have a strong hand that is not a cinch, you usually will make more money by just calling than by raising. Why? It's because your hand might not be the best, you might lose a call from a weaker hand behind you, the original bettor might be bluffing (making a raise futile), and more. If the player behind you has a hand that is better than yours, you probably *won't* chase him out with a raise, anyway. Save this middle-position raise for weaker hands — and use it sparingly.

Analysis of many key situations shows that, when you have a fairly strong but vulnerable hand, just calling is usually better in the middle position on the last betting round.

♠ ♣ ❤ ◆

When you check-raise to get extra money, you prefer the player immediately to your left to be the most likely bettor. That way, the sequence can go as follows: you check, bet, call, you raise, call, call — giving you two bets from each opponent. If the most likely bettor is the last of three players, the sequence is apt to be: you check, check, bet, you raise, fold, call. This leaves you only two bets captured. It's better to bet in that case.

♠ ♣ ❤ ◆

Eliminating opponents from proportional-payoff tournaments (in which the prize pool is awarded to the top finishers in accordance with their final standing) is not as valuable as most people suspect. Although late in the tournament it's often a good thing, early on, it has little value.

Even late in a tournament, it's not always worth the risk. And early in the tournament, making an unusually aggressive bet or call on the chance of eliminating an opponent makes no sense. If there are 100 players left, the penalty for letting an opponent survive is about one-one hundredth of the value of his remaining chips. That usually isn't enough to change your strategy.

Most tournament players are way off the mark when it comes to eliminating players. Your obligation is to make the most money for *you*, and that often means letting the opponent live and holding onto your chips. Of course, this concept does not extend to giving breaks to opponents when it actually is in your self-interest to eliminate them. That's because poker is a game in which decisions must be made only in your own interest. Doing otherwise is a violation of the nature of the game.

♠ ♣ ❤ ◆

Fumbled bets that are quickly corrected are often bluffs. This is one of the strongest tells in poker. When an opponent fumbles a bet and it doesn't fall correctly into the pot, a bluffer often will tend to correct the situation. It's a natural instinct. The player realizes that opponents are looking for reasons to call, and that a fumbled bet is likely to make them suspicious and trigger their calling reflex. In a desperate effort to fix this, the bluffer who fumbled will try to straighten the chips or the money — undoing the damage. However, a player who really does hold a strong hand will seldom bother to clean up a fumbled wager. He wants you to call, and there is no damage to undo.

♠ ♣ ❤ ◆

Since the majority of hands that *you* might play are about break-even, another skillful player could decide to *not* play most of them. Effectively, you would be playing twice as many hands and earning the same profit. Different styles for different folks!

This is among the most amazing concepts in poker. People often ask questions about how many hands they should play. Since so many hands that you play have small-profit expectation, some players just fold most of them. It really happens that some winning players enter pots with twice as many hands as other winning players, yet their long-range profit is about the same.

Of course, this doesn't mean that either of these types of winners is maximizing his profit. There's much more to world-class poker than just how many hands you play.

♠ ♣ ❤ ◆

If you are making excessive money catching bluffs or making calls, you most likely aren't calling enough! You're probably costing yourself money on the somewhat less profitable calls you didn't make.

Players who take pride in being *right* when they call usually are losing money in limit poker games. If a pot is 11 times as large as the amount it costs you to call, and you expect to win one in 10 times, you will make a long-range profit with this type of call — but you will lose nine times for every one you win. That can get frustrating. But, the point is, if you wait for just the calls that you know are extremely profitable, you will need to sacrifice all of the other calls that are reasonably profitable — and that sacrifice can cost you a lot of money.◆

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REAL POKER

Roy Cooke

They Shoot Horses, Don't They?

They say that you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. Sometimes, though, it seems that you have to drag the horse, bucking and rearing against its will, to the trough.

Most apprentice players play too loosely. They call in too many situations in which they should fold, giving up edge because the price is not right in the situation. But there is another type of error — folding when you should have called; that is, not taking odds that you are correct in taking, thereby not adding the expected gain of a wager of which you have the best to your expectation field. This error is most common in players who are making an effort to play well, and who mistakenly translate that into playing too tightly in certain situations.

You should remember from previous columns the underlying mathematical principle of all poker decisions: The recurring sum of the volume you bet, multiplied by the edge you bet it at, added into a continuously recurring field will equal your overall expectation. Over the course of time, when luck all breaks even, your expectation will equal your net results. In practical application, what that boils down to is that you want to put your money in the pot when you are getting the right price, when the return on what you are investing in the situation is an overlay.

That having been said, when you don't take a bet with a hand in which there is an overlay involved, you miss adding the amount of the overlay into your expectation field. Worse yet, you pay for every hand in the framework of antes and blinds, and time and button collection charges. You need to recoup these expenses of sitting at the table in the form of positive expectation from the hands that you play. When you don't take the positive odds opportunities that present themselves, you give up a lot to those opponents who do. Anytime you have the right price to draw and fail to do so, your rivals in the hand have gained an edge.

My Florida friend John and I have been playing $10-$20 and $15-$30 lately, working on his game.

Early in a recent session, he called an early-position raiser out of the big blind with the A♥ 10♥, making the field fourhanded. The flop came K-Q-3 with one heart. He checked, the preflop raiser bet, one other opponent called, and it was a single unit to him. He

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thought for a long while. I could see the wheels turning in his mind. Let's see, he was thinking, four cards for a gutshot, an overcard and a backdoor flush draw, no flush draw on the flop, so the gutshot was the nuts, and there were no players to act behind him, so the pot couldn't get raised. There were 10 small bets in the pot and the little blind had folded, adding an extra two-thirds of a bet. The gutshot alone was 10.75-to-1. If he picked up a heart on the turn, he would have a big overlay on the turn if there was no raise. An ace might or might not be good, but there was still some value there. If he hit the hand, he was highly likely to get additional action. All things considered, there was a big overlay, and an easy call. John folded.

"It was a good fold," John stated to me, proud as a puppy with the play. "It was close, but I wasn't getting 10.75-to-1 on the call." I shook my head in frustration. John had calculated only the immediate odds on the gutshot. He had failed to consider extra outs on the hand, and also any additional expectation that he would have had if he had hit the gutshot, picked up a heart draw, or snapped off an ace.

I went through the concepts with John point by point. He acknowledged that he was incorrect in folding, and seemed to learn from the debacle. Several laps later, John called in the little blind with the 10♦ 7♦. The flop came 8-6-3 with one diamond. Five people had seen the flop. John checked and the big blind bet, getting one caller. John pitched his hand in without hesitation. "That one wasn't close," he stated with certainty, "was it?" he added after noticing my dejection.

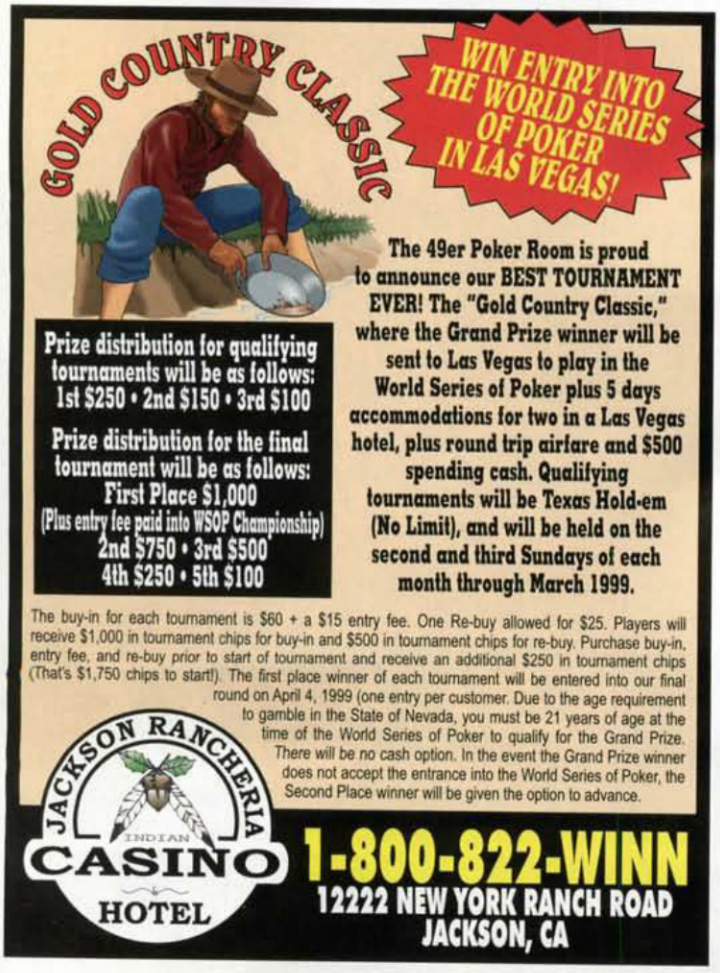
Well, it wasn't as bad a fold as the first one. The call was much closer to neutral. The pot only laid him 7-1 currently on the call. However, all of the same principles still applied. He could gain extra value if he hit his hand. He had a backdoor flush draw, which adds about 4 percent to your wins and is equivalent to approximately one out, assuming that you take both cards. He had an overcard, which in this particular situation may have had more value than the ace in the previous example. (Often, overcards other than an ace play better than an ace does due to the propensity of the ace making other players an even better hand.)

The two plays speak to several important concepts — first and foremost, John's inability to grasp fundamental concepts of poker. This is not news to anybody who reads this column regularly. He tends to get discombobulated mentally and focuses on limited aspects of individual equations. He needs to look at the big picture of the hand — to be able to intuitively analyze how the hand will unfold down the road and adjust his play accordingly, and to include the value of the bets going into the pot in the future into his analysis. He also needs to factor in any extra outs that the hand may have, which often turn a hand from a fold into an easy call. Like John, you too must consider all variables when making your poker decisions, rather than focus narrowly on a single element. Among the variables that you must always factor into your decision-making is the likelihood of the hand that you hope to make to win. If you can make the hand and still lose, you need to adjust your odds accordingly. How much to adjust is a feel predicament that is based on experience and the situation that is at hand.

As it turned out, neither hand that John laid down connected. His decisions saved him two small bets. Therefore, his results for the day were better than they would have been if he had called in those two spots. Unfortunately, this is negative reinforcement, which often influences poker decisions — many times, doing the wrong thing will improve your short-term results. But, by failing to add numbers into the positive expectation field when you have the opportunity, you are giving up edge, and your long-term results invariably will suffer. As I often have said before, you must be performance-oriented, not results-oriented, in your game.

As for John, I just don't know about him. He just can't seem to get it. His powers of focus and analysis seem to be lacking, slowing the growth and learning process. Although he has cut down the average length of his sessions dramatically, he still binges occasionally, having put in a 30-hour session during Christmas week. I'm sure that he played badly, but he won — negative reinforcement again. He has learned a great deal about the game, and can spout the theory, the math, and the analysis with glib ease. But when it comes time to apply them in the field of battle, he just seems to have misplaced them. He just can't ever seem to get it. I'm frustrated and at a loss for what to do. They shoot horses, don't they?◆

Editor's note: Roy Cooke played poker professionally for 16 years. He currently owns and operates a real estate business in Las Vegas. Please see his ad on page 121.







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Tom McEvoy's Tournament Talk



When You Hit the Wall, Wear a Crash Helmet

The wall is where you crash and burn or cruise and turn. Everybody runs into it, but not many are able to break through it. A reader who regularly plays in his local cardroom's hold'em freezeout tournaments notes that he often hits the wall at the sixth or seventh tournament round. He E-mailed me seeking advice on how to get past the barrier.

"I can't even count the number of times I've made it to the last two tables, but I've made the final table only four times," he sadly related. "I usually manage to double my stack during the first four rounds, but then it seems that I either start going down or, at best, maintain until the blinds catch up with me.

"The pattern that I've noticed is that after the first four rounds, most pots become heads-up or three-way affairs in which there is a raise followed by one or two callers before the flop," he observed. "I've seen players raise with any two relatively big cards, such as K-10 or A-X suited, or not. I believe that my biggest problem in the middle and higher rounds is not knowing with which starting hands to raise to narrow the field, and when to call a raise when I'm not holding a premium hand. In a ring game, I don't have this problem because I can always replenish my stack, and, of course, I've studied the books. Also, time is not a factor. I have reread the relevant chapters of your book *Tournament Poker*, but nothing jumped out at me. Help!"

Welcome to the wonderful world of tournament poker! People repeatedly ask me this question in a variety of scenarios: What do you do at the sixth or seventh level when you've doubled up early on and have just been hanging on for several rounds? The blinds and antes have risen so high that you have become short-stacked just by maintaining the stack that you obtained at an earlier level. There is no magic formula for survival once you're at the sixth or seventh level. You simply must win a hand. At this point, you have to look for the best *situation*, not necessarily the best *hand* — and that's all there is to it. Most of the time in the later stages, you want the best hand, such as a big pair or A-K, which should automatically "play itself," but when you don't get it, you must take the best situation you can find. Be on the lookout for the spot where you can be the aggressor, the raiser, and can get other players calling or reacting to you. You will have much better success being the aggressor than the caller.

For example, if you have an A-10 offsuit in middle position and the player on your immediate right raises, you're in a very bad situation. You may have the best hand, and maybe the other player and you are both short-stacked and you recognize that he's taking a stand, but you still have several other players to act behind you. You're in no-man's land. Under these conditions, you're usually better off to pass, or if you're



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very short-stacked, you might try a tricky, aggressive, all-in reraise. In other words, you're in a spot in which you have to totally commit before the flop with a marginal hand or get out of the way and look for a situation in which you can be the aggressor.

Let's say that I have the A♦ 8♦ two positions in front of the button and nobody has yet entered the pot. I have only *enough* chips to play one more hand. I very well may take a shot with this hand. It would depend somewhat on the looseness or tightness of the people yet to act behind me, including the blinds. The more timid or defensive those players are, the more likely I am to take the shot. The more aggressive or liberal they are, the more likely I am to get called, and then I have to decide whether my hand is still worth a play. Many times, it is, and even if I know that I'm going to get called, I still may play it.

One of the points that the reader made is that in the later stages, most of the hands are played heads up, and most are raised before the flop with only one or two callers. Since I'm going to have to win a pot at some point, I may be willing to gamble and take a shot with hands such as K-J offsuit, A-8 suited, or Q-J suited. Even if I'm called, I have a reasonable chance of either having the best hand or being on fairly equal terms with the caller and getting heads up, where I have only one other hand to beat. Many times, my Q-J or A-8 will be the better starting hand, and if only the big blind calls, I also will have position working for me.

When you're short-stacked, you know that somebody is going to play with you, but most players overlook one tiny detail when they push the panic button too soon: Even if they win that hand, they still will have to go through the blinds in a few hands. Sometimes, they're better off waiting all the way to the blind if they don't catch anything except substandard hands just prior to it. When you have several players yet to act behind you, I call it having to "run the gauntlet." If you've put all of your money in with a substandard hand from an early or middle position, it's almost inevitable that someone's going to call you. Instead, you may be better off waiting all the way to the big blind and taking your chances on a random blind hand.

In a later position when several people have passed, it's different — there, you are more likely to get away with raising with a marginal hand and perhaps, at best, get heads up against the big blind. But if you're being dealt blanks, you cannot "manufacture" a hand, so you must capitalize on the best situation you can find.

At the sixth or seventh level, your mental attitude is enormously important. Some players become frustrated and impatient when they hit the wall at that point in the tournament. Far too often, they panic. Feeling desperate, they go in with garbage hands and get busted with them. Personally, I never give up or push the panic button just because I'm short-stacked and know that I'm down to one hand.

If we can run the gauntlet successfully and avoid getting run over by the obstacles at the wall, I hope to see you soon in the winner's circle.♦

Editor's note: Tom McEvoy is the author of Tournament Poker and other poker books. You may contact him c/o Card Player or at his E-mail address: Pokerplus@powernet.net.

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MIKE SEXTON

David Hriscina

David Hriscina is the highly respected poker room manager of The Orleans Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. He worked his way up in the industry from a dealer and brush at the Barbary Coast in 1983 to poker room manager of the Gold Coast in 1986. In 1996, he opened the poker room at The Orleans. (All three properties are owned by Michael Gaughan.)



David Hriscina

The Orleans poker room is very successful with its low-limit live games and is famous for its tournaments. It runs two tournaments a day, seven days a week. It also hosts *The Orleans Open*, arguably the largest (in terms of entrants) and most successful poker tournament (medium buy-ins) in the world. The Orleans also will host poker's *Tournament of Champions* this summer.

For those of you who have not attended a tournament at The Orleans, treat yourself to an experience in professionalism by doing so. Tournament Director Michael Vento and assistants Tom Reese and Bryan Gurden really do a marvelous job. Oh, yes, tournaments at The Orleans start on time.

Hriscina literally became famous in the poker world by starting tournaments on time. It is his standard of punctuality by which all others in the industry are measured. I recently asked Hriscina some questions regarding poker. Here is what he had to say:

Q: What are the keys to running a successful poker room?

A: Uniformity, in games and tournaments. If you have regular games, players will show.

Q: What do you look for when hiring dealers?

A: Attitude, neatness, and reliability in showing up for work on time.

Q: What skills are necessary to become a good floorperson?

A: Primary skills are remaining calm, having the ability to listen, and being able to take control and defuse volatile situations. Get the game moving again — quickly and cordially.

Q: Talk a little about player misbehavior.

A: Dealers, floor personnel, and fellow players should not be subjected to abuse, and at The Orleans, we do not tolerate it. However, when money is on the line, there always will be a certain amount of abuse and cussing that takes place, so judgment does come into play. If a player's behavior drives anyone away, we don't want them or need them.

Q: Are jackpots good for poker?

A: I don't think that jackpots are good for poker. Players chase jackpots and will go where the jackpots are. They fluctuate business tremendously. You have no control over jackpots, and they are hard to plan for and staff for. Like others, we need them to compete. When our jackpots are high and jackpot players come here to play, we hope to be able to turn them into regular customers.

