

***JONATHAN LITTLE***  
***ON***  
***LIVE NO-LIMIT***  
***CASH GAMES***

**2**  
*the practice*



**POKER SERIES**  
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# Introduction

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This book is quite similar to *Secrets of Professional Tournament Poker, Volume 3*, in that it is a series of hand examples presented in a quiz format. The main difference between these two books is that in tournaments, especially in fairly short-stacked situations, I almost always use math to determine the optimal play. It's nearly impossible to figure out the optimal play in cash games, especially when deep-stacked or playing with overly tricky opponents who constantly have merged ranges. Because of this, I will list each play I made, but I will also outline other options that would likely show a reasonable expectation.

I will rate all decisions on a scale from zero to 10, with zero being the worst decision and 10 the best. As you work through the questions, don't worry if you often pick the second-best answer, as long as the best two answers have close ratings. Quite often, two options are almost equally good. There is certainly a huge amount of room to vary your play in cash games.

Sometimes I play tight and other times I play loose, usually based on my opposition and how I expect them to react to my plays. I generally play a touch tighter than I recommend in Jonathan Little on *Live No-Limit Cash Games*, because people tend to assume I bluff more than a typical opponent would. This leads me to include a few more value-bets in my range. You will see this basic adjustment throughout the book, especially in my pre-flop hand selection. If you have a tight image, I strongly sug-



gest that you get well out of line on all streets and abuse your image as much as possible to win pots that do not belong to you.

I played all these hands in March 2014 after I quickly busted from a major poker tournament. I generally make the most out of my trips to poker tournaments by playing cash games when I bust early. During this four-day period I played around 14 hours per day, which is far more than normal for me. I typically limit my sessions to 12 hours or less because I lose focus when tired. I pushed myself a bit this time to get in tricky situations for the sake of this book. From talking to my students, I know that this sort of grind, where you play as much as possible over the course of a few days, is quite common for people who take brief poker trips. Over these four days, I generated quite a few accurate reads on my opponents, which I will share with you. I will give pseudonyms to those I frequently played with so you can keep track of the hands I played against them.

I played all these hands at \$10/\$20 or \$20/\$40 no-limit, but the lessons apply to all levels of cash games. You should constantly assess your opponent in every situation and adjust accordingly. Believe it or not, there are numerous weak players in the highest-stakes games, especially live games. Please do not feel that this book may not be for you because the games are either larger or smaller than you typically play. I make a point to only play in games that are fairly soft. Since my goal in playing cash games is to win money, I see no reason to play in difficult games. For example, I often sat in a \$10/\$20 game while a \$20/\$40 game was running. I thought my hourly rate would be higher in my specific \$10/\$20 game compared to the \$20/\$40 game. You must be able to accurately assess your competition if you want to have an edge. If you don't think you will have an edge in your current game and you are playing purely to make money, you need to find another game.

You will notice that I generally have a fairly large stack in terms of big blinds. My default buy-in is usually \$5,000 at \$10/\$20 and \$10,000 at \$20/\$40. This usually ensures that I have more money on the table than my weak opponents. I will list all relevant stack sizes in each hand exam-

ple. Some hands are very deep-stacked, and others shallow-stacked. Always adjust your play based on the current effective stack size. I don't actually think in terms of dollars while I am playing. I see stack sizes only in terms of big blinds. For simplicity, I have omitted the dollar sign in front of all numbers throughout the book.

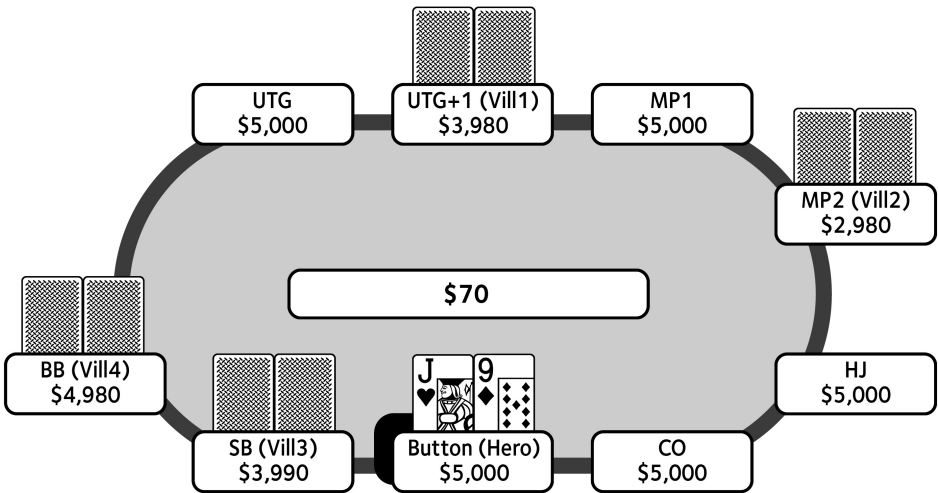
Keep an open mind as you work through this book and do not assume that every play I make is optimal. Looking back, I realize I made fairly large errors in a few situations. I will list the play I now think is ideal as the "correct" answer, and I will also list the play I made at the table. When you put in 14-hour days, it is nearly impossible to play your "A" game the entire time. Because of this, you will see a few missed value-bets and some butchered bluffs. I hope you will find them to be both educational and amusing. You can learn from my failures as well as my successes. I firmly believe there is a lesson to be learned from each hand in this book. Find them and you will be on the road to success.

