

CHRIS MOORMAN

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The inside story of the most successful online poker player of all time



POKER

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
PROLOGUE	9
01 THE BOOK OF MOORMAN	13
02 ONLINE HAND ANALYSIS	113

03	PRO HAND ANALYSIS	251
	FEDOR HOLZ	252
	MARIA HO	256
	IGOR KURGANOV	262
	LIV BOEREE	268
	VANESSA SELBST	272
	JAKE CODY	278
	DOMINIK NITSCHKE	284
	DANIEL NEGREANU	290
04	LIVE FINAL TABLE ANALYSIS	296

INTRODUCTION

When I got the chance to write a second book I'd like to say that I jumped at the opportunity but in reality I was torn as to whether to do it or not. Writing the first book was something new and ended up being very challenging while also taking up a lot of time and effort. Outside of playing poker, I've never been someone who would put a lot of work into anything so for me this was a big change.

The main reason why I did ultimately decide to write a second book was because of the feedback I received in person from readers of *Moorman's Book of Poker*. On the whole people enjoyed the book and I loved hearing stories of how it had helped readers/players with their game, leading them to bigger victories than they had previously experienced. This really made all the hours that I had put into it worthwhile to me. The main criticism about the first book though was that people wanted to read about my hands that I'd played over the years both online and live. Also they wanted to know more about me as a person and how I rose through the poker ranks.

From speaking to people I realized I had unfinished business as a pok-

er author and that I could learn a lot from the first book and as a result put a much better product out there for aspiring players. I took a lot of inspiration from autobiographies of sports stars that I liked to read and started assembling notes for my own life/poker story. After a brief discussion with my publishers I agreed to write book number two.

The first part of the book would be an autobiography of my life both inside and outside poker, which would include many things that I'd never previously talked about. The second part would be hand analysis – exclusively of my own hands that I'd played over the past few years both online and live. I even managed to get eight top pros onboard to discuss some of my hands and gain another viewpoint on them. For me this was key because one of the main reasons that I've been successful in this game is that I discuss hands with fellow pros and thus gain a wider perspective on certain situations and, as a result, improve as a player.

When I penned out notes to help me with writing the bio, I really started to get excited about the project and it was fun to relive the highs and lows that I'd had over my career. I really hope that you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it and that you can both laugh and learn from some of the stuff that I've done over the years. Reading back through it all I know that like anyone I've made mistakes and could have done things so much differently but, at the end of the day, I have no regrets, which is a motto I like to live life by.

Writing the hand history side of the book was quite interesting as I reread hands I had played only a few months ago and already thought how I would have liked to play them differently. This shows that poker is constantly evolving and that if you stand still then the game will overtake you. Even in my big live final tables I see that, despite getting good results, I made a lot of mistakes. This shows the importance of analyzing your deep runs and highlighting areas where you can improve.

Overall I hope you enjoy reading this book and learning about me as a person and a poker player. I believe that there is a lot that can be learnt from the hands that I've selected to review. If you can start getting yourself in the right mindset for making good solid decisions throughout a poker hand you really can start to take your game and results to the next level.

23) Set for Life

After my deep run and heartbreak in London three years earlier in 2008 I had always felt I had unfinished business in the WSOPE Main Event. It is an incredibly prestigious tournament with a huge prize pool and a tough field, but I went into it with my confidence shot a little after early bustouts in the side events and no major results for my horses. It looked as if it would be an expensive series overall, but with my eight horses and myself in the Main Event it could still be successful. Those were the poker swings for me back then, pretty much hundreds of thousands up or down on any given week.

One problem was that I'd busted all of the euros that I'd brought out with me for the trip so I desperately needed to find €100,000 in the next 24 hours. I hit up a bunch of people, with no luck, then was so stressed I decided the best solution was to get ridiculously drunk at the welcome party and ask anyone within 50 meters of me for the money (most of whom I'd never spoken to before).

The night was a blur but when I woke up in the morning (Day 1a of the tournament) to countless messages from horses asking for money to play, and people saying, 'what the fuck happened to you last night' along with a banging hangover, I only felt worse. I hadn't been able to come up with the euros and seemed to have asked pretty much everyone. Somehow, though, it all came together when someone I knew messaged me out of the blue saying they owed me a bunch of money (over \$100,000), which I had completely forgotten about.