Q: How can poker expand its player base?

A: With the increase in the number of casinos and the security they provide for players, organized poker will continue to grow. Reputation and word of mouth is important to the success of any cardroom. Tournaments also may play a role in the expansion of poker. Down the road, media exposure (television) could become a contributor to expanding our player base. And speaking of media exposure, *Card Player* magazine certainly has contributed significantly to the growth of poker over the past 10 years, and undoubtedly will continue to play a key role in the expansion of poker's player base as more and more people become familiar with the information that the magazine has to offer. We all need to work on getting younger players into poker.

Q: You seem to get more support from management than most poker rooms do. Why?

A: We are fortunate at The Orleans that ownership sees the entire scenario for a casino. Michael Gaughan understands the power of the "draw." His philosophy is, "If poker is a draw to the casino, it's worth having." He always has been very supportive of poker.

Well, David, I certainly appreciate what you have done for poker and your vision for the future of poker. Thanks for making the poker world a better place for all of us.

Take care.◆

Mike Sexton can be reached by E-mail: SextonTOC@aol.com.; phone: (702) 434-5247; or fax: (702) 433-4166.

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Lou Krieger ON STRATEGY

The Mambo Kings Play Poker — Part I

Mambo lessons were in full swing when I walked into the Taj Mahal's poker room a few days before Thanksgiving. No, Tito Puente hadn't set up shop in the corner, and Director of Poker Operations Tom Gitto wasn't spinning his old Perez Prado or La Playa Sextet records, either. The Taj was spreading Mambo Stud Poker, created by Mambo Gaming Company LLC of Peekskill, New York, and the first entirely new game since casino poker was introduced in Atlantic City.

Bob Pinchbeck and Joe Bocchicio, who created the game, believe that Mambo will attract players for several reasons. "It's a pretty elementary high-low game, and since it has elements of stud, hold'em, and Omaha, we think it will appeal to a cross section of players," stated Pinchbeck. "The average pot in a $1-$5 stud game is $29. In Mambo, it's $70. That," he added, "means that the casino's rake, as a percentage of the pot, is much smaller, and because Mambo is much faster than stud, more hands can be dealt each hour."

Mambo Stud Poker combines elements of seven-card stud, eight-or-better high-low split (7-stud/8), and hold'em with the speed of fast-action table games. Make no mistake about it, however, Mambo Stud Poker is not a hybrid table game designed to *look* like a poker game; it is a poker game — and a good one at that.

Because the game is brand spanking new, there are no world-class Mambo Stud mavens yet, only players trying to quickly convert skills learned in other games to this one. Mambo Stud Poker stands a good chance of gaining in popularity, and my thoughts on what it will take for you to become a consistent winner at Mambo follow.

I don't have a lot of experience playing Mambo yet — indeed, no one does — so this primer is likely to be refined before I'd consider it to be anything like the definitive word on this game. Instead of taking this as gospel, think of it as a basic strategic construct — aimed at giving you a flying start when you sit down to play Mambo Stud Poker. To become a real expert, however, you'll have to keep honing and refining these concepts based on your experience playing the game.

Mambo Stud Poker is played with a standard deck of cards, and as many as 11 players can compete for a winning hand. Since Mambo is a *split game*, a player can compete for a high hand, a low hand, or a high-low hand that can scoop the pot. Once all of the cards have been dealt, players who did not fold will have three cards in their hand, and a single community card will be exposed in the center of the table.

Players are allowed to use any combination of three of their four cards to form high or low hands. For example, if the 4♥ is the community card in the center of the table, and you hold A♠A♦2♥ in your hand, you would play A♠A♦4♥ for your high hand and A♦2♥4♥ for low. All four of your cards would have been used to form two different hands — one of which is a high hand, the other of which is a low one.

Players always can compete unconditionally for a high hand, and if no player has at least a pair, the highest card wins the high end. But to compete for low, a player must have three cards with a rank of six or lower. This is referred to as needing a *six qualifier* for low.

Mambo Stud Poker has three rounds of betting, and each player is required to post an ante. On the first round, one card is dealt facedown and another faceup to each player. The player with the lowest ranked exposed card is forced to open the betting. Each player can then fold, call, or raise in turn. When that round of betting is complete, another card is dealt facedown to each player. Now, the player with the highest ranking exposed card is first to act, and he may check or bet his hand. Like any other form of poker, players who act subsequently also may check or bet. Once a bet is made, players may fold, call, or raise.

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Once the second betting round is completed, the dealer turns a community card faceup in the center of the table.

Now, the player with the highest ranking poker hand is first to act, and can either check or bet. After the last player to act has responded to the action, the third and final round of betting has been completed.

A showdown is used to determine the winner — or winners — of the pot. Each remaining player forms three-card poker hands by using any combination of their three private cards along with the community card to form a high hand, a low hand, or both.

Because Mambo Stud Poker is based on three-card hands rather than on traditional five-card poker hands, hand rankings are slightly different than they are in traditional poker games. The best possible high hand is called a High Mambo. Comprised of A-K-Q of the same suit, it is, in essence, a miniature royal flush, and is not easily come by.

Next in ranking is a straight flush. Three of a kind is the next best hand, followed by a straight, then a flush. In Mambo Stud Poker, a straight outranks a flush. Next in order comes one pair, followed by a high card. Since you can use only three of your four cards to make a hand, you can't have two pair in Mambo Stud Poker.

The best low hand, is, of course, an 3-2-A. Examples of other low hands are 4-2-A, 4-3-2, and 6-4-A. The worst low hand is 6-5-4, and would win the low end only if there was no other low hand present. But it's also a straight, and might win for high. If you hold 3-2-A, it's called a Low Mambo, and is the best possible low hand and can only be tied, not beaten. Moreover, it too is a straight, and in the absence of any other straight or higher hand, it will scoop the pot.

Do you want to get a feel for this game? Deal out a few hands. See if you can hone in on its basic strategic concepts. Next issue, I'll outline my strategy for playing Mambo Stud Poker.◆

E-mail your questions or comments to loukrieger@aol.com, or via snail mail c/o Card Player.

You can order a personally autographed copy of my latest book, More Hold'em Excellence: A Winner for Life, by calling B & F Publishing (702) 798-6361. Hold'em Excellence: From Beginner to Winner, currently in its fourth printing, is also available. Both books also can be ordered directly from Card Player or the usual gaming bookstores.

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Barry's BULLETIN



Barry Shulman

So What — My friend Mike could be the best poker player to ever play in Seattle. He taught me three of the best lessons I have ever learned in poker. They are "So what," "So what," and "Who cares?" Interestingly, they are similar and seemingly opposite lessons, even though they certainly sound similar. I shall share all three with you here.

So what lesson No. 1: Fold — It is early in the hand, your holding is marginal, the pot is small, and the opponent bets. You think that he might be bluffing or at least semibluffing. *So what* if he is; fold. Get on to the next hand. Don't worry about it. It is no big deal. Think about it. If you are wrong, you have a lot to lose. If you are right, he might get lucky and beat you anyway. If you are right and win the pot, what have you gained? A small pot. So what. Do not let your ego get in the way.

So what lesson No. 2: Call — It is late in the hand, your holding is marginal, the pot is large, and the opponent bets. You think that he probably has the best hand. *So what* if he does; call. You probably will lose an extra bet. Get on to the next hand. Don't worry about it. It is no big deal. Think about it. If you are wrong, you have a lot to gain. That's cool. You don't have to be wrong very often in this situation to come out way ahead. If you are wrong, you might get lucky and win the pot. What have you gained? A large pot. Do not let your ego get in the way and worry about making a poor call.

Who cares? — Have you called someone on the turn or the end recently just to see not if he beat you but how he beat you? Does it help your ego to prove how unlucky you are and how bad your opponent plays? *Who cares?* Enough said.◆



Letters to the Editor

People often ask me the following question: "If I write to *Card Player*, will my letter be published?" The answer is that we are very interested in any comments that you may have about any of our articles or any other poker-related subjects. Therefore, space permitting we publish those letters that are considered to be of most interest to our readers.

Letters should be mailed or faxed to:

Card Player
Letters to the Editor
3140 S. Polaris Ave., Suite 8
Las Vegas, NV 89102

Or, if you prefer, you can E-mail them to: letters@cardplayer.com.

Letters will be edited for purposes of clarity or space. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We will withhold this information by request.

Barry Shulman can be reached through Card Player or E-mail at barry@cardplayer.com.

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Cappelletti On Omaha



Heads-Up Omaha High-Low

In the last issue, we discussed 10 types of Omaha high-low starting hands. What happens when these various hands end up heads up against each other? Some of the following results might surprise you and affect your shorthanded strategy.

Perhaps the most significant general fact about Omaha high-low, as I pointed out years ago (*Card Player,* Nov. 4 and 18, 1994), is that it is very rare for one hand to be more than a 2-to-1 favorite against another hand. More than likely, when heads up, a hand that raises before the flop is less than a 60 percent to 40 percent favorite against most random defending hands (thus, the big blind should defend quite liberally, especially in all-in situations).

It is important to understand that some hands that play poorly against many opponents play much better shorthanded or heads up. Thus, in a tight Omaha high-low game when you're in a late position, you frequently raise before the flop to narrow the field or steal the blinds with an ace and medium low cards. The following data suggests that it is probably correct to do the same with a middle pocket pair and proximate cards such as 8-8-6-4 and 6-6-5-4 — especially when double-suited (low flush cards also are more valuable shorthanded).

The following table gives the percentages of the hand on the left winning against the other six (underlined cards are suited):

Hand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. A-A-5-10	—	59.6	65.5	62.3	60.1	70.6	59.4
2. A-2-5-7	40.4	—	46.6	55.1	61.8	56.7	58.9
3. 8-8-6-4	34.5	53.4	—	51.6	57.4	52.7	58.8
4. J-9-3-2	37.7	44.9	48.4	—	57.6	46.9	52.8
5. 5-4-3-2	39.9	38.2	42.6	42.4	—	53.7	47.8
6. K-J-Q-Q	29.4	43.3	47.3	53.1	46.3	—	44.6
7. 9-8-7-6	40.6	41.1	41.2	47.2	52.2	55.4	—

Note that pocket aces are always a favorite heads up, especially when suited and with one or two low cards. But pocket kings are often an underdog at heads up (unless with two low cards or other good suited cards).

Note that a fine hand for multihanded play such as A-2-5-7 (No. 2, but including hands such as A-2-3-4) usually loses slightly heads up to a medium pair and proximate low cards (see No. 3). A-2 hands are "draw" hands — you draw in more opponents to increase the odds on your low draw.

Note that "good" high-card hands are most profitable multihanded when a high flop crashes the low hands that contributed to make a healthy starting pot. But heads up, good high-card hands are usually an underdog to any random hand with several low cards.

Finally, note that medium wraps are not good hands in Omaha high-low, either multihanded or heads up (they're not low enough to win against other lows, and good high flops with eights, sevens, and sixes often result in a split pot).◆

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Poker

Roy West



Hi. Come on in. It's been too cold here on the high desert to go jogging. Throw another log on the fire. We'll warm up some unfiltered apple juice and chat.

I thought that I'd hit you with a few poker axioms today. It seems like a good day to be axiomatic.

Axiom No. 1: For the most part at the low and medium limits, you figure to have a losing hand unless you have the best hand or best draw to begin with. Otherwise, you'll be running uphill, chasing. Low-limit poker is a game of drawouts and bad beats. If you like living on the edge, and a lot of poker players apparently do, fine. Go at it, and keep drawing to those long shots. But if you play to get the money, stay with the best hand or the best draw.

Axiom No. 2: Fold a doubtful hand if it looks as though you might be trapped between two strong hands. This is not a spot to gamble. Sure, if you pull off your draw, you might win a big pot, but it's more likely that you'll get your buns kicked.

Axiom No. 3: Unless you are an *expert* reader of your opponents, call when your cards should be good enough to win, not just because you are suspicious of a bluff.

Axiom No. 4: And speaking of bluffing, don't try to bluff a bad player, a person who is a heavy winner at that moment, or one who is a heavy loser at that moment. These players are the most likely to call you.

Axiom No. 5: It's sort of the reverse of No. 4. If you hold a strong hand and are concerned about running off your customers with a bet, look to see who those customers are who have yet to act. You figure to get calls from poor players, heavy winners, and heavy losers, with one exception: A player who has been losing heavily and then suddenly gets even or ahead is less likely to call, bluff or not. He still retains the feeling of being down, and he doesn't want to go down again. He'll be extra cautious with his calls.

Axiom No. 6: Money that you've put into the pot is no longer yours and should not be thought of as such. Think of every bet as if it were your first one. Forget the chips that you already have invested. I don't ever want to hear one of my students say, "Well, I've got to protect what I have in there." Incorrect! It's no longer your money and needs no protection. What's in the pot belongs to the eventual winner of that pot. Play with your head on tight and you'll win more than your share of pots. Throw good money after bad and someone else will be picking up your share.

Axiom No. 7: Here's one for you folks who play in home games or in fraternity houses. The more wild cards that your game allows and the more crazy rules you have, the greater the advantage is for the expert player. The drawing odds in those games are nearly impossible for the average player to figure or comprehend. Personally, I wouldn't play in such a game for more than a 25-cent limit, with your money.

Axiom No. 8: There are no friends at the poker table if you are playing for meaningful money. (The above-mentioned home or frat games don't count, because they are usually just friendly affairs.) Serious players certainly have friends, but there is an unspoken agreement among them that "friendship is left at the door." To be a successful player and have the percentages work correctly, you need to win the most money when you have a winning hand, whether the player with the losing hand is friend or foe. "Soft-playing" a friend in effect creates a "dead seat," from which you can win no money. Thus, the size of your win probably will be reduced because you are playing against fewer players ("live seats"). And be aware that many players consider it to be unethical, even cheating, to play "friendly" against someone in the game but "hardball" against others. I'm not fond of the practice.

Sip up the last of that apple juice while I prepare to repose. And kill the light on your way out.◆

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Editor's note: Roy West is again giving his successful poker lessons after a three-year hiatus for research and writing. See his ad on page 36.

IN THE

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Susie Isaacs

Chip Chatter

The Good Guy in the Black Hat

During 1998, poker players followed the controversy over the ownership of Binion's Horseshoe, with some concern about the future of the *World Series of Poker*. It was known that Jack Binion, who was very poker-friendly and realized the magnitude of the business potential and worldwide publicity generated by the *WSOP* — the world's most prestigious poker tournament, could be out as president and his sister Becky Binion Behnen could be in. As a result, no one knew if she would continue the poker tradition at Binion's or eliminate it. If she decided to go forward with the 1999 *WSOP*, who would be appointed to head this massive project? Fear of the unknown is real, indeed. Let me be the bearer of good news. Poker players around the world can relax — there will be a *WSOP* this year, and an experienced poker professional will assume the awesome task of running this world-renowned event. Bob Thompson, the good guy in the black hat, is an old (no pun intended, Bob) poker veteran and poker tournament pro. After verifying his appointment to head the 1999 *WSOP*, I met him for lunch. Thompson has been a poker fixture since I came on the scene a dozen years ago, and I can't count the number of well-run poker tournaments that he has directed. However, I had to admit that I knew little of his background and nothing of his plans for the *World Series*. I wanted to know everything, and I knew that *Card Player* readers also would be interested.

First of all, be aware that Thompson was just awarded this position in December. As a result, many months of preliminary work and planning time were not available to him. Rest assured that



Bob Thompson

he will do the very best job that he can to ensure the quality and future of the *WSOP*, but also realize that many decisions already had been made when he came on board. He agreed with some of the decisions and disagreed with others, but he had no vote in the matter.

Here are some 1999 *WSOP* facts:

1. The length of the *WSOP* has been shortened to 16 days, but I don't know that that is necessarily bad. How many people who are not professional poker players can take a full month away from their "real" lives to concentrate on poker?

2. The least expensive open-field event will be $2,500.

3. The ladies event again will be held on Mother's Day and the buy-in will remain $1,000.

4. There will be supersatellites every evening for the $10,000 event, and Thompson hopes to implement afternoon supers.

5. The $10,000 event will guarantee the 1999 world champion $1 million, and that event will be shortened by one day. The structure of the "big one" will remain the same with two-hour limits, but play will last longer on the first and second days. Nine players will go to the final table rather than six. (Therefore, three more players can brag that they made the final table of the main event of the *WSOP*!) The main event will be filmed.

6. The comp system that utilizes tracking cards again will be used. One of the best things that poker players can do to ensure the future of the *WSOP* is to use those tracking cards throughout the casino wherever you gamble. If your spouse plays those machines, get him a tracking card of his very own and he may be taking you to the Binion's Steak House for dinner!

7. Although the pavilion is gone, there will be between 45 and 50 tables, all in the same location of the casino.

8. One-table satellites will be ongoing. Satellites will not be offered several days in advance of the first event, but Thompson assures us that on day No. 1, 30 tables will be allocated strictly for satellites, which will put a lot of people into that kickoff event.

9. The *WSOP* gold bracelets again will be presented to every 1999 world champion.

As in the past, the staff will be poker professionals, including Cathy Wood, Binion's cardroom manager; Robert Thompson III, tournament director at Hollywood Park Casino; Tom Elias, longtime assistant to Bob Thompson; Rudy and Barbara Lotief, familiar *WSOP* leaders; Becky Kerber, experienced satellite coordinator; and John "Schof" Sheffield, who will be in charge of the day shift.

Fliers are ready to be mailed and brochures will be out in mid-February. Special room rates will be available and blocks of rooms are being held at Binion's Horseshoe, the Golden Nugget, the Four Queens, and the Vegas Club. Players who want to book a room for the 1999 *WSOP* can call Emily Fitzsimmons at Binion's. She has worked with Susan Albrecht in years past and "knows the ropes."

The Orleans will be running Sunday night satellites, with a supersatellite on Mother's Day night, and the Plaza will be holding *WSOP* multitable satellites.