If you have questions about any of the hands in this book, or about anything else relating to poker, please feel free to post them on the [FloatTheTurn.com](http://FloatTheTurn.com) forums. I personally reply to all questions in a timely manner. Also, check out my personal site at [JonathanLittlePoker.com](http://JonathanLittlePoker.com) for lots of free educational poker content. My goal with this book is to empower my students who are willing to diligently study to take the next giant leap forward in their poker careers. Let's get to work.

# Hand 7: Trips versus Gustav

**Hand:** J♥-9♦  
**Position:** Button  
**Players:** 9  
**Blinds:** 10/20

Villain1 is a tight, passive 40-year-old. Villain2 is Gustav, the semi-maniac who is still on tilt. The players in the blinds are unknown. Villain1 limps and Gustav limps behind.



## Question 1

The action is on you on the button.  
What do you do with J♥-9♦?

- a) Fold      b) Call 20      c) Raise to 90      d) Raise to 160

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points: .....
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You decide to call. The blinds call as well. The flop comes J♦-J♣-4♠. Villain3 bets 60. Villain4 and Villain1 fold. Gustav calls.

**Question 2**

The pot is 220. You face a bet of 60 and the effective stack size is 3,980 with Villain3. What is your action?

- a) Fold            b) Call 60            c) Raise to 200 d) Raise to 430

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points: .....
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You call. The turn is (J♦-J♣-4♠)-A♠. Everyone checks to you.

**Question 3**

The pot is 280 and the effective stack size is 3,920. What is your action?

- a) Check            b) Bet 140            c) Bet 230            d) Bet 500

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points: .....
------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------------	---------------

You bet 140, Villain3 folds and Gustav check-raises to 420.

**Question 4**

The pot is 840. You face a raise to 420 and the effective stack size is 2,780 with Gustav. What is your action?

- a) Fold    b) Call 280 more    c) Re-raise to 1000    d) Re-raise to 1400

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points: .....
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You call. The river is (J♦-J♣-4♠-A♠)-6♥. Gustav quickly fires out 800.

**Question 5**

The pot is 1,920. You face a bet of 800 and the effective stack size is 2,500. What is your action?

- a) Fold   b) Call 800   c) Raise to 1,800   d) Go all-in for 1,700 more

(a) (b) (c) (d) 

Points: .....

You decide to call and beat Gustav's 5♠-3♠.

**Discussion and Answers****Answer 1**

**a) 2 b) 10 c) 8 d) 3**

You want to see a flop on the button when possible with a wide range of hands due to your positional advantage. You can certainly raise, although I prefer to limp and see a cheap flop when my opponents are aggressive. If you decide to raise, you should usually make it an amount that is easy to balance, which is often around the size of the pot. You can also raise large with your weak hands, hoping to steal the pot immediately, if you think your opponents are so bad that they won't catch on to this exploitable play.

**Answer 2**

**a) 0 b) 10 c) 7 d) 2**

With trips on an overly dry board, both raising small and calling have merits. Raising large will usually force opponents to fold without a jack or better. A large raise would be bad in any case, since you lose to a number of better jacks. You can raise small if you think your opponents will often assume you are trying to steal the pot, which may or may not be the case depending on your image. Calling is also fine if you think it will induce your opponents to overvalue marginal made hands on the turn, or perhaps to go into pot-control mode, calling bets on the turn and river. The last thing you want is to raise and force your opponents off most hands worse than a jack.

