

Re-Raising with Weak Hands

As stacks get shorter, there is more value in picking up seemingly innocuous pre-flop pots. One of the best ways to do this while keeping variance down is to 3-bet loose, weak players before the flop while you are in position. You may think 3-betting should increase variance but it actually does the opposite because you are playing larger pots in position and smaller pots out of position. If you win 60% of the pots you play in position and 40% of the pots you play out of position, you can see how your profit will begin to pile up. Do not get too attached to any hand, and be careful to not constantly 3-bet observant opponents because they will start to play back at you, which will often bust one of you.

Suppose a loose, weak player raises from the cutoff to 2.5BBs and you are on the button with 45BBs. If they have been raising often and you have not been too wild, you can 3-bet to 7BBs with any two cards. This may seem crazy, but purely bluffing in this spot will usually be profitable because they will fold too often. To give yourself a bit more equity in case your assessment of your opponent is incorrect, try to have some sort of playable hand, such as $J\spadesuit-7\spadesuit$ or $8\spadesuit-5\spadesuit$. Some of the best hands to 3-bet bluff with are junky connectors and suited cards, although an Ace or King blocker is valuable too, especially as stacks get even shallower. Of course, you should also 3-bet your best hands, perhaps using a smaller sizing if your opponent is oblivious to your strategy. If your opponent 4-bets, fold everything besides perhaps J-J+ and A-K, exploiting the fact that you do not expect to be played back at unless you are against a premium hand. Do not let your opponents know that you are making tight folds or they will adjust and play back at your 3-bets more often, which is not what you want when you are playing exploitatively. If your opponent calls your 3-bet, make a continuation bet roughly 95% of the time, checking only when you are certain they connected with the board.

Suppose your opponent raises to 2.5BBs from middle position and you are on the button with $7\spadesuit-5\spadesuit$ with 50BB effective stacks (*Diagram 175*).

This is a reasonable spot to make a loose 3-bet, given your hand is too weak to call. You 3-bet to 7BBs and your opponent calls. The flop comes $A\heartsuit-J\spadesuit-4\heartsuit$. When he checks, you should bet 7BBs every time. In fact, with hands like 7-5, you should bet every board unless your opponent gives off a reliable tell of strength that lets you know he does not plan to fold. Only check behind with hands that have good showdown value but will be in bad shape if a lot of money goes into the pot, such as high top pairs with weak kickers, like A-3 on A-J-4, and strong underpairs, like K-K. If you instead had 9-8 on 9-7-4, you should bet because any card higher than a 9 on the turn significantly diminishes your hand's strength.

In general, you should be more inclined to make this play when you will be in position as opposed to out of position. Suppose you 3-bet from the small blind with A-8o and your opponent calls. Bet most boards besides A-x-x because then, you

want to get to the showdown cheaply. Go ahead and bet on 8-4-2 because your hand is vulnerable to a lot of turn cards.