Thompson stated, "My main concern is the European players. I just hope that we have been able to give them enough time to make their plans and their reservations. Even though we haven't had the time to plan and organize as much as we would have liked, I assure you that we certainly plan to do our best. I have surrounded myself with some of the best and most capable people in the business, and our goal is the same — to make the 1999 *World Series* as great as ever. We may have fewer players for our opening event because it is $2,500, but the prize pool should be huge with our strong satellite program. I honestly believe that we will have a big turnout, simply because it's the *World Series*. Although it will be shorter this year, people may decide that they like it better."

Thompson's card background began many moons ago (I won't mention exactly how many) when he started playing poker at the kitchen table at the age of 8. In 1947, he played in Gardena and loved it. He began visiting Las Vegas regularly during the same year. He received a degree in physical education at UCLA in 1955, and was in the photography business, sales, and insurance, and worked a stint as a lifeguard and swimming instructor. He has always played tennis, watched his diet, and stayed healthy — a necessity for handling the grueling hours of directing major poker tournaments.

Always a gambler, he decided to start a new life in the early '60s (after a divorce) in Las Vegas, where he worked as a shill at the Golden Nugget, then as a brush, and then as a dealer. He opened the Hacienda poker room in 1965 as a dealer, and then became a shift boss. From 1967 until 1973, he worked at the Stardust. He went to work at Binion's in 1973, where he met Chip Reese, who was fresh out of college, and they played $3-6 razz together. In 1974, Thompson and Lefty Kisner organized the *World*

Continued on page 106

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For What It's Worth ...

VINCE BURGIO



Mr. Coffee and a Nice Man, Too

During the last few days, I have been preparing myself to say goodbye to one of baseball's true legends — Joe DiMaggio.

When I was old enough to start following baseball, Joltin' Joe was already a legend. After I started following him, he went on to win a couple of American League MVP awards and, I might casually add, marry the biggest Hollywood movie star who has ever come along — Marilyn.

I have read many newspaper articles the last few days recounting DiMaggio's career. The most common accolade he has been receiving, other than for his unbelievable baseball skills, is for the exemplary life he has led. Everyone says that he has been a truly nice man.

About now, a lot of you probably are wondering how in heaven's name I am going to tie Joe DiMaggio and his health into poker. The fact is, I don't know if I can or not, but I am going to try.

Years ago, the poker world was inhabited by almost all men. The men's behavior in those days was less than perfect. Foul language was the rule rather than the exception. The only drawback with foul language was that you might say the wrong words to the wrong person and end up having him come across the table at you. Dealers could be abused verbally or in the physical sense, as it was allowable to throw cards at them. The bottom line was that anything went as long as you paid your collection.

Nowadays, poker rooms, for whatever reasons, have made a genuine attempt to control behavior and language. Maybe it's a result of more women or more mainstream people coming into the poker world. Almost everyone seems to be happy with these changes and views them as being positive.

The last few years also has brought about the advent of numerous publications that cover poker, and poker news is even on the Internet.

So, now, bad conduct not only is not condoned, it is reported on. You can't throw the cards, cuss the dealers, abuse the other players, abuse the employees, or just generally act like a jerk without the whole world knowing about it.

If you think that some of the critical comments that are published in the magazines and other forms of written press can be bad, try reading rec.gambling.poker on the "Net." If you act like a jerk nowadays, you have to live with your actions.

I remember that when I first started playing tournaments, I did not always lose graciously. Two things helped to change my outlook on how I should act. First, I got lucky and won a few tournaments, which resulted in someone calling me a champion. The thought occurred to me that if I really was a champion, I probably should act like one. Second, people began to recognize me, therefore, any improper behavior probably would be noticed. I guess my whole point is that it doesn't matter if you're just a plain ol' nice guy or you're just nice because you don't want people to say bad things about you. The important thing is not how you got there, but that you got there.

I'll bet that if the truth were known, a lot of people in the public eye started being nice for fear of something bad being written or said about them. Then, they woke up sometime later being nice just because it had become a habit.

Who knows why Joe DiMaggio was such a nice man. Maybe he knew that if he wasn't nice, people would say and write bad things about him. Then again, maybe he was just a plain ol' nice man.

For what it's worth ...◆





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7 Card Stud ($10,000 Guaranteed)	$200 +25	1:00 P.M.
Evening Event	**Buy In**	**Time**
Omaha Hi/Lo (8 or better)	$55 +1 *(optional $50 Rebuy)*	8:00 P.M.

Tuesday, April 13, 1999

Daily Main Event	Buy In	Time
No-Limit Hold'em ($10,000 Guaranteed)	$200 +25	1:00 P.M.
Evening Event	**Buy In**	**Time**
Pot-Limit Hold'em	$55 +1 *(optional $50 Rebuy)*	8:00 P.M.

Wednesday, April 14, 1999

Daily Main Event	Buy In	Time
Omaha Hi/Lo ($10,000 Guaranteed) (8 or better)	$200 +25	1:00 P.M.
Evening Event	**Buy In**	**Time**
Limit Hold'em	$55 +1 *(optional $50 Rebuy)*	8:00 P.M.

Thursday, April 15, 1999

Daily Main Event	Buy In	Time
Pot-Limit Omaha ($10,000 Guaranteed)	$200 +25	1:00 P.M.
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Ladies 7 Card Stud (8 or better)	$100 +25 *(optional $50 Rebuy)*	8:00 P.M.

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Blackjack 21

Arnold "The Bishop" Snyder

Request for Guidance

Q: *I lost my family 10 years ago and have been financially devastated after a 10-year series of dead-end, unfulfilling jobs. I have found a passion for double-deck blackjack, and have spent six months studying it (Thorp, Singer, and so on) and increasing my skill at home with chips. I'm skilled at card counting (the point count and tens) and have some mathematical skill to my advantage. My practice in the last six months has all been designed solely for going head-to-head with the dealer.*

Because I want to play professionally, I quit my job. Although I'm far from affluent, I've not taken other work, because I want so much to do this.

I've investigated all of the local tribal casinos here in Washington state — I thought it best to get started here before trying the "headier" atmosphere in Las Vegas. So, early this morning at 2:30 a.m. (the casino closes at 4 a.m.), I drove 40 miles and made my first attempt to play, but I was unable to even get a seat. I thought that at such an early hour on a Thursday morning, I'd be able to play head-to-head with the dealer as planned; however, the only double-deck game was full of players and remained so until closing. I'm afraid that if I play with a table full of people, even counting cards, I'll remain at the mercy of chance, not science, because of the saturation of so many people.

I know that for any new venture, there are always obstacles in the way, however, is this an obstacle that has defeated me before I've even begun? Although I'm great at strategy and point and 10 counting, are my chances of winning due to "science" only a pipe dream in which I'm deceiving myself? I'm afraid of failing and believing in something that isn't remotely possible. In a nutshell, I am passionate about this game, and I see it as something that will bring me great joy while getting me out of a financial rut.

Therefore, if I play double-deck blackjack and can't play head-to-head with the dealer, is it still possible for me to benefit financially based on my knowledge; or, am I simply at the mercy of the casino, which is simply offering me a game of chance? Please note: I'm playing at tribal casinos in Washington and Oregon now, with hopes of counting in Las Vegas, Reno, and Tahoe later on.

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A: I foresee various problems in your career choice, some due to the realities of the casino industry, and some due to misconceptions you have about card counting and playing professionally.

Your dedication, drive, and single-minded pursuit of this vocation are to be applauded. In fact, these are the qualities required in successful professional players. Without a passionate desire to beat the game, you won't make it.

So, let's see if we can get you on track. First of all, I'm worried that your current financial position may not be strong enough to allow you to enter the game professionally full time. Most pros are fairly well-financed. Even the best players suffer huge swings and must have enough bankroll to ride out the losing streaks. Many pros have "passive" income sources — stocks, bonds, real estate, and so on. Playing blackjack can be lucrative, but I would never advise it as a method for someone to "get out of a financial rut."

But, let's assume that you're in OK shape financially. Where do you go from there?

You would be better served by abandon-

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ing your insistence on playing only in head-to-head double-deck games. Any pro will tell you that you've got to be able to beat the games you find. You're trying to find the only game you can beat. Head-on games are not easy to come by anywhere. From reports I get from players, as well as from my own personal observation, the best place in the United States for finding head-on games is Northern Nevada — Reno and Stateline — especially on weekdays, in the winter, and during the mornings and early afternoons.

Most pros, however, avoid these uncrowded conditions — particularly head-to-head games — because they are trying to blend into the crowd. The less crowded the casino, the more likely your card-counting strategy will be discovered. You seem to have a notion that more players at the table make the game more of a "game of chance." That is not true.

That notion (which is common among amateurs and beginners), in conjunction with your statement that you are talented with both the 10 count and the point count, leads me to believe that your card-counting abilities exceed your comprehension of precisely how to use your talents. I never would recommend using a point count and a 10 count simultaneously. That's a lot of work for small gain.

A few years ago, I wrote a long series of articles in this column titled "Bachelor of Counting." The whole series is now compiled in my book *Blackjack Wisdom* (RGE Publishing, 1998). This series describes a curriculum that I would develop if card counting were offered as a major in a college course. I am sending you a copy of this book with my compliments. This way, I don't have to spend a dozen columns trying to explain all of the ins and outs of counting professionally.

Send your blackjack questions to: The Bishop, c/o *Card Player*.◆

Look elsewhere in this issue to find a HUGE promotional offer with up to two years of Arnold Snyder's Blackjack Forum magazine for FREE! And don't forget to visit Arnold Snyder's Blackjack Forum web site at: www.rge21.com, where you'll find the largest free library of blackjack information on the web.

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An Open Letter to Everyone in the Poker Industry

I was originally diagnosed with prostate cancer in March of 1993 and subsequently underwent 45 radiation treatments. In May 1998, *Card Player* columnist Nolan Dalla wrote a two-part column about me and mentioned the fact that I was battling spinal cancer.

Since then, during my travels around the country, hundreds and hundreds of people coast to coast – players, dealers, and cardroom management personnel – have taken the time and effort to inquire about my health and wish me well. Additionally, I have received countless phone calls, letters, and cards from people in the poker world who have sent their prayers and best wishes.

All of the care that was expressed by so many people touched me very deeply, and I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all of you.

The poker community is full of good and decent people. I am very fortunate and blessed to be a part of this world.

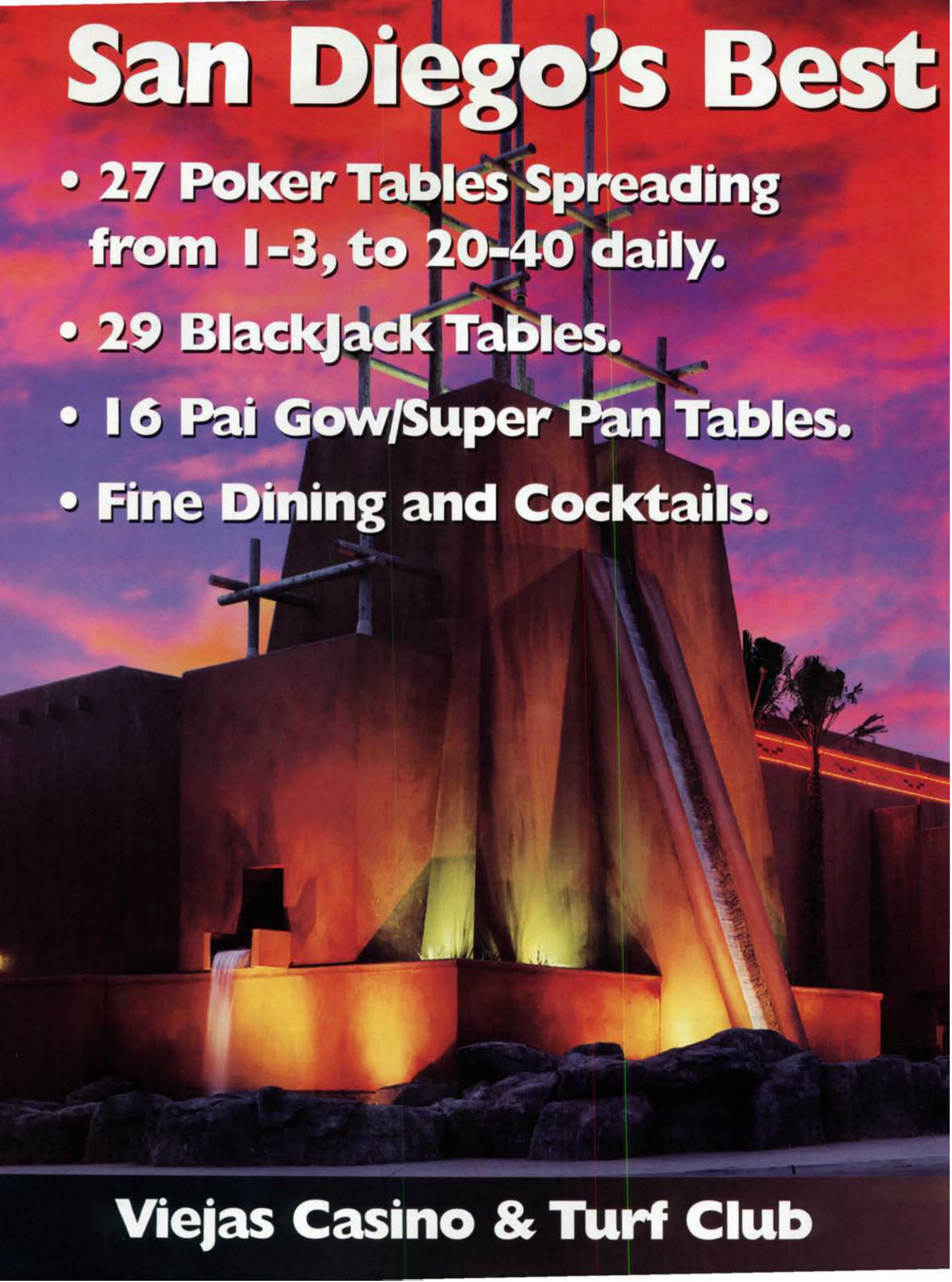
I am happy to report that my health is much improved. In fact, I recently received news from my doctor that my cancer appears to be in remission.

To all of you who expressed your concerns and conveyed your best wishes and prayers, thank you from the bottom of my heart – I love you all.

Sincerely,

John Bovetti

P.S. I hope that all poker players take a PSA test as a protective measure.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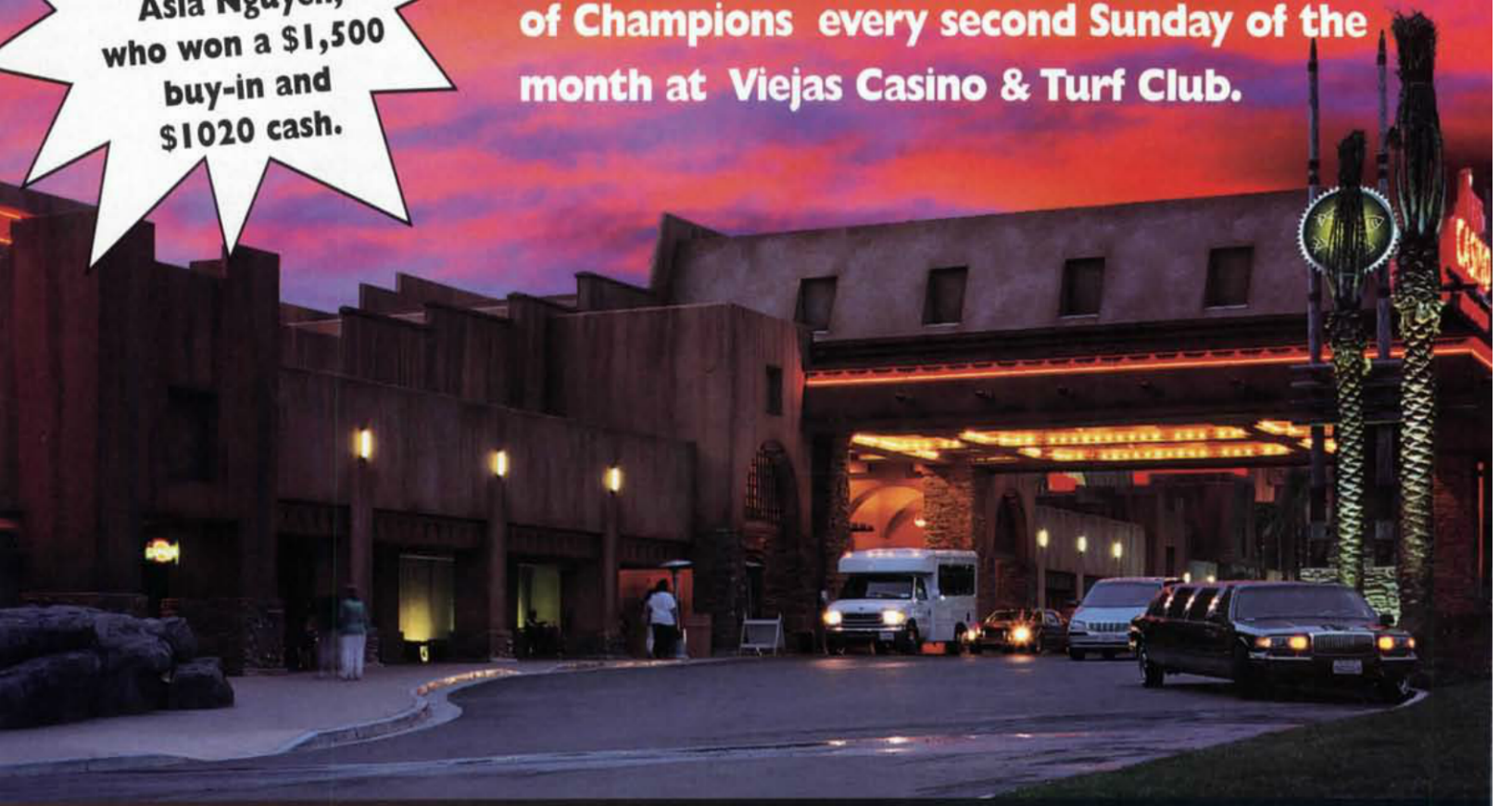

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All About POKER From The Coach

By Bob Ciaffone

Poker at the Taj

Even though I have played poker in such exotic faraway places as Malta and Nepal, until last December, I had never even been to Atlantic City, let alone played poker there. So, when the Taj Mahal announced that it would be hosting a major poker tournament, the *United States Poker Championship*, I made immediate plans to attend. This was a good opportunity to play East Coast poker, visit with some old friends, and meet in person some poker students who had been only voices on the telephone. I went there for a week.