After a brief conversation I arranged to collect the money in euros from John Duthie in his hotel room later that day. We were back in business! My stable and I had euros to punt with once again and we regged up, attempting to take the day by storm.

Day 1b started off poorly with me bluffing off half my stack, but it turned around brilliantly and I ended up finishing with a top 5 stack. In addition, one of my horses was the overall chip leader for both days combined. After a slow day when I managed to maintain my stack but not really add to it, I exploded on Day 3 increasing my stack ten-fold by the day's end to finish second in chips with only 25 players remaining and a great shot at the €1.4 million prize.

Unfortunately, despite a couple of min-cashes all of the horses had busted by now so it was all on me to save the trip. At least I found solace in reflecting that this was the type of pressure I thrived on and this got me playing my A-game. Day 4 was the last before a potential final table and was not without its usual rollercoaster moments for me. This culminated in me 4-betting all-in versus my nemesis from Aussie Millions, Patrik Antonius, with A-7 offsuit after he had 3-bet my button open from the small blind. He snap called and I knew I was in big trouble. I was so annoyed at myself that I'd not learned from my previous encounter and that he'd got the better of me once again. Fortunately, this time the poker gods bailed me out with a 7 on the river versus his A-Q, to prove that luck is better than skill, and I entered the eight-handed final table with an above average stack.

The final was incredibly tough with a who's who of poker, including Jake Cody, Elio Fox, Shawn Buchanan and Max Silver. I decided to play particularly aggressively, as I knew they were all very ICM aware and there would be no potential gifts. It was pretty sick to play in the final with both Jake and Elio, as since Day 1 of the tournament we had all been going to dinner with one another at the same place, and had already locked in a threeway swap. We seemed to be playing even harder against each other than normal at the poker table, with Elio busting Jake on a big suckout and all of us playing countless big pots against one another.

Things went well for me that day and after winning a huge flip versus Max for most of my stack I was able to consistently chip up until four-handed play. Four-handed things were a bit tougher as the stacks swung one way then another, but after a huge pot where I turned the one card nut flush versus second nut flush of Brian Roberts to bust him my stack was looking a lot healthier.

Elio and I both had huge stacks and were engaged in a three-way battle versus Moritz Kranich, who was on the hunt for a live triple crown. With Elio on my direct left my plan was to tighten up significantly and hope that Kranich busted rather than doubled. In less than ten hands of three-handed play my wish came true, but unfortunately it was Elio who busted him and now had a 2-1 chiplead over me. Still, I knew whatever happened from here on out I was a winner, after overcoming a very tough final table and being guaranteed at least €800,000, and knowing that I'd saved the trip big time!

After reaching heads-up Elio and I took a short break and went outside to discuss a chop with the help of an app on his phone. In the end, we settled on an ICM chop, so I was guaranteed at least €1 million and my first ever seven-figure score. Ironically I remember saying that we were set for life now after this score, and we agreed we should be smarter with our stables. Now I laugh looking back on this, knowing how wrong I was!

After the chop I felt on cloud nine, but knew that the job wasn't completed yet. I needed to focus more than ever as I really wanted that bracelet and to overcome such a chip deficit versus an incredibly tough player I'd need to be on my A-game and have a little luck on my side. It is quite tough to play your absolute best after doing a deal. Obviously, there is still money, glory and ultimately a bracelet on the line, but even though they are all highly desirable you are still missing that extra 5%.

Sadly, once again I couldn't get it done heads-up and lost in quick fashion. My losing largely hinged on a big hand where I got rivered with a lot of money in the pot, which completely messed up the momentum that I'd begun to build. This one hurt a bit more at the end despite losing to a friend of mine because of the near miss a few months earlier. I'm realistic and know that in MTT poker the opportunity to win a bracelet doesn't come around too often, particularly with the size of the fields in most No Limit Hold 'Em events. Also, if I had managed to win, there was a possibility I could win WSOP Player of the Year if Ben Lamb, who was on the November 9 final table, got sixth place or worse. Ben got third, so regardless if I had won I still wouldn't have had enough points for the WSOP Player of the Year. I guess that was some solace for me at least!