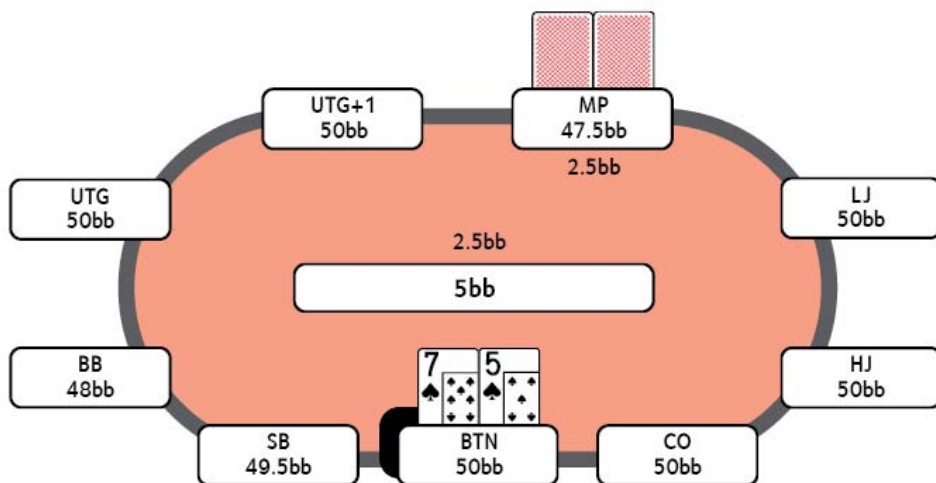


Diagram 175

Do Not Fear Going Broke

Once you get down to 40BBs or so, you cannot fear going broke with strong hands like 10-10 or A-K before the flop, or with a strong made hand like A-Q on Q-7-3. While you should still pot control with your marginal made hands, be happy to get all-in with your premium hands. If you happen to be beat, that is fine. Sometimes your premium hands will lose and there is nothing you can do about it.

If you raise before the flop with 10-10+ or A-K and are 3-bet, go all-in unless your opponent is known to rarely 3-bet. For example, you raise with A-K to 2.5BBs out of your 40BB stack and an aggressive player 3-bets on the button to 7BBs. Go all-in almost every time. Your early position range should be tight, so most players who 3-bet should also have tight ranges that are unlikely to fold to an all-in. For the most part, never fold a premium hand before the flop once you start to get short.

It is worth noting that you should also have some bluffs in your all-in 3-betting range. The GTO strategy 40BBs deep involves going all-in with lots of low suited Aces as bluffs. While you will not be in great shape when your all-in gets called when you have A-5s, realize it is a solid blocker hand that still has decent equity when called. You should also go all-in with K-K, Q-Q, J-J, 10-10, and A-K, all of which will be in fine shape. You probably want to just call the 3-bet with A-A to protect your preflop calling range, making you more difficult to play against after the flop.

Be willing to push with an even wider range against the most aggressive players. Suppose your fairly loose-aggressive opponent knows that you are loose-aggressive too. You raise to 2.5BBs out of your 40BB stack from middle position into a tight player's big blind and your loose-aggressive opponent in the cutoff 3-bets to 7BBs. You can go all-in with a wide range because most of your equity will come from your opponent's folds. You must know your opponent is fairly wild, otherwise an easy push can turn into an easy fold.

Suppose you raise 9♠-8♠ to 2.5BBs out of your 45BB stack from middle position and your loose-aggressive opponent 3-bets to 7BBs from in position (*Diagram 176*).

This is a great spot to make an exploitative all-in. You will usually have at least 30% equity when you are called, and most likely about 40%. When you have that much equity, pushing is usually a great play if you have any fold equity at all, which you will certainly have in this spot due to the 3-bettor's wide range.

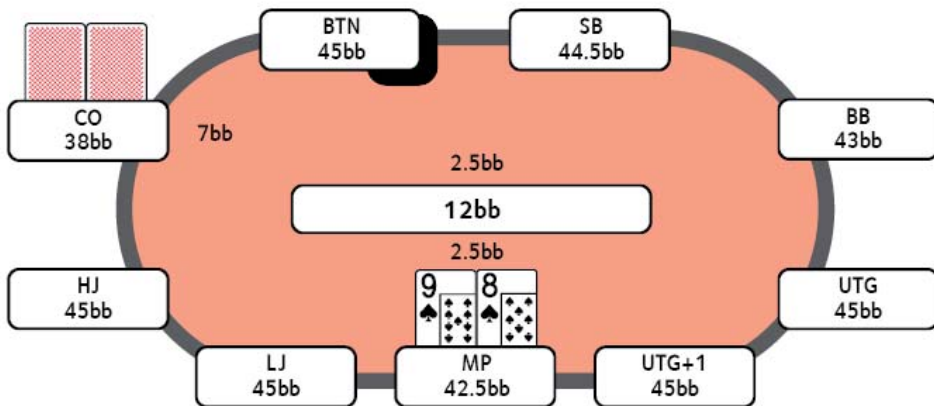


Diagram 176

Suppose you raise A♠-J♠ from middle position to 2.5BBs out of your 50BB stack and both blinds call. The flop comes J♥-8♥-3♣. Your opponents check and you bet 5BBs. The small blind folds and the big blind goes all-in for 42BBs more (*Diagram 177*).