The Taj cardroom is directly accessible from the front entrance, the lobby, or the casino floor. I give the poker room five stars for its location, which is very important in attracting new players to the games.

The Taj has its own way of doing things, and a number of its practices are certainly worthy of emulation. For example, when you first play poker there, you are given a plastic card similar to a credit card. This is your "Taj Card." Whenever you play in a game, you clock in by giving your card to a floorperson, who gives it a swipe through an electronic machine. When you clock out, the same thing is done. Every hour played at higher limits earns you $2 worth of comps, which can be redeemed in any food establishment on the premises. If at any time you want to know how much comp credit you have accrued, you simply have the appropriate staff person check the computer. It is really nice to have this democratic and reliable system to handle what is a major task in other casinos. For a guy who plays 12 hours or more a day like me, the food bill for the whole trip is practically free.

As you know, I prefer big-bet poker to limit poker. However, I know that the pot-limit games are not as popular in the East as they are in the South and West. The week that I was there, we had only three games, all starting in the evening, so I played mostly limit poker. My usual roosting place was in one of the $20-$40 hold'em games. In those games, the action the first couple of days was OK, but nothing exceptional. However, all of that changed on Friday as the weekenders arrived. Those games were really terrific — a delightful blend of the too fast and the too inexperienced.

Here are a couple of poker hands from the $20-$40 hold'em game that illustrate some of the points that I stress in my teaching. Do you ever quit raising before the flop in limit poker when you hold aces? I think that in special circumstances, it can be the best play. Look at this hand. I picked up A-A when first to act and opened with a raise. (If I am going to limp in with a big pair in early position on occasion to vary my game, I would rather have K-K than A-A, as I am less likely to be tying up cards that someone else behind me needs to raise.) Everyone folded around to the little blind, a young man who previously had shown a desire to gamble. He made it three bets, and I just called him. The flop brought rags, he bet, and I called. Fourth street brought another little card, and I again called his bet. When he bet the innocuous river card, I finally raised him, and he folded quickly. My impression was that he had been betting without any outs, and needed to catch runner-runner to beat me. If I had shown strength earlier, it seems likely that he would have folded and lost less money to me.

Note that all three key elements were present that would make me even consider taking my foot off the gas pedal and stop raising preflop with aces. It was a heads-up situation, I had position on my opponent, and he was an aggressive player who could be expected to keep firing whether or not he hit anything on the flop. It is a big mistake to quit raising with aces to conceal your hand if there is more than one opponent left in the pot.

Sometimes, I throw in an extra bet to look like I am some kind of action player, but I pick places where I am really not giving up much. Here is an example. I was in the blind with 7♠ 5♠. A player in middle position raised after three people had called in front of him, the button called, and I called. All told, six of us saw the flop, which came nicely for me — 7♥ 6♠ 2♠. This gave me a pair, a flush draw, and a backdoor straight draw. I bet, someone called, and the original preflop raiser raised. I reraised; with a pair and a flush draw, you should try to narrow the field.

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The caller folded and the preflop raiser hit it again, so I was pretty sure that he had a big pair and would play the hand out. Even so, I raised him again. Now, he just called, worried about a set. A blank came on fourth street, I bet, and he called. On the river, I caught the 7♦ to make trip sevens, bet out, and he called. He had pocket aces, so I won a nice pot.

It probably looked to some like I had caught the gambling spirit, putting in five bets on the flop against a probable big pair. Did that make me Action Bob? Not hardly. I ran a simulation on Mike Caro's *Poker Probe* program after I got home. As it turns out, I am a 52-48 favorite if my opponent's aces do not include the A♠ and he is a 52-48 favorite if one of his aces is the A♠. Since he is 50 percent to have that card, my hand is even money against random aces on the flop. Throwing in an extra raise on a draw when even money to win is my idea of "giving action."

Here is a remarkable story that was told to me by a lady who might be the best middle-limit hold'em player in the world. The lady's "Aunt Ann" was an experienced stud poker player who logged enough hours in a certain casino cardroom to qualify for its freeroll tournament. But the game to be contested was hold'em, which she had never played. Her friends talked her into playing in the hold'em tournament because they said it didn't cost anything, so why not? More than 100 people were in the event, but Aunt Ann took first place in her maiden effort at the game. Even more remarkable is the fact that the lady was 90 years old when this happened!

No article on poker in Atlantic City could go without mentioning the burdensome regulations placed upon our game by the Paperwork State. The rules on chip transactions bothered me the most. According to the rules of the New Jersey Gaming Commission, poker players cannot buy chips at the cashier's cage, and chip runners are an illegal occupation. The dealer is your only chip source, and he must get verification from a floorperson to sell more than $200 worth of chips. The game often gets delayed because of these chip transactions between a player and the dealer, which holds up the rake and antagonizes the players, so nobody benefits.

The New Jersey cardrooms have been trying for years to get permission from the Gaming Commission to use chip runners. They presently are submitting another formal request. A member of cardroom management to whom I spoke about this said that they were really hoping to be listened to this time around. I think that this would be an excellent step in improving the New Jersey poker climate.♦

Note: Shortly after this column was written, chip runners were approved by the New Jersey Gaming Commission.

Editor's note: Bob Ciaffone is available for poker lessons. He may be reached at (517) 792-0884, or by E-mail at coach999@concentric.net. His book Pot-limit and No-limit Poker and his latest book Improve Your Poker are available through Card Player.



GAMBLING AND THE LAW®



I. Nelson Rose

But is it Gambling?

"I imply no criticism of the Court, which in those cases was faced with the task of trying to define what may be indefinable ... I shall not today attempt further to define [hard-core pornography] ... But I know it when I see it ..."

— Justice Potter Stewart, Jacobellis vs. Ohio (1964)

Unlike pornography, gambling is not necessarily something you can recognize on sight.

Determining whether an activity is gambling under the law is a two-step process. First, the game or scheme must meet the legal definition of gambling. This usually means that three elements must be present: consideration, prize, and chance. The second step requires lawyerlike thinking: Even if it is gambling, is there another law that says that it is not?

Gambling is universal, and is found in all cultures and all times. It also has almost always been universally condemned. So, the law lays down broad general definitions in an attempt to cover every possibility, even games that have not yet been invented.

But, many forms of gambling are not prohibited. Legislatures will often legalize an activity by simply passing a law declaring that it is not gambling.

Every jurisdiction has the right to define the three elements of gambling — consideration, prize, and chance — any way it sees fit.

1. Consideration usually means players must pay *something of value* to be eligible to participate.

2. Prize includes not only money, but anything of value.

3. Chance means the outcome is not determined by skill.

I recently participated in an evening's entertainment that may have been gambling — or maybe not. The setting shows how difficult it can be to determine whether



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Seven seminars plus a breakout session have been scheduled that will cover a broad range of topics by leaders in the poker industry. A luncheon to roast Jack McClelland also has been scheduled this year.

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these three elements are present.

UCLA runs a holiday camp in the San Bernardino mountains for alumni and their families. Activities include everything you would expect in a modern vacation getaway: arts and crafts, hiking, lots of food, and, of course, bingo.

Was the bingo gambling? We first have to look for the three elements.

Was there consideration? A few states have held that having to go to a particular location to participate in a game or drawing constitutes consideration. Fortunately, the California Supreme Court has said that consideration requires paying money for the chance to win. So, even though the other players and I had to be present to play, there was no consideration.

But wait. I had to spend money to be a registered guest at the camp, and the money did go to the operator, including to pay for the prizes.

If UCLA were ever challenged on this, it would have to say that the game was open to anyone — "no purchase necessary."

The prizes ranged from a stuffed bear to a gift pack of wine and cheese — not exactly Las Vegas, but the law says that a prize is anything of value, no matter how small. California has even said that free replays qualify as prizes for determining whether a game is gambling.

Chance would seem to be the easiest element to meet. There have been court cases fought over blackjack, backgammon, and poker, but chance clearly determines the outcome in bingo.

Courts determine whether a game is predominantly skill by looking at the average player under normal playing conditions. This particular bingo game was open to children.

A favorite variation that night was "Losers' Bingo." Everyone in the room stood up holding a single bingo card. As the numbers were called one by one, players having that number on their cards had to sit down. The last one standing won the prize.

Kids as young as 2 years old not only had to understand the rules, they had to obey them. Have you ever tried to get an excited 2-year-old to sit down and stay seated?

Some legislatures have tried to shortcut this type of analysis by declaring that charity bingo is not gambling. Of course, this then necessitates a new set of rules on what constitutes a charity — and what exactly is bingo.

Congress took this approach in enacting the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). A new federal crime was created, "gambling in Indian country." All state laws, including all regulations and licensing requirements, that apply to gambling in a state now apply to gambling on Indian land in that state. A violation of those state laws is now a federal crime.

However, IGRA contains the following provision: "The term 'gambling' does not include" Class I or II gaming regulated by IGRA or Class III gaming conducted under an approved compact. Bingo is a form of Class II gaming under IGRA.

If the UCLA bingo game were played on a reservation, the game, by law, simply would not have been gambling — proving that you cannot know that gambling is gambling, even when you see it.◆

Professor Rose can be reached at rose@sprintmail.com.

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How to Play Lowball — Part IV: Typical Hands



Michael Wiesenberg

The Low Rollers

Well, enough of this hilarity for all of you lowball neophytes. So far, I have burdened you with a technical description of how the game works, but I know that you can't stand all of the dry exposition, and are ready to leap into your first game.

Here you are at the lowball table, a $10-$20 game, somewhere in Southern California. You just sat down with two stacks of $5 chips. Already, you have done something right. "I have?" you ask. "What's that? There's only one open seat in this game; I don't have a choice of position, and, anyway, I have no idea how they play. I wouldn't recognize a good game if it bit me on the knee." No, no; this is your first play. You don't need to learn how to pick a good game yet, although you will soon. What you did was start with enough chips. The minimum buy-in in most games is 10 times the smaller limit, which in this game would be $100 — but that's not enough. If you get a good hand and someone gets a slightly worse hand, you want to have enough to cover all of the betting. If your chips ever get down too low in a game, buy some more.

The house dealer starts dealing cards, starting with the player immediately to your right, who appears to have anted a $5 chip, as has the player in the dealer position. The player to your right says to you, "It's your big blind."

"How much is that?" you wonder.

"Ever played lowball before?"

"Nope."

"Put in two chips for the blind. You act last before the draw."

You put in your chips. By now, everyone has five cards.

Before you even have a chance to look at your cards, the player to your left throws her cards away, as does the player to *her* left.

The next player puts $20 into the pot. This is equivalent to a bet and a raise. That is, your blind bet is the same as an opening bet. The first player to the left of the blind must either call that bet or throw her cards away. She elected not to play, and now has no further claim on this particular pot. The player to her left made the same decision. The player to his left also had the opportunity of throwing away his cards. He wanted to play in this pot. Having made that decision, he then had two choices. He could either *call* the opening bet — that is, your blind bet — by putting in $10, or he could *come in for a raise* by putting in $20. Players are permitted to either open for a bet equal to the size of the blind or open for a raise. This practice is called *gypsying in*. You may encounter games in which the opener must come in for a raise; this is usually referred to as *no gypsy*.

Even though players are *allowed* to open for the minimum in most lowball games, you will find that in practice, most players don't. Most players who do open for the minimum have a poor hand. When raised, they either fold, or compound their poor play by calling and then taking the worst of it in the succeeding action. Specifically, players who open for the minimum often do so hoping to sneak in on a substandard hand, and end up drawing two cards or drawing one to an inferior hand. Such plays usually are losing propositions. A few players who fancy themselves to be tricky open for the minimum when holding a very good hand, in hope of enticing several players in, perhaps one of whom might raise with marginal holdings. Players soon learn who has that habit, and do not raise them when they open for the minimum.

The player to the left of the opener folds. The next two players fold, and the dealer calls.

By now, you have looked at your cards. Your hand consists of A♠ 2♥ 4♦ Q♣ K♣. That's not a good lowball hand, however, it costs you only $10 to get in, since you had to put in the blind. This is half what it cost the other players. The pot already contains $60 (two players at $20 each, plus the three blinds). You're getting odds of 6-to-1. That makes a good two-card draw a decent investment. If you just call now by putting in $10, no one can raise.

You draw two cards. The next player stands pat, and the dealer draws one. You catch a tantalizing 3♣, and a 2♦, which ruins your hand (by pairing the deuce already in your hand). Your options now are two. You can bet or check. After the draw, you are permitted to check without throwing away your hand. Checking is the wise play at this point. You have no idea how strong the pat hand is. If you bet, it is a bluff, and there is a very good chance the pat hand will call. Even if you manage to convince the pat hand to fold, the one-card draw might make a calling hand. This is definitely not a good bluffing situation.

You check. The pat hand bets. The bet after the draw is $20, double what it was before the draw. "Double?" you say. "How is that? He bet $20 before the draw, and now he's betting $20 after." Yes, I know; that *is* a bit confusing. Before the draw, though, the $20 *represented* two bets. Remember that your blind was one bet, technically the opening bet of the round. The first player to put money into the pot *after* having seen his cards actually *raised*. The $20 represented a call of the $10 blind bet plus a raise of another $10. Pretend that it's the first round in hold'em, and this should make sense.

The dealer raises. He does this by put-

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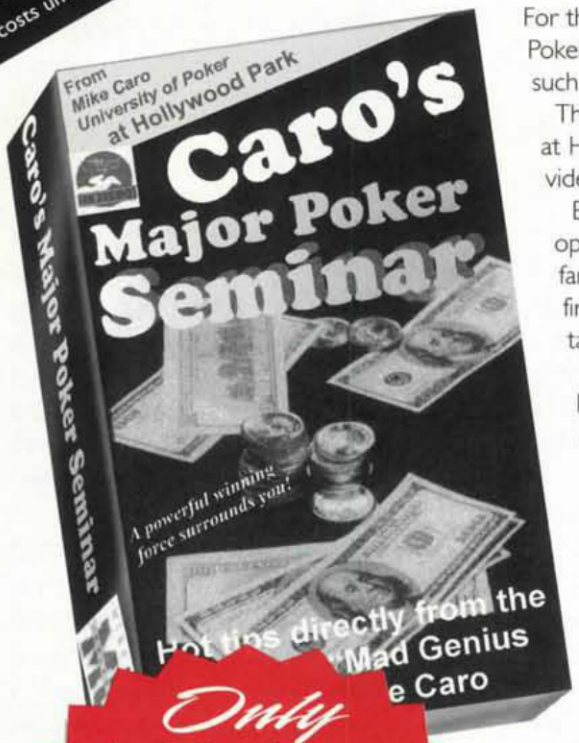

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ting $40 into the pot, stacked in two side-by-side piles containing four chips each.

The bet returns to you now. Your hand cannot possibly win in this particular situation, so you now throw the cards away.

The opener calls. He does this by putting another $20 into the pot.

The bets now have been equalized, and it is time for the showdown. The dealer's hand is 6♥ 5♣ 3♠ 2♠ A♦. The opener's hand is 7♠ 5♠ 3♦ A♥ joker. Those are two excellent hands. You recall from before on what beats what that the dealer's 6-5 has beaten the opener's 7-5. A pat hand that good doesn't get beat very often. When it does, it often is costly. The house dealer pushes the chips to the winner, who tosses two $1 chips to the house dealer, who thanks him as she shuffles the cards for the next hand.

As my father once said about a completely different situation, while not typical, this hand is *representative*.

A whole round goes by in which you have no playable hands, according to a series on lowball that you've been reading in *Card Player*.

The deal has gone around the table, and is now two positions to your right. You have the blind again, and you remember to put two chips into the pot.

Before you even have a chance to look at your cards, the player to your left throws her cards away, as does the player to *her* left.

The next player puts $10 into the pot, opening for the minimum. The next three players fold, and the dealer calls.

By now, you have looked at your cards. Your hand consists of A♠ 3♦ 5♥ 10♠ K♥. That's also not a good lowball hand, however, this time, it doesn't cost you anything to play in this pot, since you already have $10 invested, having had to put in the blind. With a two-card draw, you're pleased to get a free draw. Even if you had a five-card draw (five facecards, say), it would be quite legitimate to draw that many, but only in this situation of the betting having stayed at the minimum. Since you haven't raised, you have effectively stopped the betting before the draw. Usually when a player has the blind and does not wish to raise, he signifies by tapping the table. At this point, the house dealer prepares to deal replacements to those active players who wish them, starting with the first active player to the left of the deal position.

You draw two cards. The next player stands pat, and the dealer draws one.

You catch 2♣ 4♦, which gives you a wheel, the best possible hand in this game, what some call a *miracle draw*. Before the draw, the betting skipped you because you were in the blind position. Now, after the draw, the betting proceeds in ordinary rotation. According to the rules, you must bet a seven or better. A wheel is better than a seven, so you bet. This you do by putting $20 into the pot.

The pat hand raises. The dealer reraises. He does this by putting $60 into the pot, stacked in three side-by-side piles containing four chips each. As he does so, he says, "Three bets."

The bet now returns to you. Of course, you put in one more bet. You add $60 to the pot, bringing the total bet after the draw so far up to $80.