**Answer 3**

**a) 0 b) 10 c) 7 d) 3**

When checked to on the turn, you should usually bet an amount that will keep your opponents in with most of their marginal made hands. Betting around 3/4-pot would normally be good if a low card appeared on the turn, since your opponents would much more likely call down with a medium pair. When sizing your turn bet, try to figure out if your opponents can call a fairly small bet with any pair or better, or if they will only call with an ace or better. Betting half-pot is much better if they will call that bet with all made hands but would fold all hands worse than an ace to a 3/4-pot bet. The larger bet is ideal if they will call either bet with only an ace or better. Think about your opponents' various calling ranges based on your bet size and act accordingly.

**Answer 4**

**a) 0 b) 10 c) 2 d) 4**

When raised by a wild player who may be on tilt, you should tend to call to induce a river bluff. A call will save you money if Gustav has you beat with a better jack or 4-4, and he'll likely fold a worse made hand if you re-raise. A call will keep him in the pot with his worse made hands as well as his bluffs. There are a few draws on the turn, but they are backdoor draws, meaning they should be discounted, and you won't lose a huge pot if he hits on the river.

**Answer 5**

**a) 0 b) 10 c) 3 d) 3**

Sticking with the plan, you have a fairly easy call when Gustav fires again on the river. There's little point in raising, since you lose to a few made hands and he probably won't call a raise with worse than a jack. If you know Gustav tends to call river raises with a wide range, perhaps with an ace or better, assuming you must be polarized, raising becomes a decent idea.

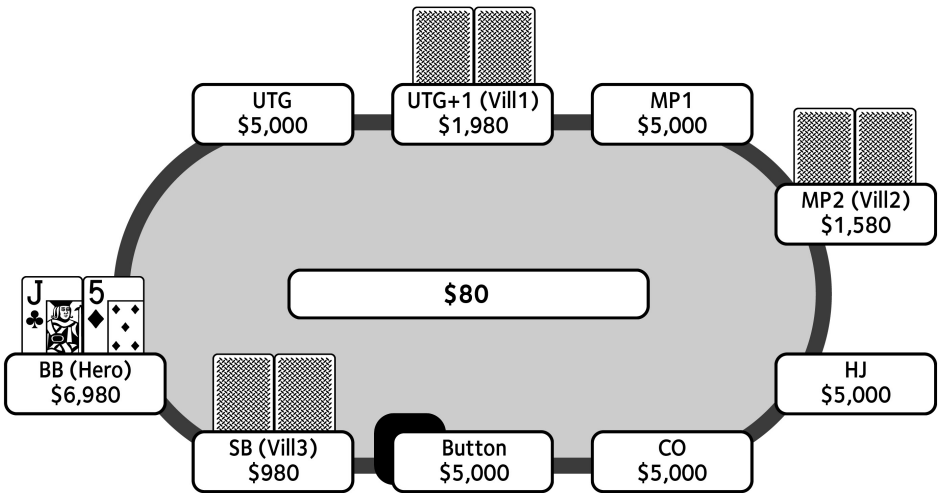
**Summary**

It is interesting to note that Gustav actually floated the flop with nothing, then ran a huge bluff on the turn and river, probably trying to make you fold an ace or worse. You called the flop, so he incorrectly assumed you could not have a jack. While you do lose to most jacks, you still have to call down against someone who is not afraid to take overly creative lines. Some players may justify re-raising the turn because Gustav had outs. That is not good logic, especially since he fired again on the river with nothing. Notice if he fired again on most rivers, which is almost certainly the case because he fired an effective blank, you would win a river bet roughly 75 percent of the time, which means Gustav would be directing tons of money your way. While it's never enjoyable to be outdrawn, it is usually best to let your opponent draw when he will attempt a bluff most of the time when he misses.

## Hand 8: Nuts Again versus Gustav

**Hand:** J♣-5♦  
**Position:** BB  
**Players:** 9  
**Blinds:** 10/20

Villain1 is tight and passive. Villain2 is Gustav, who recently bluffed off a decent amount of his stack to you. The small blind is a weak, tight 50-year-old. Villain1, Gustav and Villain3 all limp.



### Question 1

The action is on you in the big blind.  
What do you do with J♣-5♦?

- a) Fold      b) Check      c) Raise to 100      d) Raise to 160

(a)       (b)       (c)       (d)       Points: .....

You check. The flop comes J♠-8♣-5♣. Villain3 checks.



**Question 2**

The pot is 80 and the effective stack size is roughly 1,580.  
What is your action?

- a) Check      b) Bet 20      c) Bet 60      d) Bet 120

(a) <input type="checkbox"/> (b) <input type="checkbox"/> (c) <input type="checkbox"/> (d) <input type="checkbox"/> Points: .....
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You decide to check. Villain1 also checks.  
Gustav bets 70 and Villain3 folds.