24) How to be Safe

Within a few days of WSOPE was EPT San Remo, which was a short taxi ride across the border. What better way to invest my winnings than to put ten people and myself in that event? I decided to take my winnings the casino paid me in cash (over €800,000) to avoid the hassle of bank wires and potential fees and hoped that I didn't misplace my backpack or get robbed!

The tournament was pretty uneventful despite an early double up as I suffered from too much money syndrome and tried to bluff the Italians

every hand, which is never the best of ideas. What was notable about the event was what happened to the hordes of cash I was carrying around with me.

When I checked into my hotel I put all of my winnings into the safe and was glad not to have to worry about it constantly. What happened next is a bit of a blur. In the first two hours of the EPT Elio came and found me and delivered the €200,000 chop we had agreed upon in a brown paper bag. After my early double I decided to go back to the hotel and place the money in the safe rather than risk carrying it about all day. I borrowed a rucksack from the Skrill desk on site and emptied the cash into it. No doubt the people working there stared at me with widened eyes as I haphazardly dumped the large amount of cash into a backpack. After putting that cash with the rest of my money in the safe in my room I returned to play.

At the end of Day 1a play I headed back to my room and thought I'd check on the money before I went to sleep. When I entered my four-digit code nothing happened. I entered it again. Nothing. The only possible code that I knew I had used now wasn't working.

I called down to reception for assistance but no one spoke much English and it seemed an hour had passed before I could get my point across. The receptionist's response wasn't of much comfort: he said they had to wait till the morning for the manager to be there with the key in order to check it.

That whole night my heart was pounding and I had no chance of getting any sleep. I joked with Taylor Paur, who I was rooming with, that only he knew the code so he was the chief suspect. I asked him jokingly if he was playing it cool by hanging around while his accomplice ran off with the money.

After what felt like an eternity the manager arrived in my room in the morning and opened up the safe while looking away (I guess they aren't supposed to know what is in there). I'm not going to lie, my heart was pounding out of my chest and I felt nerves that I'd never felt before. I tried to prepare myself for the safe being empty by telling myself it was just money and it comes and goes, but there was no way around it- if I had lost this money it would hurt big time!

Fortunately, the safe was still packed with cash and I could breathe a

huge sigh of relief. Now I could play Day 2 of the tournament on a massive freeroll. Unfortunately, though, I did play it like it was a freeroll and pissed off a nice stack within the first hour of the day. To be honest I didn't care one bit.

25) A Positive Loss

New Year's resolutions are a weird, dumb concept to me and I don't usually make them. If you desperately need to change something in your life then why wait till a new year to do it? However, in 2012 I actually made a New Year's resolution that was long overdue and ultimately changed my life. I decided it was time to try and get myself into shape.

At the time I was living in Cyprus with one of my horses and I decided to reach out to Jason Koon (jakoon1985 online) on Facebook Chat and asked if he'd be interested in a backing deal for both online and live poker, with the condition that he'd fly out to Cyprus and live with us and be our personal trainer and chef. In return I'd take care of his rent and flights to live events that we'd be hitting up until the WSOP that year. As Cyprus was over the other side of the world and probably a place that he didn't know much about I didn't expect him to agree. To my surprise he pretty much snap agreed and before I knew it there was no turning back.

A few weeks later Jason arrived and instantly set about getting us into shape. He completely changed our lifestyle. Gone were takeaways, energy drinks and alcohol and in came clean food, vegetables and a lot of hard work. In Jason's eyes even fruit was unhealthy after 7 p.m.! Previously I'd been to the gym a maximum of 20 times in my life and not since my first year of university over seven years ago. Now I was going six days a week and using muscles I had never worked before. Those first few sessions were brutal and I have no idea how I managed not to throw up, let alone make it to the session the next day. Anyone who knows Jason knows that he is not the guy you say no to, so no matter how late I'd stayed up to the previous night playing online we still made the gym session the following day.

As I began to notice positive changes to my body I got more and more into the training and it became much more enjoyable and less of a chore.

After a while I was happy not to drink on nights out because I knew I'd feel good the next day and that I hadn't ruined my training earlier that day. I became more socially confident and was excited about going out and meeting new people once again. My fear of being awkward in front of strangers started to disappear and I learned to be happy with myself and proud of what I had achieved in poker and life.