The opener raises again! This brings it up to five bets, $100 so far.

The dealer takes another look at his cards and shakes his head. It is two more raises to him. He calls by adding another $40, again stacked in two neat piles.

Again, it returns to you. Again, you raise, bringing the total to six bets.

The opener raises one more time! *Foolish lad,* you think.

The dealer looks disgusted and apprehensive at the same time. He puts in the two more bets.

Of course, with the perfect hand, you never will quit raising as long as you have chips. Wasn't that smart of you to start with $200 instead of the $100 that many players think is enough? You put in one more bet, bringing the total to eight bets, or $160.

Now, the opener also is looking somewhat critically at his cards, almost as if he's afraid they'll bite him. He starts to reach for eight chips, thinks better of it, and just calls.

The dealer mutters something under his breath about "beginner's luck," and also reluctantly tosses in four more chips, not in a neat stack.

The bets now have been equalized — and it is time for the showdown. The dealer's hand is 6♥ 5♣ 3♦ 2♠ A♦. The opener's hand is 6♠ 4♠ 3♠ A♥ joker. Those are two excellent hands, but, of course, you have A♠ 2♥ 3♣ 4♦ 5♦, a perfect wheel. You have just beaten two terrific hands. The house dealer pushes the chips to you. You toss $10 as a toke to the house dealer, who thanks you while shuffling the cards for the next hand.

By the way, did you notice something? The opener was trying to be tricky. He had a pat 6-4, the second-best possible hand, and he did not open for $20, as players normally do. Sometimes, such a play entices other players to raise with marginal hands, and then the opener can reraise, which is what he is hoping to do. What happens more often, though, is that no one raises, and the other players are suspicious. The play then often backfires, because as soon as this player stands pat and then bets or raises after the draw, most players realize that he has a very good hand. Being aware of this is a bit of strategy that you'll pick up on shortly, if you have any card sense at all. Opening this way is a losing proposition, but those who do it often never realize it. (Be glad that they don't. That free draw that you get once in a while gives you a terrific moneymaking opportunity. Sometimes, you get to take three or more cards, and sometimes, you make a freak draw that you would not otherwise have had the opportunity to make, and you beat a good hand for a lot of money.)

The second situation is even less typical, but if you play lowball for any length of time, you will see it happen. (And in many games, players won't put in that many bets with a 6-4 after the draw.) Let's hope that you're lucky and it happens to *you*.♦





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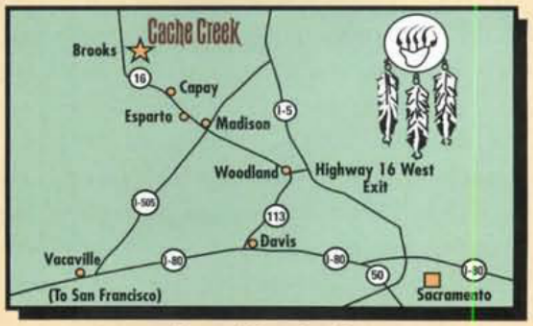

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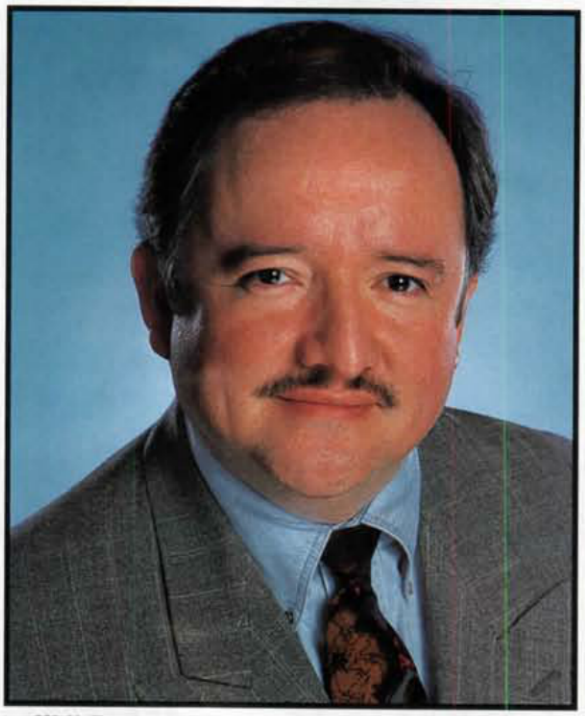
The Ladies of Trop Poker Club

It's not a boys' club anymore! In a segment of the gaming industry that is traditionally male, Tropicana's Poker Club has broken the mold by having five women in its top management positions. Will Espin, vice president of poker/simulcast, explained that he didn't set out specifically to hire women; it evolved that way by choosing the best people for the positions. That having been said, he does believe that a predominantly female management team contributes to Trop's unique atmosphere.

Kate Dumas charms players with a mischievous smile, which belies a rather no-nonsense management approach. As poker manager, she has the formidable task of overseeing approximately 30 supervisors and 220 dealers, while at the same time tending to any number of player questions or concerns. After graduating from college, Dumas decided to work as a dealer, and has spent most of her 20 years in the business in a supervisory capacity. At any given moment, Dumas has to be both firm and compassionate — a good cop and bad cop rolled into one.

Marie McHugh, director of poker/simulcast facility administration, graduated with a degree in psychology and has held a variety of positions in the casino industry ranging from general ledger accountant to poker floorperson. Espin jokingly refers to McHugh as the one who "keeps us out of trouble." That is to say, it is McHugh's responsibility to work with New Jersey's Casino Control Commission to ensure that all games, events, and tournaments fall within legal limits. She also oversees the department that controls staffing, and keeps the room in supplies and equipment. McHugh affirms, "I've enjoyed using each of my previous experiences in keeping a simulcast facility as large as ours running smoothly!"



Will Espin, vice president of poker/simulcast

Race/Keno Manager Robyn Talvacchio is the confident calm in the eye of the frenetic simulcast storm. She began her career while still in high school when her physics teacher suggested that she work part time as a parimutuel teller. She continued this throughout her college years. After graduation, Talvacchio worked as a casino internal auditor, but shortly after simulcast came to Atlantic City, she decided that the racebook was more to her liking. So, when Trop Poker Club went on the drawing board, Talvacchio was the ideal candidate for its simulcast operation.

Kathy Brown is executive secretary to Will Espin, but anyone who has worked for Espin can tell you that that is only the tip of the iceberg. In addition to her administrative and guest service duties, she keeps morale going as the department's cheerleader, and has been active in arranging numerous employee events. She is on the United Way and Blood Drive committees. Brown came on board as a seating controller and enjoys providing top-quality customer service. "I love working here! Where else can you have a job like this, with so many challenging projects and interesting people stopping by my office each day?"

The energetic Patrice Munalo, poker host, has been with the room since preopening. Her hospitality career has encompassed everything from arranging boxing events to purchasing for a startup casino in New Orleans. Espin introduces her as the employee who approached him one day and *interviewed him* for the position. She says, simply, "He had a laptop PC, which was cool, and seemed to be up to something interesting, so I couldn't resist!" Munalo has had no problem finding something to chat about with her guests. "I was thrilled to find out that poker players tend to be well-versed in many subjects and have diverse backgrounds. There are players with whom I can discuss my favorite sci-fi books, computers, art history — you name it!"

Each in her own way is dedicated to making Trop Poker Club's guests have the best time possible. What these ladies have in common is a passion for what they do.◆

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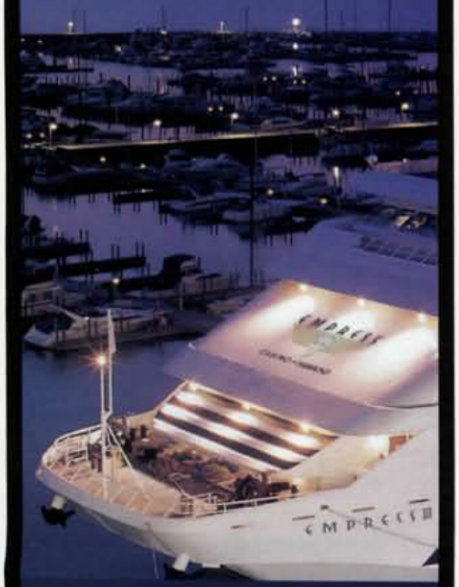
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From the E-Mail Bag

BY YOLANDA SMULIK-ROCHE, E.A., AND ROGER C. ROCHE, E.A.



Our E-mail "question" box is overflowing again, so it's time for our favorite type of article — the one that you the reader write by sending us your questions. All we have to do is answer them, so we thank you for your questions; keep them coming in.

Q: J.R. asked more than one question (no law against that) as follows:

1. I have been keeping records of my poker playing for five years now. If I read your article on keeping records correctly, I should have been listing the names of the players every night when I play. How do I do that, and is it necessary if I have the date, number of hours played, results by game, and name of establishment?

2. Can you apply previous years' losses to a big win?

3. Are there any tips to shelter such a win from taxes?

A: You have read our articles correctly. The IRS issued Revenue Procedure 77-29 to "provide the guidelines to taxpayers concerning the treatment of wagering gains and losses ... and the related responsibility for maintaining adequate records in support of winnings and losses." This procedure proclaims, "An accurate diary or similar record regularly maintained by the taxpayer, supplemented by verifiable documentation, will usually be acceptable evidence for substantiation of wagering winnings and losses. In general, the diary should contain at least the following information:

1. Date and type of specific wager or wagering activity;
2. Name of gambling establishment;
3. Address or location of gambling establishment;
4. Name(s) of other person(s) (if any) present with taxpayer at gambling establishment;
5. Amount(s) won or lost."

The key words here are "will usually be acceptable" and "should." The IRS is stating that if you keep such a diary and it appears to have been maintained at the time the events occurred, it will more than likely accept it as proper substantiation of wins and losses. You will be able to go to appeals with an expectation of prevailing if your records are not accepted by an auditor but conform to this procedure. (Here's a reminder: You can go to appeals over any position taken by the IRS with which you disagree.) These diaries are not required to be mailed in with the return, but merely kept to be produced should the IRS decide to audit your gambling wins and losses. The good news is that we have had diaries accepted by IRS auditors that did not list the names of any "other person(s) (if any) present," but merely wins and losses by day. But our recommendation has to follow the "party line," which is to get names whenever you can, but at least keep a daily diary showing your wins or losses by day. Regarding applying previous years' losses that were not claimed — because losses are limited to the amount of winnings — to the current year, the answer is *no*! Congress specifically prohibited doing this in the Internal Revenue Code. Finally, we cannot recommend anything except to maintain a diary and keep any gaming receipts and any reports that you might get from the casinos to substan-

tiate all of your losses should you be lucky enough to have a big win that is reported to the IRS.

Q: Linda asked this question: *I have been trying to find out about cash back (and bonus coupons). As a player who frequents Atlantic City, the cash back has started to add up. I called the IRS and couldn't get an answer. It seems to me that since cash back and bonus coupons are directly related to the amount you bet, they should be either included as "winnings" or used to offset losses. I can make a case in my own mind for either, but what does the IRS actually say? Should they be reported at all? If so, how? It would be better for us to reduce losses, since that is one effect of cash back. Or, should they be added to winnings?*

A: Actually, Linda, the IRS took the position that the value of "comps" received was not *gaming* income. Therefore, one taxpayer was not entitled to write off losses against the value of these comps, which the IRS considers to be income. The IRS was taken to Tax Court by the taxpayer. The taxpayer in this case played primarily at one casino over a period of three years, during which time he received free automobiles, vacations, jewelry, and other complimentary goods and services from the casino. He received Form 1099-MISC, Miscellaneous Income, from the casino that reflected the value of these comps as prizes and awards. The taxpayer included these amounts on his tax returns and also an equal amount as "gambling losses" on a Schedule A. The fact that the taxpayer had gambling losses vastly greater than the amount claimed was not disputed by the IRS, however, the IRS disallowed his deduction for gambling losses based upon the argument that the comps were not *gambling* winnings, but an "award." Thus, the taxpayer could not deduct any of his gambling losses. The taxpayer challenged the IRS in Tax Court and prevailed when the court ruled that the value of the complimentary goods and services received as an inducement to gamble can be rightfully represented as gains from gambling and can be offset by **gambling losses.** We present the following quote from this case to provide a deeper insight into the court's logic:

"The comps from the casino increased petitioner's wealth, and they were derived out of his betting transactions at the casino. The fact that petitioner's receipt of the comps bore a close nexus to his gambling transactions at the casino cannot be denied. Petitioner would not have received the comps from the casino but for the fact that he gambled extensively at the casino. Although petitioner's receipt of the comps did not directly hinge on the success or failure of his wagers, he received the comps incident to his direct participation in wagering transactions. The relationship between petitioner's comps and his wagering is close, direct, evident, and strong. The comps are sufficiently related to his gambling losses for purposes of section 165(d). We hold that petitioner's comps are "gains from [wagering] transactions" under section 165(d).

We believe that the "coupons" and "cash backs" that you asked about fall under the category of "comps," and should be treated as gaming winnings. Although it would be more favorable to reduce losses than add to winnings, this case is as good as it gets. At least we can treat them as gaming income.

Thanks to all of you who took the time to send us questions. Keep them coming and we will keep the answers coming.◆

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Tales From the Felt

1998 Player of the Year: T.J. Cloutier

By Nolan Dalla



Introduction: Two years ago, I first conceived the idea of trying to establish a method of determining poker's "Player of the Year." My objective was to devise and implement a rating procedure that would evaluate the tournament performances of every player over a 12-month period. Using a ranking system, each player was given a point count based on every in-the-money finish that was achieved during the calendar year. The "Player of the Year" distinction was awarded to the player with the highest point total.

That inaugural column appeared in *Card Player* on Jan. 23, 1998. Honestly — at the time — I wasn't quite sure what kind of reaction it would receive. First, I wasn't convinced that my ranking system was refined enough to resolve any ensuing debate within the poker community as to which players were most successful in tournaments. Second, I was aware that other ranking systems already had been developed, and I wasn't inclined to modify the procedures of other accepted ranking methods. Finally, I was concerned that it might be just a bit presumptuous to publicly announce that the players on my list were "more successful" than players that were not listed — particularly those who may have played in fewer tournaments overall, but who nonetheless had achieved impressive results over the year.

So, given these concerns, I was pleased and even somewhat surprised by the public reaction to that column. I was inundated with letters and E-mail — most of which encouraged me to continue with the project. A few readers suggested that I publish the results at regular intervals in my column. Others voiced the opinion that I should try to launch a tournament newsletter, complete with monthly standings. Everyone that I heard from thought the rankings were a great idea — and without exception, everyone suggested that they become an annual practice. So, it shall be. What follows is my second annual "Player of the Year" column.

Tournaments: There were 32 major poker tournaments held in the United States in 1998 (up from 28 in 1997). All tournaments were either special one-time competitions or — in most cases — annual events. Buy-ins ranged from $50 up to $10,000. The list of major tournaments included a grand total of 341 individual poker events in hold'em (limit, pot-limit, and no-limit), Omaha (limit and pot-limit), Omaha high-low split, seven-card stud, seven-card stud eight-or-better, seven-card razz, deuce-to-seven lowball, lowball draw, crazy pineapple, five-card draw, Chinese poker, Mexican poker, and various mixed events (combinations of more than one game).

1998 Major Tournaments Included in the Rating System

Carnivale of Poker
(Rio Hotel and Casino)
International Pot-Limit Rendezvous
(Oceans Eleven Casino)
Golden Gate Classic
(Ladbrokes Casino San Pablo)
L.A. Poker Classic VII
(Commerce Casino)
Winnin' o' the Green
(Bicycle Club Casino)
Peppermill Spring Tournament
(Peppermill Hotel and Casino)
Queens Poker Classic VIII
(Four Queens)
World Series of Poker
(Binion's Horseshoe)
Shooting Star Tournament
(Bay 101)
Masters of Poker VI
(Normandie Casino)
California State Poker Championship
(Commerce Casino)
Orleans Open
(The Orleans)
Poker Challenge Week
(Crystal Park Casino)
Heavenly Hold'em Tournament
(Commerce Casino)
New England Poker Classic
(Foxwoods Resort Casino)
Pot of Gold Tournament
(Reno Hilton)
San Francisco Open
(Ladbrokes Casino San Pablo)
Legends of Poker
(Bicycle Club Casino)
Summer Challenge
(Crystal Park Casino)
Fall Vacation Tournament
(Lake Elsinore)
National Championship of Poker
(Hollywood Park Casino)
Big Poker Oktober
(Bicycle Club Casino)
L.A. Poker Open VI
(Normandie Casino)
Tom McEvoy's Guaranteed Poker Spectacular (Crystal Park Casino)
Thunder by the Bay
(Ladbrokes Casino San Pablo)
Fall Challenge
(Crystal Park Casino)
$100,000 Poker Challenge
(Crystal Park Casino)
Peppermill Fall Tournament
(Peppermill Hotel and Casino)
U.S. Poker Championship
(Trump Taj Mahal)
World Poker Finals
(Foxwoods Resort Casino)
Holiday Bonus Tournament
(Commerce Casino)

Note: Since the European Poker Players Association has devised its own rank-

ing system (in fact, the EPPA scoring methods provided a workable model for my system), I did not include the highly competitive European tournaments in my tabulations. There is relatively little player crossover between Europe and North America (with notable exceptions in the biggest events). For this reason, I have not included European events in the rankings. At some point in future years, I will aim to incorporate all poker tournaments worldwide into the rankings. At the present time, however, the method of determining overall consistency will be limited to U.S.-based events.

