

Introduction

Welcome to *Secrets of Professional Tournament Poker, Volume 3*. This book will be significantly different from Volume 1 and 2. While Volume 1 and 2 laid out a solid game plan on how to win at no limit hold'em tournaments, this book will show you how to implement the strategies outlined in the previous volumes. This book consists of numerous hands from three drastically different tournaments I recently played.

The first set of hands is from the \$25,500 World Poker Tour main event. This event is one of the largest buy-in events of the year and takes place at Bellagio, in Las Vegas. It is known to be one of the toughest stops on the circuit, as most of the people in the field are strong players. While there are a few soft spots, most of your expected value will come from outplaying the mediocre professionals. This event is very deep-stacked from start to finish, meaning you rarely feel immense pressure from the blinds unless you lose a few large pots in a row.

The second set of hands is from a \$1,000 World Series of Poker event, which took place at the Rio in Las Vegas. These events – and there are many of them during each World Series – are known for their fast structures. This means you will often be all-in numerous times throughout the events because the average stack size is so tiny. Most of the field is made up of recreational players, although there are some pros sprinkled throughout. Despite the poor structures, you will often find numerous pros at the final table of these events because it is tough for weak players to survive numerous all-in's when they are constantly getting it in as an underdog, which will regularly be the case when they face strong players. You will find it is mandatory to play an aggressive style if you want to succeed in these events.

The third set of hands is from a \$2,500 World Series of Poker event. In contrast to the \$1,000 events, this event has a significantly better structure because you start

with 2.5 times as many chips. You will find this event tends to have a higher concentration of professionals because of the larger buy-in. However, compared to the \$25,500 World Poker Tour event, this is a walk in the park. You will find it necessary to get all-in from time to time, but the goal in this tournament is to avoid getting all-in by slowly grinding up a nice chip stack.

Although I intricately described my general game plan in *Volumes 1* and *2*, you will find I occasionally take drastically different lines in some of the actual hands. It is important to always think about your opponents and their ranges. A player who plays a perfect robotic style will win significantly less than a good, but not great player who adjusts well to his opposition.

The book is laid out in a question and answer format, where I ask you to pick the play you think is optimal. At the end of each hand, I will rate each answer on a scale of 0-10, with higher numbers being better. I will also explain the merits of each option and the reason I picked the play I did. If you struggle coming up with correct decisions initially, be patient and figure out where your logic is failing. In no time, I am confident you will have a clear understanding of why I play the way I do. Good luck!

Jonathan Little,
April 2013.

Hand 4: Weird turn spot

Game: \$25,000 WPT Championship
Hand: 10♥-9♠
Position: Cutoff
Blinds: 100/200

UTG	+1	MP1	MP2	HJ	CO	Button	SB	BB
85K	99K	101K	101K	100K	101K	100K	97K	115K
					Hero	Villain1		Villain2

The Play

Villain1 is an older, straightforward player who doesn't get too out of line but tends to overplay his strong hands. Villain 2 is a young, aggressive British player who plays well.

Question 1

Everyone folds to you in the cutoff seat. What do you do with 10-9?

- a) Fold b) Raise to 525 c) Raise to 725 d) Raise to 1,200

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points:
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You raise to 525, Villain1 calls on the button and Villain2 calls in the big blind. The flop comes A♦-10♠-6♥. The big blind checks to you.

Question 2

The pot is 1,625 and the effective stack size is 99,500. What is your action?

- a) Check b) Bet 500 c) Bet 800 d) Bet 1,500

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points:
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You bet 800 and both Villain1 and Villain2 call.

Question 3

What types of hands do you think make up most of Villain2's range?

- a) Premium hands
- b) Marginal made hands
- c) Gutshot draws
- d) Air

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points:
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The turn is the (A♠-10♠-6♥)-5♦. Villain2 leads into you for 2,500.

Question 4

The pot is 4,075 and the effective stack size is 98,700. What is your action?

- a) Fold
- b) Call 2,500
- c) Raise to 6,000
- d) Raise to 9,200

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points:
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You fold and Villain1 folds, giving Villain2 the pot.

Discussion and answers

Answer 1

- a) 0
- b) 10
- c) 6
- d) 2

When the action is folded to you in late position and you have any sort of decent starting hand, unless the players behind you are overly aggressive, you should tend to make a standard raise, in this case, to 525.

Answer 2

- a) 8
- b) 10
- c) 6
- d) 2

This is a tricky question because you shouldn't expect Villain2 to call behind with too many hands in general. When he does call behind, you should put him on a

good mix of monsters, weak made hands like A-7, and the gutshot draws. He is probably not going to call with air here often at all, as it is clear Villain1 has at least something decent. When this happens, you need to use the turn action to further narrow the ranges of both Villains.

Answer 3

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

When Villain2 leads into you on the turn, you need to make a point to go through his likely range and figure out which hands make sense. On a 5 turn, not much makes sense besides 9♦-8♦, 9♦-7♦, 8♦-7♦, and A-5. However, he may check the turn with his draws, as Villain1 likely has some sort of made hand he simply will not fold to a turn lead. This makes me believe Villain2 has one of the random slow-played made hands or A-5. He does not want to see the turn checked through. Seeing how you are drawing almost dead to the made hands and you are unlikely to be able to make Villain2 fold with a bluff raise, folding is the only real option. If you know your opponent will only lead here with a draw, you can raise, hoping to get Villain1 off a weak top pair and also to charge Villain2 to draw. As you can see, your play in this situation depends almost entirely on your opponents' tendencies.