When I went to EPT Madrid in March that year I was taken aback by the number of positive comments I received about my weight loss and it really inspired me to carry on with the training and strict eating regime. I even managed to win my first ever live tournament that festival in a small €2,000 8-max turbo bounty side event. I was feeling better about myself than ever before, even though up to that point in the year my poker results had been less than stellar.

One big result I had was a couple of months later at EPT Berlin in the €10,000 High Roller. I don't often play high rollers unless it's a particularly big field with a lot of value as I've always had a weird risk-averse personality when gambling on myself. I am much more inclined to risk a little to win a lot. In poker that means larger fields and a much smaller percentage chance of winning the tournament. To me it doesn't feel as bad when the buy-in is smaller if you lose, which happens most of the time given the nature of tournament poker. This particular high roller event only had 57 runners and a pretty stacked field so it's a mystery to me why I decided to play. Looking back I guess I was just feeling in a good frame of mind and confident about my game.

What I remember the most about this tournament was the prop bet Jake Cody, Taylor Paur and I made. We did a last longer where the first out of the event had to bleach their hair blonde and wear a white suit for all of EPT Monte Carlo, the second person who busted got to choose which of the two punishments they received, and the last man standing got off scot free. With 15 players left and nearing the money we were all still in, albeit short. The bet was of great significance to us for personal pride and because Jake and I were particularly concerned about how bad we'd look rocking a bleached blonde hairstyle! Fortunately for me the others busted and I could concentrate on the rest of the tournament and trying to win the damn thing.

Hand 26

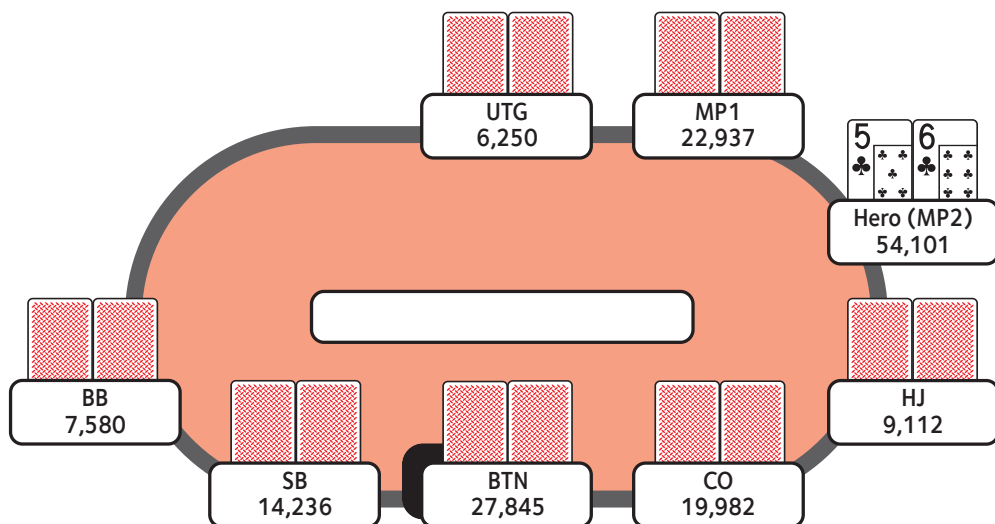
Game: Online Tournament \$150+\$150+\$20

Hand: 5♣-6♣

Position: MP2

Players: 8

Blinds/ante: 200/400-40



PreFlop: Hero is MP2 with 5♣-6♣

UTG folds, MP1 raises to 800, Hero calls 800, 2 folds, BTN calls 800, 2 folds

Flop: (3,320) 8♥-2♦-7♣ (3 players)

MP1 checks, Hero bets 1,460, BTN folds, MP1 calls 1,460

Turn: (6,240) 8♥-2♦-7♣-10♣ (2 players)