The Dalla Rating System: My goal was to design a rating system that emphasized overall consistency, as evidenced by high tournament finishes. The system I devised uses numerical scoring in which more challenging events are weighed with higher point totals. The cumulative scores of all final-table finishes during the year were added together to determine poker's most prolific tournament masters, thereby making the final tabulations an objective indication of performance. Points were awarded based on three primary factors:

1. Place finished — Rating points were awarded to each player based on his/her finish in every event. For a first-place finish, 100 base points were given; for second place, 90 base points were given; 80 points for third, and so on. Only "final-table" finishes were recorded. (Note: This is a slight change from last year's method, which measured "in-the-money" finishes.) I aspired to rewarding final-table appearances on a graduated scale, while not overemphasizing winning the event outright. Although prize money is weighed disproportionally in favor of the top few spots, the goal of this project was to reward final-table appearances in multiple events as a far more meaningful indicator of overall consistency. For stud events, a normal final table is comprised of eight places. In hold'em and Omaha, final tables are normally nine or 10 places. Finally, in events with a smaller number of entrants — in which a final-table appearance did not win prize money — the finish was not counted.

2. Number of entrants — The greater the number of entrants in the event, the greater the challenge to make the final table. Obviously, smaller fields are not as burdensome to overcome as larger fields. Therefore, I devised a sliding scale that uses numerical values ranging from 1 to 3. For any event having up to 100 entrants, the numerical factor is 1. Thereafter, for each 10-player increase, the factor increases in multiples of .1 (note the decimal). The maximum factor is 3. For example, an event with 234 entrants has a factor of 2.3. An event with 300 or more entrants has a factor of 3. Although rebuys and add-ons are important considerations in the total prize pool, they do not affect the rating system.

3. Level of Competition — Of course, some tournament events are more highly competitive than others. Accordingly, it was necessary for me to make some qualifying judgment and give greater weight to tournaments that were comprised of top professionals over those with primarily novice players. Since we cannot determine the skill levels of each player in every tournament, I devised a workable indicator that awards rating points based on the amount of the buy-in for the event. Since many lower-limit buy-in events from $50 to $499 are largely comprised of amateur players, these events received a numerical factor of 1. Events with buy-ins ranging from $500 to $2,499 were given a factor of 2. Events with buy-ins higher than $2,500 were given the maximum factor of 3. Again, only the amount of the original buy-in was counted.

Now, to determine a point score for a final-table finish, let's take an extreme example — the $10,000 buy-in no-limit hold'em world championship at the *World Series of Poker*. The 1998 winner, Scotty Nguyen, received the following points for his win based on the following formula:

100 (a first-place finish is awarded 100 points) **x** (multiplied by) **3** (more than 300 entrants) **x** (multiplied by) **3** ($10,000 buy-in) = **900 total points.**

Therefore, winning poker's world championship is worth 900 rating points, or (in other words) equivalent to winning nine events at the $100 buy-in level (with fewer than 100 entrants). Admittedly, this judgment calls for some subjective reasoning on my part that may be open to criticism. However, based on the tournament results calculated prior to devising this system, I concluded that one single tournament victory (no matter how impressive) did not — in and of itself — merit being included among players being noted for their high levels of consistency. Therefore, I used the "900" base score for poker's premier event as a working model for establishing the parameters of smaller events.

Let's take one more example: Barbara Enright finished fourth in the $300 limit hold'em event at the *California State Poker Championship* (at the Commerce Casino). There were 265 entrants. See if you can calculate her points for this event:

70 (fourth-place finish) **x 2.6** (number of entrants) **x 1** (level of competition) = **182 points.**

Finally, my tabulations included only those events that were open to *all* players. Special events for ladies, seniors, pairs (doubles), and freeroll competitions did not count.

1998 Player of the Year Results: Thousands of players entered the 341 events that made up the 32 major poker tournaments that were held throughout the United States in 1998. Technically, every single player who entered an event of any kind was eligible to make the list. I added the rating points from every single tournament finish (no small task) to determine a cumulative final score for each player. The results proved to be quite interesting. Although a sizable number of players performed admirably in smaller events (including many amateurs), most did not accumulate enough rating points above the 200-300 range. Other players scored well in one or two major events, but lacked the overall consistency needed to make "contender status" — which is about 1,000 points. Still other players chalked up numerous small victories and

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several final-table appearances, yet they lacked large enough wins (in terms of points) to catapult them into the upper echelon of finishers. Naturally, the "Player of the Year" honor was awarded to the player having the highest point total. Following are the results of the 1998 year in tournament poker:

The Top 12

1. T.J. Cloutier, Dallas, TX ..... 3,277 points
2. Randy Holland, Orange, CA 2,833
3. "Miami" John Cernuto, Las Vegas, NV 2,763
4. Men Nguyen, Bell Gardens, CA 2,533
5. Scotty Nguyen, Henderson, NV 2,460
6. An Tran, Monterey Park, CA 2,230
7. Steve Rydel, Stoke-on-Kent, Eng. 2,186
8. Barbara Enright, Hollywood, CA 2,071
9. John Juanda, Westminster, CA 1,968
10 Vince Burgio, West Hills, CA 1,785
11. Dan Negreanu, Willowdale, Ont., Canada 1,758
12. Layne Flack, Missoula, MT 1,646

Comments: A discussion of this rating system and results would not be complete without a few candid observations:

1. T.J. Cloutier — He began the year



T.J. Cloutier

in his usual style, winning the $500 buy-in limit hold'em event at the Rio's *Carnivale of Poker*. He also won the $500 buy-in pot-limit hold'em event at the *L.A. Poker Classic VIII*. In April, the *World Series of Poker* wasn't too bad for him, either. He won his fourth gold bracelet in the $2,500 buy-in pot-limit Omaha event, then went on to finish third in the $10,000 world championship (yet another final-table appearance, but still no win in "the big one"). Demonstrating his mastery of all games, he also achieved a Chinese poker win at the *Legends of Poker*. In last year's rankings, he ranked second on the list. Many thought that he was the favorite to take "Player of the Year" honors this year. If you bet on him, cash your tickets now. While you're there, be sure to make another wager for 1999. It's hard to imagine anyone being favored over Cloutier.

2. Randy Holland — In recent years, this Canadian-born former attorney has



Randy Holland

been one of tournament poker's most underrated players. After a number of final-table appearances, a few people began to take notice. Then in 1996, he won his first *WSOP* bracelet — in seven-card razz. To his credit, he has performed at a consistent level of excellence ever since, demonstrated by 18 final-table appearances in 1998. He won four major events in 1998 — including no-limit hold'em events at both the *L.A. Poker Classic VII* and the *Winnin' o' the Green*, the eight-or-better event at the Bicycle Club's *Legends of Poker*, and the razz event at the *Legends of Poker*. It's long overdue for the poker community to acknowledge what many players (particularly those who have faced him) already know: Randy Holland is one of the best poker players in the game today.

3. "Miami" John Cernuto — He actually had more final-table appearances than any other player on the list (20). Although he was limited to only one major win in 1998 — in pot-limit Omaha at the *Queens*



"Miami" John Cernuto

Poker Classic VIII — he once again demonstrated the overall level of consistency that has kept his name atop the tournament money winners' list for more than a decade. He won the "Best All Around" prize at Commerce Casino's *California State Poker Championship*, and remains a serious threat in any game, at any limit, in any tournament he plays.

4. Men "The Master" Nguyen — 1997's Player of the Year drops this year to fourth in the rankings. Despite the "decline," Nguyen still managed an impressive performance — with five wins and 15 final-table appearances. A repeat of the point total he achieved last year (3,341 points) would be a difficult task for anyone, even "The Master." So, perhaps his 1998 shortfall was inevitable. Most players would welcome such a fate. The former laundry and furniture store owner had his biggest payday most recently at the *U.S. Poker Championship* in the $1,000 buy-in seven-card stud event. And even though he has been hampered the last two years by disappointing performances at the *World Series*, he likely will become a permanent fixture on this list for years to come.

5. Scotty Nguyen — What can be said about the current world champion? This much: He plays every poker game with the same fearless tenacity that he exhibited during his *World Series of Poker* appearance. He won two other major events in 1998, both at the *Queens Poker Classic VIII* — in seven-card stud and Omaha high-low. Nguyen, at age 36, also might be some-

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thing of a visionary. After taking third-place prize money in the $2,000 buy-in event at the *WSOP*, he seemed to predict his own upcoming victory. "You will see me at more final tables here," he said. Two weeks later, he made this third *WSOP* final table, and took home $1 million.

6. An (Anthony) Tran — He is a former poker dealer who became a professional player nine years ago. In 1991, he won the pot-limit Omaha title at the *World Series*, and has won many other major tournaments since then. He also ranked 11th on the 1997 "Player of the Year" list, and many observers thought that he would be a favorite to contend for top honors this year. They weren't disappointed. In 1998, he made 17 final tables and enjoyed his biggest win in the $1,000 buy-in pot-limit hold'em event at the Rio's *Carnivale of Poker*.

7. Steve Rydel — One of Britain's top poker players for many years, he finally crossed the Atlantic and won four major tournament events in 1998. In his first-ever trip to the *World Series*, he made two final tables and overcame a record field in the $3,000 pot-limit hold'em event to win the title. He also enjoyed two wins at the *Queens Poker Classic VIII* (no-limit hold'em and pot-limit Omaha) and one at *The Orleans Open* (no-limit hold'em). If this former jeweler decides to relocate at least temporarily to the United States and starts playing in more tournaments, expect to see him in numerous winner's circles. You also can expect to see his name again on the 1999 list, if his short but impressive American success story is any indication.

8. Barbara Enright — She is another player who is approaching "living legend" status. Her list of tournament wins reads like an encyclopedia. Her 1998 performance was no less impressive, with 13 final-table appearances, including her most recent win at seven-card stud in December's *Holiday Bonus Tournament*. She also overcame 373 competitors in the limit hold'em event at Crystal Park's *Poker Challenge Week* back in August to win the title. She was the only woman to make this year's list (displacing Kathy Liebert, who was 1997's only woman).

9. John Juanda — This year, he made 15 final-table appearances. His biggest wins took place at the *L.A. Poker Classic VII* (limit hold'em) and the *Heavenly Hold'em Tournament* (pot-limit hold'em). During the last few years, he seems to have developed an exceptional level of tournament mastery, particularly for hold'em events. In 1998, a staggering 13 out of his 15 final-table appearances were in hold'em competitions. He ranked high on last year's list and is likely to be one of poker's "players to watch" in 1999 as well.

10. Vince Burgio — While he wasn't busy writing columns for *Card Player*, he could be found at a poker tournament — and often at the final table. In 1998, he made 16 final tables and won three major events — at the *L.A. Poker Classic VII* (eight-or-better), the *California State Poker Championship* (no-limit hold'em), and the *Legends of Poker* (no-limit hold'em). He also finished second in "Best All Around" points at the *L.A. Poker Classic VII* and third at the *Legends of Poker*. Interestingly, he stated that he was motivated to play in more events in 1998 to see how he would rank on the "Player of the Year" list. Tenth place out of several thousand players — not bad, Mr. Burgio.

11. Dan Negreanu — Poker's newest "shooting star" shows no signs of fading. In fact, he seems to shine brighter the more events he plays and the longer he stays on the tournament circuit. At age 24, he is considered by many to be destined perhaps to be the next great poker prodigy. Such distinction comes with higher public expectations, which he seems to welcome with a refreshing sense of humility. In 1998, he won four major events — at the *World Series* (pot-limit hold'em), the *California State Poker Championship* (limit hold'em), *The Orleans Open* (half stud, half hold'em), and the *Heavenly Hold'em Tournament* (limit hold'em).

12. Layne Flack — At age 30, he is another player with a seemingly incredible future ahead of him. He started his career as a poker dealer. Sometime ago, he discovered an uncanny talent for cards on the other side of the table. Playing in his first *World Series* this year, he finished second in the $2,000 no-limit hold'em event. Although he made only seven final-table appearances all year (he played in far fewer tournaments than most competitors), five of them were in no-limit hold'em events. He won the $1,000 buy-in event at the *Carnivale of Poker*. He also won the Omaha high-low event at the *Big Poker Oktober* tournament. We expect to see him at many final tables in 1999.

Conclusion: Beginning in 1999 with the Rio's *Carnivale of Poker*, I will maintain a computer data base of players' names and their tournament finishes during the upcoming year. It remains to be seen what I will do with these tabulations. However, the "Player of the Year" column shall be an annual tribute to those who have proven themselves to be the year's best tournament players. In my next column, I will break down every game (various forms of hold'em, Omaha, stud, and so on) and will rank the top 10 players on each list. Finally, I wish to thank Mike Paulle, Tom Sims, Don Larrimore, and Bob Delisle for their tournament coverage. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the many casino representatives who faxed me results on a short deadline.◆

Nolan Dalla can be contacted at: nolandalla@aol.com.

Writer's note: In my Jan. 8, 1999, column, "The Best and Worst Places in America to Play Poker," I made at least one glaring omission. In the segment on the San Francisco-Oakland area (which ranked third on the list), I failed to mention one of the region's top cardrooms. **Casino San Pablo** *in San Pablo is and has been one of the finest poker rooms in California for several years. I personally have visited Casino San Pablo, which is located a short distance north of Oakland, and believe it deserves special mention for its superior staff and excellent services to the poker community. My apologies for this omission.*



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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Europe

By Nic Szeremeta

European Super Bowl of Poker ... All but two of the seats for the second *European Super Bowl of Poker* have been allocated after a year of competition in EPPA ranking tournaments and nominated Grand Slam events.

The final two seats in the three-table $25,000 freeroll will go to the two highest-placing EPPA players in the major Omaha competition, which will take place the prior day at the Concord Card Casino, Vienna. Concord is sponsoring this event and the European Poker Players Asssociation European championship this year and in the year 2000.

Alternate rounds of stud, Omaha, and hold'em will be played throughout the contest, so whoever wins will prove to be an all-around player. It will be played on the first Sunday of the *Vienna Spring Festival* March 18-28.

The other feature event of the *Festival* will be the third *European World Series Trial*. This will be a no-limit hold'em tournament that will be played over four days to the same timetable and ante structure as the *World Series of Poker* championship event. One of its objectives will be to give European players experience in playing a "slow" no-limit hold'em tournament in advance of having a shot at the $10,000 competition in Las Vegas.

The *Euro Trial*, which costs 15,000 Austrian schillings (approximately $12,000) to enter, has proven to be one of the success stories of the Euro circuit. Last year, it attracted 121 entrants, and this year, with approximately 50 to 60 locals qualifying through weekly supersatellites, the field is expected to be even bigger.

Also on the schedule will be a 5,000 schilling limit stud event, an EPPA ranking event on the second weekend. The *Super Bowl* qualifiers are: Aidan Bennett, Ireland; defending champion, Julian Gardner, UK; Christian Walczewski, Germany; Christoph Haller, Germany; Barney Boatman, UK; Alex Kong, UK; Hannu Hakala, Sweden; George Geary, UK; Ross Boatman, UK; Liam Flood, Ireland; Alex Dietrich, Germany; Robert Kojfer, France; Alan McClean, UK; Michael Greiner, Germany; Alex Riessemann, Austria; Franz Wagner, Austria; Thor Hansen, Denmark; David Tavernier, France; Pekka Salmi, Finland; Steve Vladar, UK; Asher Derei, Israel; Chip Winton, United States; Bruno Micchiardi, Italy; and Marion Flock, Germany.

The European ranking lists for 1998 were dominated by UK players. In hold'em, Julian Gardner won with 10,064 points, well ahead of second-place finisher Dave Welch, also of the UK. Third place went to Christian Walczewski of Germany. Barney Boatman of the UK headed the stud rankings, with Alan McClean of the UK finishing second and Alex Riesemann of Austria garnering third. In Omaha, Christoph Haller of Germany came out on top, Robert Kojfer of France finished second, and George Geary of the UK captured third.

Paris prizes top $270,000 ... The annual *Winter Tournament* at the Aviation Club de France, Paris, generated a total prize pool of $277,000 for the week. All but one of the events was won by ACF regulars; only Alex Kong of the UK won for the visitors.

The top prize of the week of almost 200,000 francs (almost $90,000) went to local Pierre Brochard, who won the 5,000 franc no-limit hold'em event. Belgian Michel Cordier, for whom the ACF is a bit of a happy hunting ground, took second place for 95,000 francs. No player managed a double win, but several hit the big money twice. Pascal Perrault took home 140,000 francs for his win in the pot-limit hold'em event and third-place finish in the 5,000 franc no-limit competition, and Fabrizio Ricci collected 120,000 francs for a win and a second-place finish. By the time this issue hits the cardrooms, the ACF's major event of the year — *the Euro Finals of Poker* — will be under way. Also, the *Spring Festival* will be held there March 6-14.