While the pot was only 13.5BBs before your opponent pushed, you should almost always call because his range is decently strong made hands, perhaps Q-J and better, and draws. Against that range, you are in amazing shape. Whenever your value hand beats some of his value hands and all the draws, calling off is usually the right play.

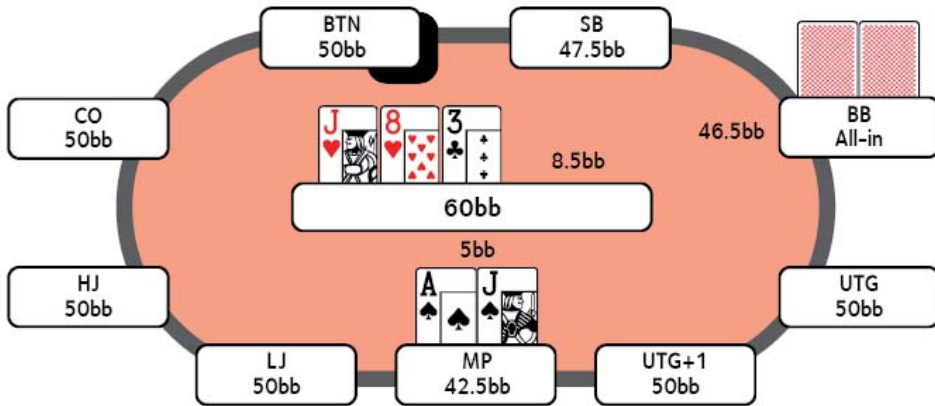


Diagram 177

Note that his push is not that great of a play with marginal made hands like J-10 and worse because he will usually only get called when he is beat or against a premium draw that has plenty of equity. Do not make the mistake of drastically overvaluing a marginal made hand.

If your opponent just calls on the flop and the turn is a blank, you should again bet with the intention of calling if your opponent pushes. If the turn completes a draw, check behind and call on all rivers as long as the board does not drastically change, such as when a four-straight or four-flush arrives.

When you start to get short stacked, try to not fold strong hands. They do not come around often enough to justify folding except against the tightest ranges.

Getting Excellent Pot Odds

You will occasionally have a marginal hand that is getting pot odds that are so good that you cannot fold, even though you think your opponent has a better hand. This is similar to when you are min-3-bet preflop.

Suppose someone raises to 2.5BBs out of their 50BB stack, another player calls, you call with 7♠-6♠ on the button, and the big blind 3-bets to 12BBs. Both the initial raiser and the caller call (*Diagram 178*).

There are 40.5BBs in the pot and you have to call 9.5BBs more, giving you 4:1 odds. Your hand will realize more than 20% equity, so calling is the correct play even though you are likely way behind at least one player's range. After the flop, if you flop an open-ended straight draw, a flush draw, or two pair or better, you should be happy getting the money in.