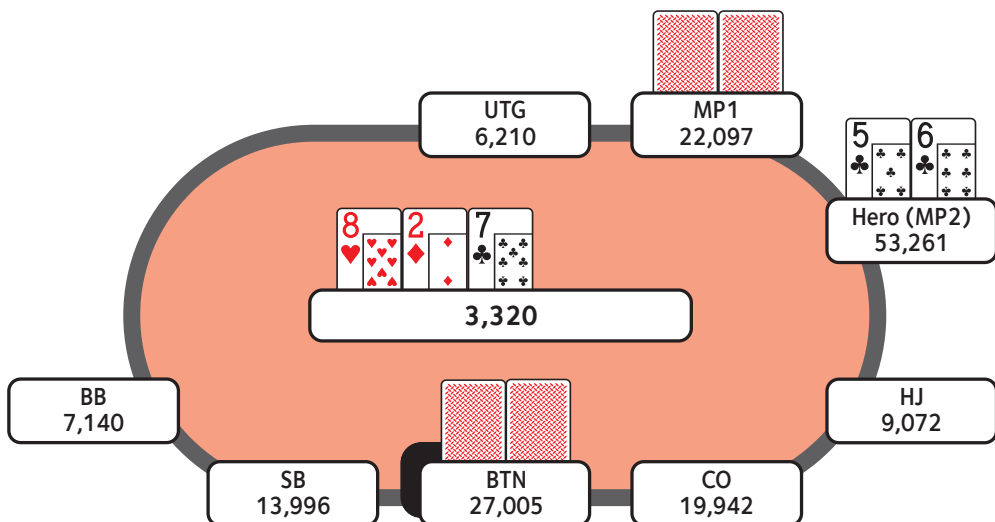
MP1 checks, Hero bets 3,481, MP1 calls 3,481

River: (13,202) 8♥-2♦-7♣-10♣-8♦ (2 players)

MP1 checks, Hero bets 48,320 and is all-in, MP1 folds

This hand is taken from a Super KO tournament, which means that play-

ers receive half the buy-in back if they knock out an opponent when they are the covering stack. By this point I'd already built a very large stack, which is a great advantage and allows me to get involved in pots with a much wider range than normal. Facing an MP1 open in the next seat with 5♣-6♣ and an effective stack of 57bb, normal play would be to fold virtually always and use the occasional 3-bet. However, because of the huge bounties in play I get to widen my range and can profitably play this holding, especially given that the big blind is playing less than 20bb and is likely to play since they get such good odds and close the action. If I had a big hand here I might choose to flat to keep the big blind in the pot and possibly to induce a reshove from the opener if the big blind were to shove preflop. If the big blind were to shove and the opener folded I could profitably call off the extra 6,740 with my 6-high because in these situations you get to add an extra 10,000 chips (one starting stack) to the pot for the bounty equity which means that there will effectively be 20,460 in the pot and it will only cost me 6,740 to call. I only need 25% equity against their shoving range to call profitably here, which I will easily have with a hand such as 6♣-5♣. It is important to note that the actual value of the chips added to the pot is slightly less than 10,000 because if you lose the pot it reduces your chances of winning further bounties in the future. The overall difference this makes is dependent on how high a percentage the pot is of your stack.



The big blind actually ends up folding though and we go three-way to the flop as the button also calls. They cover the opener so are also likely to have a very wide range although they are very unlikely to hold a premium hand. The flop comes 8♥-2♦-7♣, giving me an open-ended straight draw and backdoor flush draw. The preflop raiser checks and I have an easy flop bet. My hand is too weak to check-call and getting either or both of my opponents to fold here would be a real result. I also have a lot of potential to barrel them off the hand by the turn or river depending on the action and runout. I bet 1,460 into 3,320 (about 44% pot) and only the preflop raiser calls. At this point they could be calling with a number of A-K and A-Q hands as well as some low pairs like 3-3 through 6-6. Potentially they could slowplay a set or pocket aces on this board, due to the fact that the ranges the flop hits are held by me and the button, and those hands need little protection.

The turn is the 10♣ giving me a flush draw to go with my straight draw. On this turn I feel that my opponent is forced to fold their A-K and A-Q type hands and only continue with their traps. When I bet this turn, I expect to get raised with some of these traps because the board is getting very scary. I am barreling the turn on a very connecting card and it looks as if I have a strong made hand or draw that, given that I cover them, I could be willing to gamble with. If my opponent calls here I'm putting them on a very specific range of a few hands including 9-9 and some 7-x and 8-x. Overall that range is pretty weak so I'd be looking to fire a third bullet on the river on the majority of cards. I end up betting 3,481 into 6,240 (around 56% pot) and my opponent calls.