Results of the *Winter Tournament* were as follows:

2,500 franc Omaha
Entrants: 40
Prize pool: 152,500 FF ($28,000)

1. Jean-Michelle Henrion, France 60,000 FF
2. Patrice Lapage, France 29,200
3. Rank Callaghan, Ireland 18,000
4. Aidan Bennett, Ireland 11,200
5. Ofer Ovadia, Israel 7,000
6. Karim Bazzi, UK 4,900
7. George McKeever, Ireland 4,900
8. Gerard Duguet-Grasser, France 2,800
9. Michel Abecassis, France 1,250
10. David Tavernier, France 1,250

2,500 franc no-limit hold'em
Entrants: 46 • Prize pool: 205,000 FF ($37,500)

1. Robert Louisadat, France . 80,200 FF
2. Fabrizio Ricci, Italy 39,100
3. Fabrice Dimeglio, France 24,200

4. Robin Keston, UK 15,000
5. Leo Douek, France 9,300
6. David Elbaz, France 7,500
7. Patrice Lepage, France 5,500
8. Daniel Berkowicz, France 3,600
9. Jean Pierre Stella, France 2,500

1,000 franc Omaha high-low split
Entrants: 44 • Prize pool: 86,000 FF ($15,800)

1. Elie Martial, France ..... 32,800 FF
2. Karim Bazzi, UK 16,000
3. Ofer Ovadia, Israel 9,000
4. Victor Waknin, France 6,100
5. Patrice Lepage, France 3,800
6. Olivier Labos, France 3,000
7. Jean Pierre Stella, France 2,300
8. Jeff Duvall, France 1,500
9. Jean Michel Henrion, France .. 1,000

1000 franc dealer's choice
Entrants: 42
Prize pool: 82,000 FF ($15,000)

1. Alex Kong, UK ..... 32,000 FF
2. Marcus Michaels, UK 16,000
3. Ebi Pajand, France 10,800
4. Alain Abbou, France 6,400
5. Danny Newman, UK 2,900
6. Jean Pierre Stella, France 2,200
7. Philippe Michel, France 1,400
8. Claude Cohen, France 1,000

2,500 franc pot-limit hold'em
Entrants: 55
Prize pool: 210,000 FF ($38,000)

1. Pascal Perrault, France .... 82,000 FF
2. Surinder Sunar, UK 40,000
3. Xavier Detournel, France 24,600
4. Benjamin Hannuna, France .. 15,300
5. Alain Abbou, France 8,850
6. Ofer Ovadia, Israel 8,850
7. Jean Pierre Huard, France 5,700
8. Teddy Tuil, France 3,800
9. Dave Ulliott, UK 2,500

5,000 franc pot-limit Omaha
Entrants: 41
Prize pool: 82,000 FF ($15,000)

1. Fabrizio Ricci, Italy ..... 78,000 FF
2. John Kabbaj, UK 37,600
3. Danny Newman, UK 23,600
4. Ofer Ovadia, Israel 14,500
5. Christoph Haller, Germany 9,000
6. Jan Boubli, France 7,300
7. Angelo Besnainou, France 5,500
8. Simon Trumper, UK 5,000
9. Karim Bazzi, UK 5,000

2,500 franc hold'em/stud/Omaha
Entrants: 55
Prize pool: 210,000 FF ($38,000)

1. Not available ..... 69,300 FF
2. Elie Martial, France 33,800
3. Angelo Besnainou, France 21,000
4. Cesare Bornaghi, Italy 12,800
5. Alex Kong, UK 8,000
6. Xavier Detournel, France 6,400
7. Robert Kojfer, France 4,800
8. Julian Gardner, UK 3,200
9. Karim Bazzi, UK 2,500

5,000 franc no-limit hold'em
Entrants: 55 • Prize pool: 485,000 FF ($89,000)

1. Pierre Brochard, France . 194,500 FF
2. Michel Cordier, Belgium 95,000
3. Pascal Perrault, France 58,800
4. J. Baptiste Brochu, France 36,300
5. Patrick Lang-Willan, France .. 22,600
6. Paul Testud, France 18,100
7. Laurent Besnainou, France ... 13,600
8. Yves Aknin, France 9,000
9. Patrick Bruel, France 5,000

Hold'em with a difference ... The poker room at Casino Bregenz, Austria, is experimenting with a new form of hold'em tournament during a four-day event Feb. 25-28.

The schedule for the 3,000 schilling competition at the popular Casinos Austria venue will be include all three hold'em disciplines. The first three levels will be limit, the next four will be pot-limit, and the remainder will be no-limit.

The casino also will spread its 5,000 schilling limit stud tournament over two days, so that it can be played to a slower timetable, thus enabling competitors to get into the cash action without being played out.

The Bregenz management also has taken the groundbreaking step of publishing its timetable and ante structure in advance, so that players will be familiar with them prior to arrival. One of the bones of contention in Europe is that players travel to events only to find that schedules are much faster than they would like. Entries will be limited to a maximum of 70 and 90 for the stud and hold'em

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competitions.

The Bregenz cardroom's pre-Christmas tournament turned out to be a festive affair for many of Europe's leading tournament money winners.

Results were as follows:

Limit stud

Entrants: 40 • Prize pool: 494,000 ATS ($40,000)

1. Istvan Hamori, Hungary ..... 172,900 ATS ($13,800)
2. Antonio Turrisi, Italy 98,800
3. Ernst Stoller, Switzerland 59,280
4. Zvonny Jozic, Switzerland 49,400
5. Herr Stieger, Germany 39,520
6. Peter Faulmann, Austria 29,640
7. Herr Nguyen, Switzerland 24,900
8. Sigi Baud, Switzerland 19,760

1999 European Poker Tournaments

Tournaments marked * include either EPPA ranking events or Grand Slam events. These also are tentative and additional EPPA events may be added.

Euro Finals of Poker * — ACF; Paris, France; Feb. 6-14

Hold'em Challenge — Casino Bregenz; Austria; Feb. 25-28

Spring Festival — ACF; Paris, France; March 6-14

*Vienna Spring Festival** (featuring the EPPA *Super Bowl European Championship Final* and the *European WSOP Trial*) — Concord Card Casino; Vienna, Austria; March 18-28

*Irish Open** — Jackpot Club; Dublin, Ireland; April 1-4

*Bad Homburg Championship** — Spielbank Bad Homburg; Germany; April 6-11

Great Britain Hold'em Championship — Rainbow Casino; Birmingham, UK; to be announced.

Poker Tournament — Casino Bregenz; Austria; May 13-16

*Torneo di Poker** — Hit Casino Park; Nova Gorica, Slovenia; May 25-30

*Midnight Sun Tournament** — Casino Ray; Finland; June 1-6

Austrian Masters — Concord Card Casino; Vienna, Austria; June 8-15

Seefeld Masters — Casino Seefeld; Austria; June 23-27

*Summer Tournament** — ACF; Paris, France; June 19-July 4

*Bregenz Championship** — Casino Bregenz; Austria; Sept. 9-12

*Autumn Tournament** — ACF; Paris; Sept 18-26

Austrian Classics — Concord Card Casino; Vienna; Sept. 28-Oct. 5

*Poker EM** (European Limit Stud Championships) — Casino Baden; Austria; Oct. 7-9

*Manx Festival of Gaming** — Stakis Casino; Isle of Man, UK; to be announced

Bad Homburg Poker Jubilee — Casino Bad Homburg; Germany; Oct. 25-30

*Master Classics of Poker** — Holland Casinos; Amsterdam, Holland; Nov 7-13

*European Open** — Spielbank Hohensyburg; Dortmund, Germany; to be announced

Winter Festival — ACF; Paris, France; Dec. 4-12

*Helsinki Freezeout** — Casino Ray; Helsinki, Finland; Dec. 13-19

Bregenz Winter Championship — Bregenz, Austria; Dec. 15-17

Note: The *Poker en Mer* poker cruise is scheduled Oct. 16-23.



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Sun.	Apr. 11	6 p.m.	$120	Limit Hold'em
Mon.	Apr. 12	6 p.m.	$220	7-Card Stud 8 or Better
Tue.	Apr. 13	6 p.m.	$220	7-Card Stud
Wed.	Apr. 14	6 p.m.	$220	Omaha 8 or Better
Thu.	Apr. 15	6 p.m.	$330	7-Card Stud
Fri.	Apr. 16	6 p.m.	$120	7-Card Stud*
Sat.	Apr. 17	6 p.m.	$550	7-Card Stud
Sun.	Apr. 18	6 p.m.	$330	Limit Hold'em
Mon.	Apr. 19	1 p.m.	Final Table $330 Limit Hold'em	

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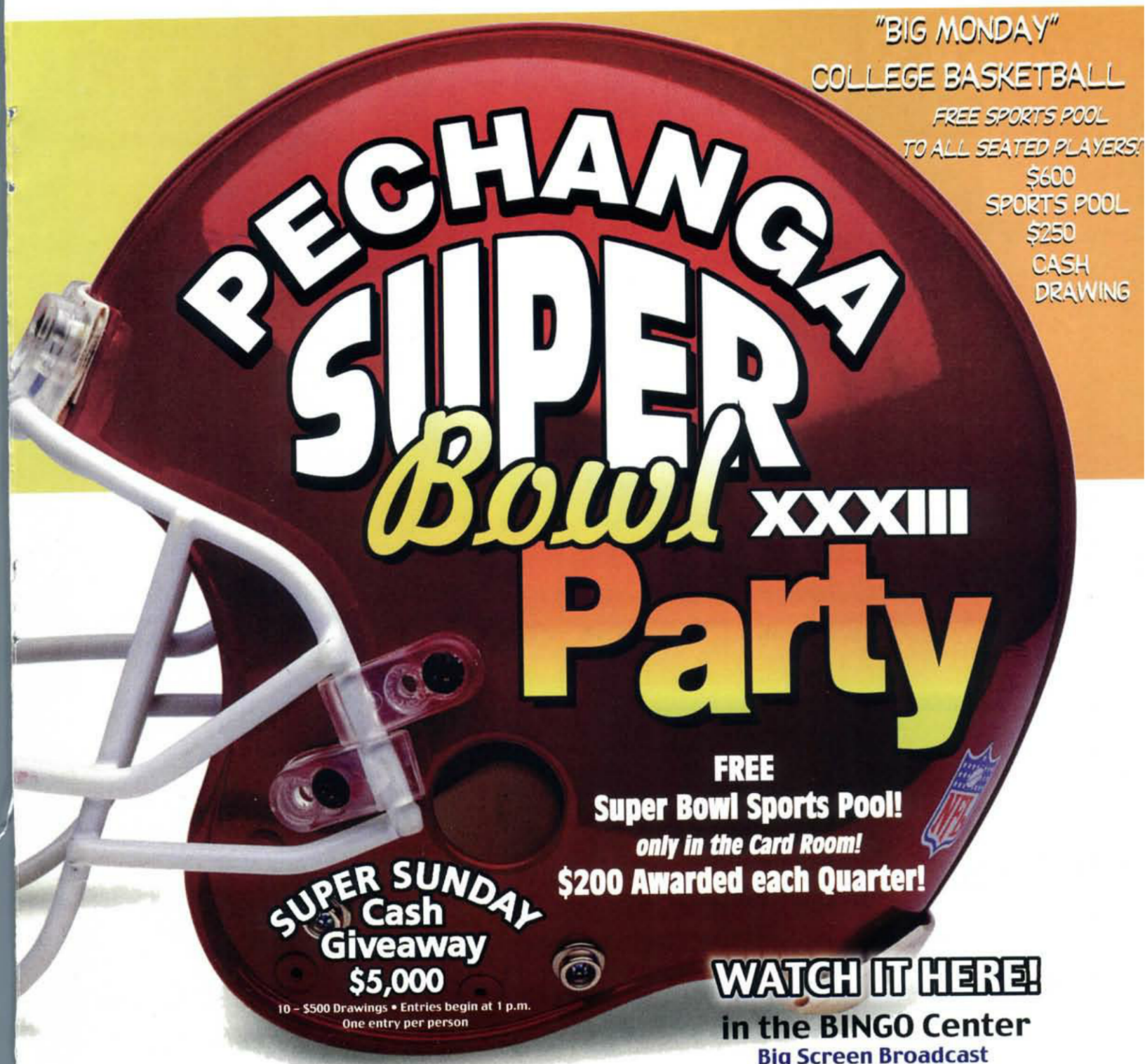

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Reno Report

By Susie Isaacs

Let's Get It On ... For those of you who do not recognize the "Let's get it on" war cry, it originates from Mills Lane. For the few of you who do not recognize that famous name, let me explain. Mills Lane was (recently retired) the most famous boxing referee in the world. He refereed fights involving every boxing great of recent decades. Most notably, he was the referee during the unforgettable Tyson-Holyfield fight in which Tyson's cannibalistic attack on Holyfield's ear resulted in Tyson's temporary banishment from boxing. Lane is now a famous TV personality via the latest courtroom drama, *Judge Mills Lane*.

Additionally, Lane was a district court judge in Reno, and is an avid poker player. Thus, the Mills Lane *Let's Get It On!* annual poker tournament, which recently concluded at Boomtown in Reno, was born.

I recently asked Poker Manager Joe Bennett how the tournament idea originated. He said, "The truth of the matter is, I got a speeding ticket. The day that I went to the courthouse to pay it, I arrived two hours early. I had been thinking about a poker tournament that we wanted to have, and about a theme or at least a name for it. With two hours to kill, I discovered that my old buddy Judge Mills Lane was in his chambers, so I dropped by for a visit. Mills made an honest man out of me five years ago when he performed the marriage for my wife (Darlene) and me. We talked, and I told him about the poker tournament. Even though he was buried with his hectic schedule, he told me to check with his secretary about the scheduling. Then, he smiled, and in Mills Lane referee fashion, he said, 'Let's get it on!' I knew then what we would call our tournament."

I had the privilege of meeting Lane at the latest Boomtown tournament, as he was on hand mixing and mingling and signing autographs. He is full of personality and loves his public and his poker. He was fun and funny — until the tournament began and then he became serious. For the record, he is a good poker player, and he makes an effort to become better because he has a mission — to play in the *World Series of Poker*.

When Bennett made his appearance at the tournament sporting full tuxedo attire, heads turned. Lane quipped, "And they say crime doesn't pay — you look like a French pimp!"

Now, for the results — let's get it on!



$100 hold'em
Entrants: 83 • Prize pool: $8,300

1. Dan Camillo	2,988
2. Cheri Coley	1,909
3. Charlie Lee	1,162
4. Chris Christensen	747
5. Ed White	415
6. Rosemary Maxfield	290
7. Jan Fisher	249
8. John Check	208
9. Tommy Reynoso	166
10. Sue Byrd	166

$100 Omaha high-low split
Entrants: 49 • Rebuys: 47
Prize pool: $10,700

1. Robert Lizarraga	$3,852
2. Chuck Frank	2,461
3. Don Tiederman	1,498
4. Anthony Deioria	963
5. Ed White	535
6. Jerry Flor	374
7. Ken Barlor	321
8. Jack Niles	268
9. Rosanne Stanley	214
10. Salvatore Citarelli,	214

$100 limit hold'em
Entrants: 49 • Rebuys: 33
Prize pool: $8,200

1. Kha Ung	$2,852
2. Jerry Fiske	1,850
3. Ira Eisenberg	1,128
4. Tom Hasperis	738
5. Terry Thomas	410
6. Chuck Frank	287
7. Dan Camillo	245
8. Woody Malin	235
9. Genrose Neff	230
10. Sophie Kalfas	225



First-place limit hold'em winner Kha Ung (left) is congratulated by Boomtown Poker Room Manager Joe Bennett.

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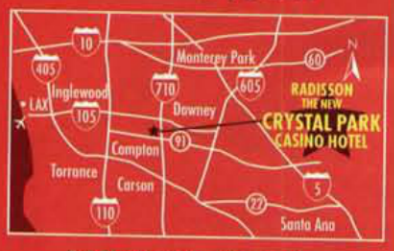

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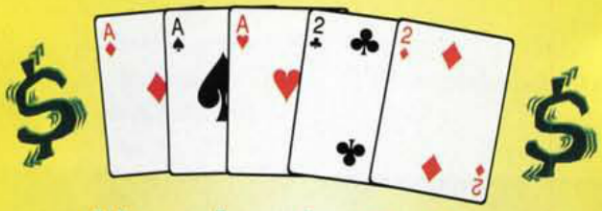

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Countdown to Peppermill ... It's almost that time of year again — time for the *Peppermill Spring Poker Tournament*. Just like the swallows regularly return to Capistrano in the spring, poker players head to Reno for the annual big poker shindig. Tournament Director Billy V. has made a few changes in the scheduling, per player requests. There will not be a partners event, however, the popular consensus is that the regular second-chance tournaments that have been added to the schedule are a better-than-even trade. Every evening, the second-chance events will coincide with the day's competition, so if you bomb out on your first attempt, try, try again. Yes, the schedule has a few changes, but what you like best about the Peppermill will remain the same — great poker personnel, great treatment, great service, great food, special players' room rates, and so on.

Vegas News and Views

By Steve Radulovich

Boulder Station ... A new promotion is set to begin in the poker room at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 8. At that time, and continuing indefinitely, any player who makes trips (three of a kind) or better in any game will receive a drawing ticket. Then, on Monday, Feb. 15, and on every Monday thereafter, drawings will be held for players to "spin the wheel" for cash prizes. Two names will be drawn every hour from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. Those players whose names are drawn will then have the opportunity to spin a wheel that will contain 52 playing cards on it. Each player will get five spins of the wheel to make up a five-card poker hand to determine his prize.

The unique aspect of this promotion is that if anyone makes a royal flush on his five spins, he will win $1 million. The prize money payouts for all of the possible poker hands are as follows:

- one pair — $25
- two pair — $50
- trips (three of a kind) — $100
- straight — $200
- flush — $300
- full house — $500
- four of a kind — $1,000
- straight flush — $10,000
- royal flush — $1 million

Texas Station ... The *Buy for Benz* promotion is set to start in the poker room on Monday, Feb. 8. This promotion will feature two separate drawings — one for cash and one for a Mercedes-Benz 1999C-230 as follows:

Cash Drawings

- Players must register in the poker room.
- Drawing ticket distribution will begin on Monday, Feb. 8 at 1 p.m. and will continue until Saturday, March 6 at 1 p.m.
- Players will earn drawing tickets in the following ways:

— One ticket for a $50 buy-in (initial buy-in only)

— Three tickets for a $100 buy-in (initial buy-in only)

— One ticket will be placed

in every pot of $20 or more.

— One ticket will be given to each player at the table at every dealer change.

• At each cash drawing, one ticket will be drawn for a $500 cash prize. The winner must be present. Drawings will continue until there is a winner.

• Drawings will be held every Saturday and Sunday from Feb. 13 to March 7 at 1 p.m., 3 p.m., 5 p.m., 7 p.m., and 9 p.m.

• Drawing tickets will not be distributed from 1 p.m. to 11 p.m. on drawing days.

Mercedes-Benz Drawing

• Players must register in the poker room.

• Drawing ticket distribution will begin on Monday, Feb. 8 at noon and will continue until Wednesday, March 10 at 5 p.m.

• Players will earn drawing tickets in the following ways:

— First ticket: upon registration and first buy-in

— Second ticket: upon five hours of live-action play

— Third ticket: upon 10 hours of live-action play

— Fourth ticket: upon 15 hours of live-action play

Each player will be allowed a maximum of four drawing tickets.