**Question 3**

The pot is 150. You face a bet of 70 and the effective stack size is 1,580.  
What is your action?

- a) Fold    b) Call 70    c) Raise to 200    d) Raise all-in for 1,510 more

(a) <input type="checkbox"/> (b) <input type="checkbox"/> (c) <input type="checkbox"/> (d) <input type="checkbox"/> Points: .....
---

You raise to 200. Villain1 folds and Gustav calls.  
The turn is (J♠-8♣-5♣)-10♦.

**Question 4**

The pot is 480 and the effective stack size is 1,400.  
What is your action?

- a) Check      b) Bet 200      c) Bet 360      d) Bet 500

(a) <input type="checkbox"/> (b) <input type="checkbox"/> (c) <input type="checkbox"/> (d) <input type="checkbox"/> Points: .....
---

You bet 380 and Gustav goes all-in for 1,020 more.

**Question 5**

The pot is 2,260. You face an all-in raise to 1,400.

What is your action?

- a) Fold                      b) Call 1,020

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points: .....
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You call and lose to Gustav's Q♣-9♣ when the river blanks.

**Discussion and Answers**

**Answer 1**

**a) 0 b) 10 c) 2 d) 3**

Folding is out of the question because you can check and see a flop for free. Raising small or large is usually not a good idea with total trash, unless you have been especially tight recently. If your opponents assume you will only raise with a premium hand, perhaps a raise to 160 around 3 percent of the time is ideal.

**Answer 2**

**a) 10 b) 2 c) 6 d) 4**

With two pair, your options are to either check with the intention of check-raising or to bet. There are numerous possible draws and most turn cards will be bad for your hand, so it is usually best to go for a check-raise. If you bet and someone calls, you will be out of position with fairly deep stacks with what is effectively a bluff-catcher on most turns. Notice that any club, A, K, Q, 10, 9, 7, 6 or 4 could be bad for you. If you can only happily continue on a few specific cards, it is usually best to check-raise to charge the draws as much as possible and to get a decent amount of money in the pot when you are almost certainly ahead.

If the board were J-5-2 instead, you would usually want to lead because you would fear few turn cards, allowing you to continue value-betting.

Think about what will happen on future streets if you take a specific line on the current street. Players who think about one street at a time usually don't survive long.

**Answer 3**

**a) 0 b) 6 c) 10 d) 1**

Sticking with the plan, you should check-raise to an amount that allows Gustav to call with most of his marginal made hands that you have crushed. While you could raise huge, hoping to force him to fold his draws, this might also fold out made hands that are drawing thin. Size your bets so that you can comfortably continue against your opponent's calling range.

**Answer 4**

**a) 3 b) 5 c) 10 d) 2**

The turn is not ideal, but it isn't terrible. Furthermore, a maniac like Gustav has such a wide range that you should not simply give up on any turn. Make a bet that continues to extract value from worse made hands. A large bet may force him to fold marginal made hands that are drawing thin. Also, you could easily be crushed at this point. Whenever that's the case, you want to size your bet such that your opponent can continue with a wide range of inferior hands. You could also check with the intention of calling, but given the number of possible draws, that line is not ideal.

**Answer 5**

**a) 2 b) 10**

When Gustav goes all-in, it is too likely that he has some sort of draw, or a pair plus a draw. You will occasionally be drawing thin, but you have the pot odds to continue against someone as wild as Gustav.

**Summary**

Realize that maniacs will often win large pots from you, mainly because they play more large pots than other players. Many players think they

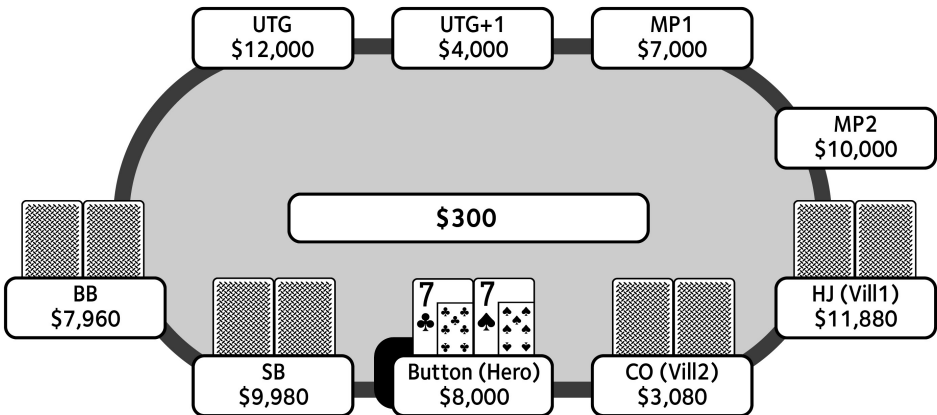
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should always win against a maniac, especially when they flop a strong hand. Do not develop this mental flaw. Even a maniac will win around 35 percent of the time. Do not let a minor setback bother you. Continue playing with a sound mind because now the maniac has twice as many chips for you to siphon away.