The river is the 8♦ which means I miss all my draws and am left with just 6-high. The SPR is a little under 1.3 and I know that I can't win without betting. When this is the case it is advisable to go for a bluff. My thinking at the time was that it would look credible to overshove on the river to make it look like I was bounty-hunting. The problem with this bet size is that it takes out some of my value range when the river card is an 8. I'm not going to be comfortable overshoving for value with just one pair on this card, which means I am representing trips or better. I do have a lot of nut-type hands in my range which I could use for this line, but it's a very polarizing bet and could encourage my opponent to bluff-catch. Also, when my op-

ponent does have a very unlikely but possibly strong hand I lose an extra 10,000 chips in comparison to a half-pot sized bet. For these reasons I'm not a big fan of the sizing I chose on this particular card and would much prefer to use it on a brick river such as an offsuit 3. Fortunately my opponent didn't have an 8 on this occasion and didn't read too much into my sizing mistake which might have allowed them to make a light call. Instead they folded, allowing me to take down the pot.

Hand 64

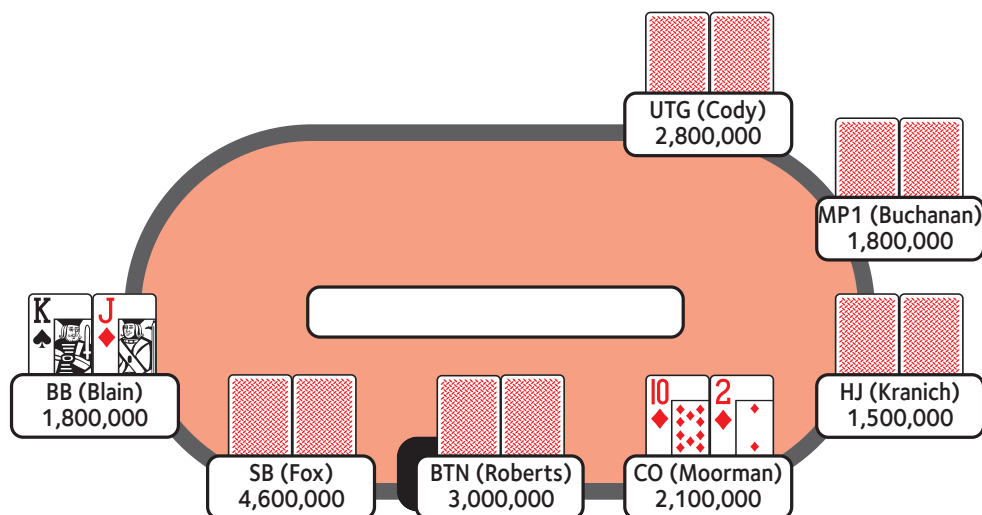
Game: WSOPE Final Table 2011

Hand: 10♦-2♦

Position: CO

Players: 7

Blinds/ante: 20,000/40,000-5,000



PreFlop: Hero is CO with 10♦-2♦

3 folds, Hero raises to 85,000, 2 folds, BB calls 45,000

Flop: (225,000) J♣-9♦-Q♦ (2 players)

BB checks, Hero bets 125,000, BB calls 125,000

Turn: (475,000) J♣-9♦-Q♦-7♦ (2 players)

BB checks, Hero bets 275,000, BB calls 275,000

River: (1,025,000) J♣-9♦-Q♦-7♦-8♠ (2 players)