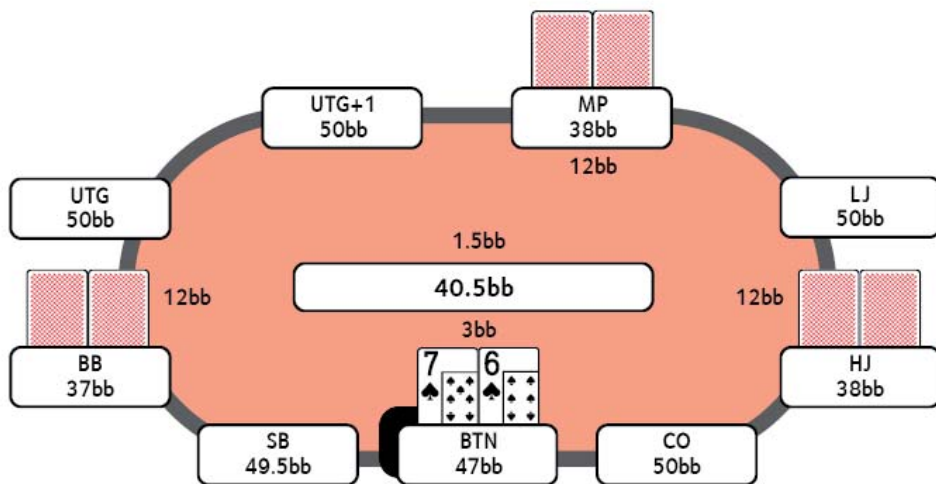


Diagram 178

You will undoubtedly run into trouble when you flop a marginal made hand like middle pair in a multi-way pot. If you flop one pair, the big blind pushes, and one of the other players goes all-in as well, you have an easy fold. If the big blind goes all-in and the other players fold, you will be getting 2:1, having to call 38BBs in an 81.5BB pot. You have 20% equity against overpairs, but most players' ranges include more than just overpairs. They also have unpaired hands like A-K and A-Q in their range most of the time, giving you a huge amount of equity, often as high as 55%, depending on how many unpaired hands are in their range. So, your equity is somewhere between 20% and 55%. This is where knowing your opponent's tendencies becomes extremely helpful. If they are tight and straightforward, you should fold, but if they have lots of preflop bluffs and will go all-in with lots of them, you should call.

A great example of this concept came up in the \$5,000 WPT event at the Bike. A good, loose online player raised to 2.5BBs, a tight player called, and I called from the small blind with 10♣-8♣ with a 48BB stack. A tight-aggressive pro in the big blind 3-bet to 10BBs. The initial raiser and the caller folded. I called due to my decent pot odds (I had to call 7.5BBs into a 19BB pot) with the intention of check/pushing any flop where I had a gutshot with an overcard or better, unless there was an Ace or two Broadway cards on board. The flop came 8-6-5, giving me a pair (Diagram 179).

I checked, she bet 12BBs, and I went all-in. She snap-called and turned over 9-8o. My 10 kicker held up, winning me a large pot. This situation is slightly different compared to when multiple players see the flop because this time, I was heads-up. In a heads-up pot, her flop betting range should be much wider (perhaps

her entire 3-betting range) than if there were two other callers in the pot. When you flop something decent in a heads-up pot, you have to be willing to get all-in. Calling the flop bet and then check/folding to a turn bet would be a disaster. When you lose all your chips in these situations in a few tournaments in a row, which will certainly happen if you play enough, it is easy to get discouraged. While these plays are high variance, they are profitable in the long run.

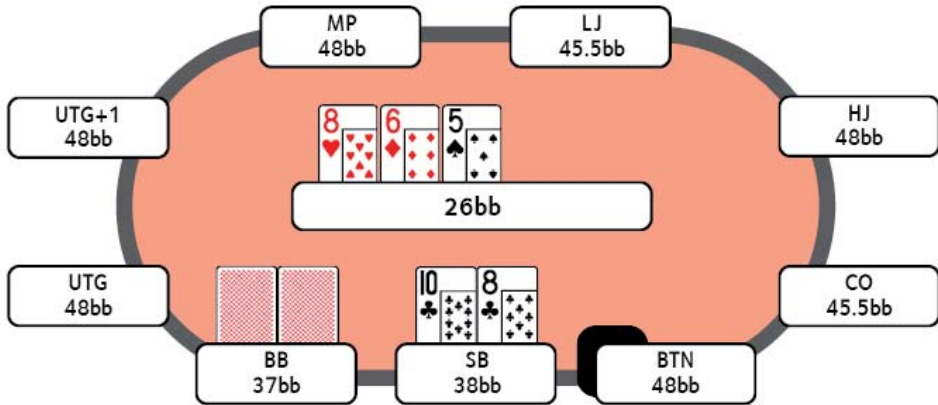


Diagram 179