• The drawing will be held on Wednesday, March 10 at 7 p.m. The winner must be present and may elect to receive $25,000 *in lieu of* the car.

Stratosphere ... A new five-card stud section is scheduled to open at noon on Friday, Feb. 12. The new section will be located in the pai gow poker/minibaccarat section of the casino.

The game will utilize a 32-card deck (deuces, treys, fours, fives, and sixes not included in the deck). Plans call for various limits to be spread as follows: low-limit ($2-$20 and $5-$50), pot-limit, and high-limit.

The Stratosphere will be the only casino in Nevada to offer this game.

A grand opening party will be held for the new section on Feb. 12 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. The public is invited, however, reservations are required. For further information and reservations, contact Stratosphere Director of International Marketing Jimmy Hsu at (800) 998-6937, Ext. 5227.

CasaBlanca, Mesquite ... Poker Room Manager Bob Davidson recently stated, "Our Tuesday night tournament started as a one-year birthday celebration and promotion for the property. It became so popular that we never stopped doing it. It's always a great time."

The $25 buy-in for the 5 p.m. tournament includes two buffets. If a player logs a minimum of four hours of live-action play, his room accommodations are complimentary.

The game changes each week. The February schedule will be as follows:

• Feb. 2 — razz

• Feb. 9 — limit hold'em

• Feb. 16 — seven-card stud

• Feb. 23 — Omaha high

Palace Station ... Results of the most recent Omaha high $1,000 freeroll tournament were as follows:

1. Rudy Lebovich $500
2. Nancy Weir 250
3. Ernie Leccese 150
4. Rocky Brown 100

Fifth- through eighth-place finishers Steven Dresback, Eddie Plake, Joe Gaglairdi, and Sylvia Reiter each won a

Reno's Premier Place To Play!



Spring Classic Poker Tournament

March 12 - 19
Friday - Friday

FRIDAY, MARCH 12
Limit Hold 'Em
$120 Buy-in + $100 Re-buy

SATURDAY, MARCH 13
Limit Hold 'Em
$225 Buy-in + $200 Re-buy

SUNDAY, MARCH 14
No Limit Hold 'Em
$225 Buy-in, No Re-buy

MONDAY, MARCH 15
Limit Hold 'Em
$225 Buy-in, No Re-buy

TUESDAY, MARCH 16
Omaha Hi-Lo Split
$120 Buy-in + $100 Re-buy

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17
"Terminator"
No Limit Hold 'Em
$120 Buy-in + $100 Re-buy

THURSDAY, MARCH 18
1/2 Hold 'Em
1/2 Omaha Hi-Lo Split
$120 Buy-in + $100 Re-buy

FRIDAY, MARCH 19
Limit Hold 'Em
$120 Buy-in +Unlimited
$50 Re-buys for the
first three rounds

All tournaments start at noon.

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6 pm Every Evening
$120 Buy-in, No Re-buy
Seating limited
Registration opens at 5 pm



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$25 voucher good for a buy-in for any Omaha high game.

Qualifying for the next Omaha high $1,000 freeroll tournament will begin on Feb. 1 at noon; players who log eight hours of live-action Omaha high play receive $500 in tournament chips, and players who log 12 hours receive $600. The tournament will be played on Feb. 14 at noon.

In the most recent seven-card stud high-low split $1,000 freeroll tournament, results were as follows:

1. Ann Schintzer $500
2. Gladys Green 250
3. Rick Wilkens 150
4. Larry Alverez 100

Fifth- through eighth-place finishers Bill McCaig, Steven Dresback, Donna Saboe, and Al Benbow each won a $25 voucher good for a buy-in for any seven-card stud high-low split game.

Qualifying for the next seven-card stud high-low split $1,000 freeroll tournament will begin on Feb. 8 at noon. Qualifying hours/chips received are the same as those for the Omaha high freeroll tournament. The tournament will be played on Feb. 21 at noon.

California Ramblings

Hollywood Park Casino ... Tournament fever will take off on Feb. 5 at 3 p.m. with the first *ESCARGOT* (Experimental Southern California Recreational Gambling Outing and Tournament), a joint venture of Hollywood Park Casino and Crystal Park Casino. For a $50 buy-in and $10 entry fee, players can enter the limit hold'em event with no rebuys. Registration for the three-day, three-tournament event is strictly by E-mail. Those who wish to participate can subscribe to the *ESCARGOT* mailing list by sending E-mail to majordomo@conjelco.com or loukrieger@aol.com with the message reading "subscribe escargot." Any additional information can be obtained by logging on to http://www.pokerworld.com. The tournament will be followed by a free seminar by Mike Caro, sponsored by Mike Caro University.

Through Feb. 22, those players who play $3-$6 and higher in any poker game can earn chips for each hour played for entry into a $50,000 freeroll tournament on Sunday, Feb. 28. Players logging 20 hours will be rewarded with $300 in tournament chips, 30 hours of play earns $400 in chips, 40 hours of play earns $500, and 50-hour players receive $600 in chips. Players at the final four tables will be paid and will win a *Tournament of Champions* entry and free entries into the next *National Championship of Poker* tournament at Hollywood Park Casino.

The recently released Mike Caro University limited edition $5 chip already has reached collector status and may be worth as much as $50 at the National Chip Convention this summer.

The *Winterfest* poker tournament is here, Jan. 28-31. Tournament events will include limit hold'em, no-limit hold'em, and seven-card stud high-low split. The buy-in for all events is $120 with one optional $100 rebuy.

Fantasy Springs Casino ... The sixth annual *Tournament of Champions* recently concluded. Players qualified by winning points for tournament play during 1998. George Di Vincenzo Sr. won the title of Grand Champion for 1998. Results were as follows:

1. George Di Vincenzo Sr. $936
2. David Kunhert 585
3. Gilbert Munoz 468
4. Ed Messereni Sr. 234
5. Ed Pedalino 117

Commerce Casino ... will join many of its Asian customers in celebrating the Asian New Year, which commences Feb. 16. The



George Di Vincenzo Sr.

casino extends wishes of good health and prosperity to all patrons in the "Year of the Rabbit," also referred to as the "Year of the Cat" in Vietnamese cultures.

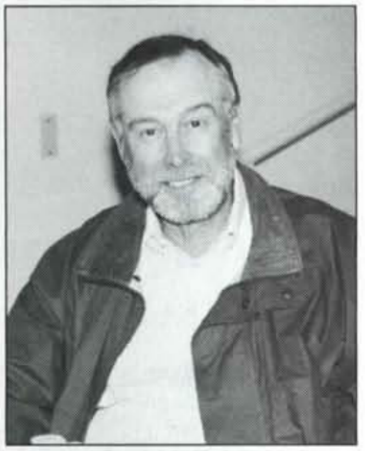
L.A. Poker Classic VIII players will note that Feb. 12 will feature a day of special cash drawings totaling $10,000 for lucky tournament players. Players who participate in events No. 1 through No. 7 will be given a drawing ticket for two $5,000 casino drawings on Feb. 12. Tournament players must retain their drawing tickets and be present at drawing times to claim the cash prizes. Other *L.A. Poker Classic* bonuses include a special limited edition tournament jacket for each competitor who makes it to the final table in the lowball championship event and the *L.A. Poker Classic* championship.

As *L.A. Poker Classic* satellites and initial tournament events get under way, live-action play will heat up, especially in the top poker section where out-of-towners will take their seats in the Terrace for big hold'em and stud games daily.

Ocean's Eleven Casino ... The largest promotion ever held at Ocean's Eleven Casino, the *$125,000 Freeroll*, recently concluded with three tournaments held over five days. The promotion ran for five months, with players accumulating points based on hours played. All of the tournaments were limit hold'em. Results were as follows:

$10,000 bonus event
100 players

1. Carl McKelvey $4,000



Carl McKelvey



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FROM 2 P.M. TIL GAME END

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The Bicycle Club Casino reserves the right to cancel or modify this promotion at its sole discretion. For Pick Cards no purchase necessary. See official rules at the Welcome Center.



John Shortsteps

2. Robert Tatum 2,200
3. Mohammad Banktavakoli 1,100
4. Fred Smith 700
5. Ron Weaver 600
6. Perry Werbel 500
7. Hugh McLean 400
8. Not available 300
9. Lydia Humphrey 200

$15,000 bonus event
63 players

1. John Shortsteps ... $6,000
2. Anthony Pociunus .. 2,490
3. Maurice Rice 2,490
4. Not available 1,050
5. Star McCormick 900
6. Bob Buchanan 750
7. Dwight Hill 525
8. Billy Duarte 525
9. Mostafa Nematbakhsh 300

$100,000 main event
199 players

1. Bruce Kirby $40,000
2. Norm Jones 20,000
3. Bill Yuan 10,000
4. Lawrence Lee 6,000
5. Abol Parviz 4,500
6. John Lombard 3,500
7. Bruce Kaylor 2,500
8. Joe Bernier 2,000
9. Chris Hanley 1,600

The $70,000 *Cash Galore* promotion is under way. Four daily cash giveaways are being held, plus players are accumulating tickets for the large cash giveaways on Feb. 21, March 21, and April 18.

The poker section is spreading $10-$20 Omaha high-low, $9-$18 hold'em, $20-$40 hold'em, and pot-limit half hold'em-half Omaha; $40-$80 hold'em is spread on Thursdays. In addition, $3-$6 and $4-$8 hold'em, high-low hold'em, and Omaha high-low are spread every day.

Crystal Park Casino ...The *February Tournament Special* will be featured in the Top Section.



Bruce Kirby (seated), winner of the main event of Ocean's Eleven Casino's $125,000 freeroll tournament weekend, is congratulated by (left to right) owner and CEO Haig Kelegian, Tournament Director Mike Oriquiat, General Manager Bob Moyer, Tournament Coordinator Vivian Weisbly, and Shift Manager Ed Briggs.

WinterFest Tournament

$135,000 Guaranteed. Cool!

The air may be getting cooler, but the action has never been hotter at HOLLYWOOD PARK Casino! We've lined up four big events for the final weekend in January promising a cool $135,000 in prize pools! Mark your calendar now!

Event 1

Thursday
January 28
7 pm

* * *

Limit Hold'em
$100 Buy-in
$20 Entry
One Opt. $100 Rebuy

$40,000
GUARANTEED!

Event 2

Friday
January 29
7 pm

* * *

No-Limit Hold'em
$100 Buy-in
$20 Entry
One Opt. $100 Rebuy

$30,000
GUARANTEED!

Event 3

Saturday
January 30
2 pm

* * *

7-Card Stud Hi/Lo
$100 Buy-in
$20 Entry
One Opt. $100 Rebuy

$25,000
GUARANTEED!

Event 4

Sunday
January 31
~~**2 pm**~~ **7 pm**

* * * **New Time**

Limit Hold'em
$100 Buy-in
$20 Entry
One Opt. $100 Rebuy

$40,000
GUARANTEED!

Players... Don't forget our daily Poker & Ponies Tournaments ($10 Buy-in/$2,000 Guaranteed) at 11:30 am... the NEW Monday Night Poker Tournament ($50 Buy-in/$5,000 Guaranteed) at 7 pm... Mexican Poker Tournament ($20 Buy-in/$2,500 Guaranteed) on Tuesday nights at 7 pm... and the Mel W. No-Limit Hold'em tournament ($300 Buy-in/Winner take all) on Sunday nights at 6 pm.

Win $10,000 WSOP™ Entries!
Play in our special No-Limit Hold'em Shoot-out Satellites on Sundays starting January 3rd at 3 pm. $100 Buy-in/$20 Entry.
Call ext 2040 for details!

Hollywood Park CASINO

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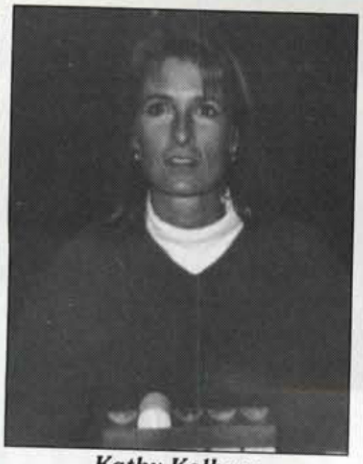
On Tuesdays, Feb. 9, 16, and 23 at 6 p.m., these tournaments will be hosted by Kwang Lee and Robert Turner, and will feature seven-card stud high-low split with a $200 buy-in, $25 entry, and no rebuys. On Thursdays, Feb. 11, 18, and 25 at 6 p.m., these tournaments will be hosted by Kathy Kolberg and Michael Woo, featuring limit hold'em with a $200 buy-in, $25 entry, and no rebuys.

The *Sweethearts* tournament is coming Saturday Feb. 13 at 7 p.m. This half hold'em-half Omaha high-low team tournament will feature a $15,000 guarantee. At least one lady is required per team. The event will feature a $100 buy-in, $20 entry per person, and no rebuys.

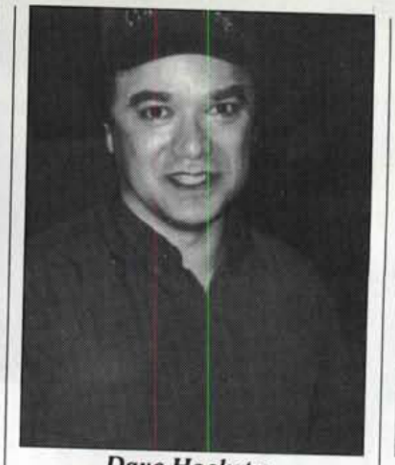
The *$60,000 Guaranteed No Rebuy Tournament Weekend* recently concluded. Results were as follows:



Kathy Kolberg

$100 no-limit hold'em
Entrants: 196
Prize pool: $19,600

1. Kathy Kolberg $7,800
2. Michael Adel 4,000
3. Reginald Cardiel 2,000
4. Doug Eaman 1,200
5. Nicasio Poyaoan 900
6. Mel Wiener 700
7. Art Hakim 600

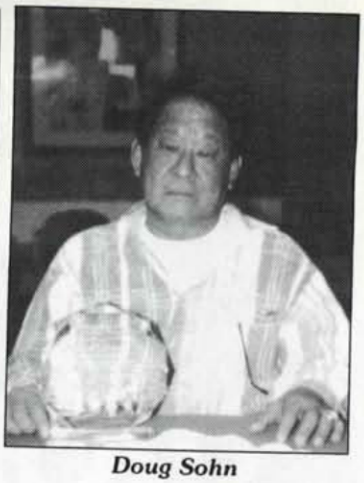


Dave Hoekstra

8. Zayan Mogadam 500
9. Ly Minh 400
10. Phillip Luong 250

$100 Omaha high-low
Entrants: 181
Prize pool: $18,100

1. Dave Hoekstra $7,700
2. Chan Vu 3,900
3. Patrick Wilmes 2,000
4. Steve Boud 1,200
5. Jim Oh 900
6. Steve Pace 700
7. Earl Shelton 600



Doug Sohn

8. Kishore Mehta 500
9. Joe Bartolome 400
10. Wally Caldwell 250

$100 limit hold'em
Entrants: 271
Prize pool: $27,100

1. Doug Sohn $9,750
2. Mario Esquerra 5,145
3. Gabriel Goldstein ... 2,710
4. Diana Bornstein 1,625
5. Mohamed Abraham 1,080
6. Danny Nguyen 945
7. Jose Mendoza 810

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4 Days / 3 Nights

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March 5th
4 Days / 3 Nights

Leave FRIDAY, MARCH 5th and Return MONDAY, MARCH 8th.

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New York, Houston	~~$749.00~~ $599
Los Angeles, San Francisco	~~$849.00~~ $699

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8. Claude Stefanescu 675
9. Joe Farmer 540
10. Jose Carlos 335

Casino San Pablo ... The *Golden Gate Classic* poker tournament currently is under way and will continue through Sunday, Feb. 7. A special $6,000 *Super Bowl* Sunday *Show Me the Money* high-hand giveaway is scheduled Jan. 31. The total guaranteed prize pool for the tournament is $150,000.

The Year of the Rabbit Chinese New Year bash will get under way in mid-February with two days of fun. On Feb. 13, a special VIP party will feature an expert card magician. Then on Feb. 16, there will be a lavish free buffet from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. for all players. The traditional dragon will perform the Lion Dance to bring good luck for the new year, followed by a night of dancing in the club's Oasis Room. This year, the lucky red envelopes will be filled with a commemorative $5 chip in a unique octagon shape. The highlight of the day will be a $10,000 giveaway beginning at 3 p.m. and continuing until midnight. Every hour from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., $500 will be given away. From 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., the amount will increase to $1,000, and then at midnight, the amount will jump to $3,000. "If the individual whose ticket we pull isn't available, we'll go to a table drawing and the money will be split among all of the players at that particular table," said Casino Manager Jerry Jackway. "At the midnight drawing, if the individual isn't there, we'll just keep drawing more individual tickets until we have a winner." Players from both the poker and California sections will be eligible for the drawings.



Michael Morris recently captured the title in a Double Hand Poker tournament at Casino San Pablo.

The weekly Double Hand Poker tournament guaranteed prize pool has been increased from $1,000 to $1,250. Tournaments begin at 8 p.m. on Sundays and Tuesdays with a $25 buy-in, $3 entry fee, and multiple rebuys. Players can receive a free buy-in ($25 value) for the tournament by being dealt an eight-high hand in a live Double Hand Poker game.

On the poker side, *Wake Up and Win* morning tournaments are being held weekdays at 11 a.m. On Mondays and Thursdays, the game is seven-card stud. On Tuesdays and Fridays, it's limit Texas hold'em, and on Wednesdays, it alternates between Omaha high-low and seven-card stud high-low; $200 is added to each tournament, and recent tournaments have topped $1,000 in prize money.

Bicycle Club Casino ... Two super pan 9 tournaments are scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 7 and Sunday, Feb. 21 in the Pavilion. The