## Hand 65: Being Aware

**Hand:** 7♣-7♠  
**Position:** Button  
**Players:** 9  
**Blinds:** 20/40

Villain1 is a strong TAG kid who has yet to get too far out of line. You have not battled with him. Villain2 is a 25-year-old who seems to be in well over his head. He bought in for 5,000 and has been ground down to 3,200 by calling flop continuation bets and folding to pressure on the turn and river. He seems a bit frustrated. Villain1 raises to 120 and Villain2 calls.



### Question 1

The action is on you on the button.

What do you do with 7♣-7♠?

- a) Fold      b) Call 120      c) Re-raise to 500      d) Re-raise to 780

(a)  (b)  (c)  (d)  Points: .....

You re-raise to 500. Villain1 folds and Villain2 calls.  
The flop comes 8♦-4♣-2♠. Villain2 checks.

### Question 2

The pot is 1,180 and the effective stack size is 2,700.  
What is your action?

a) Check      b) Bet 500      c) Bet 740      d) Bet 1,000

(a)  (b)  (c)  (d)  Points: .....

You bet 500 and Villain2 quickly calls.  
The turn is (8♦-4♣-2♠)-6♠. Villain2 checks.

### Question 3

The pot is 2,180 and the effective stack size is 2,200.  
What is your action?

a) Check      b) Bet 700      c) Bet 1,100      d) Bet 2,200

(a)  (b)  (c)  (d)  Points: .....

You decide to check behind.  
The river is (8♦-4♣-2♠-6♠)-10♠. Villain2 quickly goes all-in for 2,200.

### Question 4

The pot is 4,380 and you have to call 2,200 more.  
What is your action?

a) Fold      b) Call 2,200

(a)

(b)

Points: .....

You decide to call. Villain2 quickly mucks his hand and is out of the casino before the dealer has time to push you the pot.

## **Discussion and Answers**

### **Answer 1**

**a) 0 b) 8 c) 10 d) 3**

With a hand that flops extremely well, especially in position, your primary goal should usually be to avoid getting blown off your hand, so that you can realize your implied odds. However, since Villain2 seems to be fairly loose and passive, it is probably smart to re-raise, expecting to frequently force Villain1 to fold and Villain2 to call. A re-raise is often ideal when it's highly likely to force a strong player to fold and a weak player to see a flop out of position.

### **Answer 2**

**a) 4 b) 10 c) 7 d) 2**

You should be fairly happy with your hand despite an overcard flopping. When a standard bet of around 2/3-pot would force your opponent to put a large part of his stack in the pot, it is usually wise to bet a bit smaller to hopefully induce him to stay in with a wide, weak range. A larger bet forces him to play well by folding hands you crush.

### **Answer 3**

**a) 10 b) 7 c) 4 d) 2**

Both checking behind and betting small have a lot of merit. If you think Villain2 will only call a turn bet with a decent pair or better, it is probably smart to check behind, allowing you to extract additional value on the river from bluffs and overvalued made hands you beat. Value-betting is ideal if you think he will call a small turn bet with a wide range of worse made hands. Villain2 has folded before the river on a few previous occasions, so checking behind is probably smart.

**Answer 4**

**a) 2 b) 10**

Villain2's big river push is almost certainly either a premium made hand or a bluff. Your hand probably looks weak due to your turn check. Most thinking players would bet small with their strong hands, hoping to extract a bit of value. This should lead you to assume he is bluffing to try to force you off your entire range of marginal made hands. Since he probably wants you to fold, and you only have to win 33 percent of the time to break even, you should call.

**Summary**

After I finished stacking my new chips, someone at the table mentioned that I had made an awesome call. In my mind, it seemed super standard. The player who made the comment thought the kid was incapable of bluffing, given that he had continuously folded to aggression in previous hands. But this hand was different. Instead of being aggressive, I checked behind on the turn, giving him a huge opportunity to make a mistake. I knew exactly what I was inducing and was not afraid to make a big call with a marginal hand for a fair amount of money.