Hand 5: Big river decision

Game: \$25,000 WPT Championship
Hand: A♥-K♦
Position: MP2
Blinds: 100/200

UTG	+1	MP1	MP2	HJ	CO	Button	SB	BB
100K	99K	101K	101K	100K	103K	100K	97K	100K
	Villain		Hero					

The Play

The Villain is a middle-aged player you have never played with before. From the way he is acting, you assume he is a weak player who won his seat in a satellite.

Question 1

The Villain raises to 600 from UTG+1. What is your play in MP2?

- a) Fold b) Call 600 c) Reraise to 1,700 d) Reraise to 2,600

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points:
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You reraise to 1,700 and the Villain calls. The flop comes 10♠-7♥-6♥. The Villain checks to you.

Question 2

The pot is 3,700 and the effective stack size is 98,300. What is your action?

- a) Check b) Bet 1,000 c) Bet 2,000 d) Bet 3,000

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points:
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You bet 2,000 and the Villain calls. The turn is the (10♠-7♥-6♥)-4♠. The Villain checks to you again.

Question 3

The pot is 7,700 and the effective stack size is 96,800. What is your action?

- a) Check b) Bet 3,000 c) Bet 5,000 d) Bet 7,000

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points:
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You check. The river is the (10♠-7♥-6♥-4♠)-5♥. The villain checks to you for the third time.

Question 4

The pot is 7,700 and the effective stack size is 96,800. What is your action?

- a) Check b) Bet 3,000 c) Bet 5,000 d) Bet 7,000

(a) <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) <input type="checkbox"/>	(c) <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) <input type="checkbox"/>	Points:
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You bet 5,000. The Villain thinks for around 3 minutes before calling with A-K, chopping the pot.

Discussion and answers

Answer 1

- a) 0 b) 6 c) 10 d) 8

When a weak player raises, unless he is overly tight, you should consider reraising with a large portion of your range in order to get heads-up, in position against an opponent who is probably going to make errors post-flop. You need to size your reraise to be a little smaller than three times the Villain's raise so he will consider calling with pretty much every hand he opened.

Answer 2

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

When your opponent checks on a 10♠-7♥-6♥ board, you should generally make a standard continuation-bet, especially in a reraised pot. Notice this board is not good for your range and not too bad for your opponent's range. Because of this, you should expect him to call a decent amount of the time. You should be prepared to fire multiple barrels on scary turn cards as well as turns that improve your hand. You should bet slightly more than half pot in reraised pots when you are deepstacked. If you bet smaller, your opponent will call with an overly wide range, which will make most turn decisions tough for you. If you bet larger, you will be risking too many chips to get the job done. Checking is the only option besides a bet of 2,000 that has some merit. The problem with checking is your opponent will often take a stab at the pot on the turn and then most of the time you will be in a tricky situation.

Answer 3

a) 10 b) 3 c) 4 d) 3

The 4♠ on the turn doesn't change the board too much. Because of this, if your opponent called on the flop, he is unlikely to fold his made hands on the turn. He is also unlikely to fold his draws on the turn, as he still doesn't have to worry too much about running into a larger draw or a full house. This should lead you to give up on the turn. If the Villain bets the river, you should fold basically every time. Sometimes you simply have to give up on a pot.

Answer 4

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

While the plan was to give up on this pot, when the 5♥ comes on the river and your opponent checks, you should strongly consider bluffing to try to get your opponent off all one pair hands. Against a strong opponent, you should generally not bluff in this situation because you aren't representing many value hands. You have to remember you reraised pre-flop. It is almost impossible for you to have an 8 or 3 in your hand. Most good players will realize you are polarized to either a flush or nothing, and seeing how you checked the turn, it is unlikely you had a flush draw. This means you almost always have nothing when you bet the river. However, since you are against a weak opponent in this hand, you can bet in spots like this even though it doesn't make much sense. You should make a standard-looking bet of around 2/3-pot. This sizing will get your opponent off most one pair

hands and maybe even some weak two pair hands.

To your surprise, your opponent calls down with A-K. When you see something like this happen, make a mental note that this is an opponent you should value bet relentlessly in the future. When you see an opponent make a huge error, it is not enough to simply note the player is bad. You need to think about how they are bad and what you can do about it in the future to further exploit them. When someone calls way too much, the plan is to value bet a lot. Notice you took a line of bet-check-bet in this hand. Maybe the Villain always assumes that this line is weak. He may assume a bet-bet-bet line is always strong and may make huge folds in those situations. It is important to pay attention to each opponent and figure out what they view as strong and what they view as weak. You can then do the opposite in order to induce whatever action you desire.

Conclusion

Hopefully these 150 hands have demonstrated how I think whenever I play a poker tournament. You should have noticed that I am usually looking to get a bit out of line and make slightly unusual, exploitative plays that are tailored to exploit my opponents' tendencies and ranges. If you play an A-B-C style, you will probably be a small winner, but you will rarely make the big cashes. My goal is to help you think outside the box and actually play poker instead of simply playing your cards. In the end, as long as you accurately think about your opponents' ranges and make moves to exploit them, you will be a winner in the long run. Good luck!