BB checks, Hero bets 575,000, BB calls 575,000

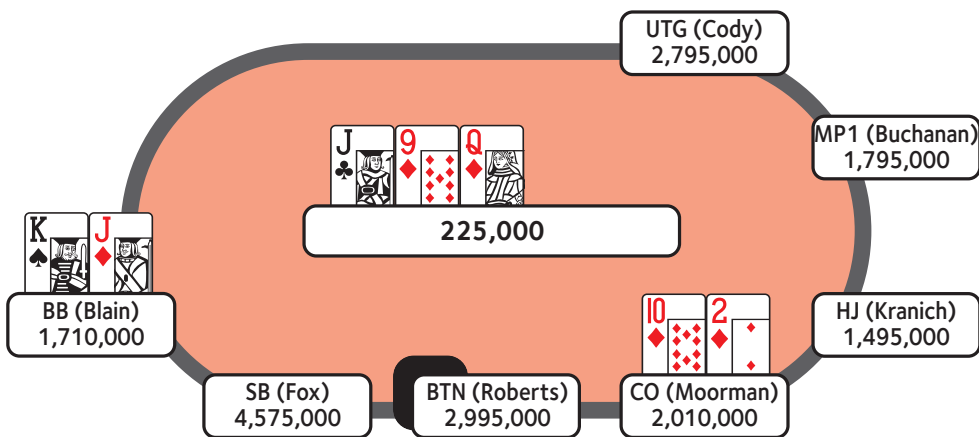
This and the following few hands are taken from the WSOPE Final Table 2011. The players, in seating order were: Chris Moorman, Brian Roberts,

Elio Fox, Dermot Blain, Jake Cody, Shaun Buchanan and Moritz Kranich.

In this hand I open the cutoff with $10\heartsuit-2\heartsuit$ to 85k off a 40bb effective stack. Six years ago when this final table was played out, people defended their blinds much tighter so, with only three players behind me, I went for a very loose open. There weren't any fish at the table so my strategy was to play very loose and aggressive preflop hoping to pick up a lot of smaller pots without showdowns. Even so this is way too loose an open from the cutoff and you would need to have a very tight/straightforward set of players on the button and in the blinds to make this profitable.

Dermot Blain defends in the big blind with $K\spadesuit-J\heartsuit$, which is a very standard call preflop. If he knew I was opening as wide as I was he could consider a 3-bet for value but it's a very tough hand to play facing a 4-bet, which is my likely response versus a higher 3-bet strategy (rather than increasing my flatting range to include a lot of hands dominated by K-J) so I much prefer just calling.

The flop comes $J\clubsuit-9\heartsuit-Q\heartsuit$ which is an action flop giving me an open-ended straight draw and flush draw and is about as much as you can ask for with a junky hand like 10-2 suited.



It also gives Blain a strong piece with middle pair, a gutshot draw and an overcard. The flop plays out very standardly with me betting 125,000 into 225,000 (just over 55% pot) and him calling. I went for the bigger sizing

here as I'm going to be a bit more polarized with my continuation betting on such a dynamic board. Nowadays I think I would size slightly smaller versus the big blind as I have a huge range advantage here so actually want to be continuation betting at a much higher frequency than I would have done in 2011.

The turn is the 7♦ giving me the flush. Blain checks to me and I 100% have to bet here. Maybe with a hand such as A♦-K♦ you could consider checking behind and laying a trap as you block a lot more of their continuing range on the turn and Blain is likely to be drawing dead. Even though I now have a flush and almost certainly the best hand, there are still plenty of hands of his that have to continue here so I like that I bet 275,000 into 475,000 (around 58% pot). I could actually go even bigger here (closer to 70% pot) given that we started the hand at a 40bb stack depth and a lot of his range has to continue on the turn. K-J with the J♦ is a hand that absolutely has to continue. I could easily be semi-bluffing with the A♦ and he also has substantial equity versus a lot of my value bets such as A-J with no diamond, etc.

After Blain makes the turn call the river is the 8♠ giving me the straight to go with my flush (not that I needed it!). It's not ideal for me that I'm blocking the straight here by having the 10♦ in my hand as that is a hand that he will call the river with. At this point I don't have too many bluffs other than A-x with the A♦ of which I have all combinations that don't make a pair on the flop. I don't really have the K♦ as a bluff in my range here as the only offsuit kings I'm opening will all have at least a pair on the flop to go with them so are not going to be bluffed in this way. On the river I bet 575,000 into 1,025,000 (around 56% pot) and Blain ended up calling with his K-J. I think this is a slight mistake as at this point I don't have that many bluffs. One thing that does work in his favor is that I'm not going to be betting two pair on this river so my range is more polarized. However, I think I have too many combinations of flushes, straights and sets compared to bluffs that would all play this way to make this a profitable call with K-J on the river.