



# POKER*news*

UK&EUROPE

## **Max Lykov: Rough Ride to the EPT Title**

Matt Hawrilenko  
Vitaly Lunkin  
"Armor Man" Phil Ivey

EPT Season IV:  
Kyiv & Barcelona  
Dr. Pauly  
on Moneymaker

**Poker  
with  
Natalie  
Portman**





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We are glad to introduce to you a brand-new monthly: PokerNews, UK & Europe. We'll try our best to create a magazine that will not only cover the biggest poker tournaments all over the world, but also help our readers to become better players and hopefully money winners in their own right. It would be ridiculous to ignore the fact that poker is actually all about money, and we don't. On the cover, we present you with Max Lykov, a 21-year old who just won €330,000 in the Kiev EPT. Amazingly, the other EPT winner of the newly-born Season VI is even younger, and "wealthier." 20-year old American, Carter Phillips, who took the €850,000 first prize in Barcelona.

We'll try to be honest with our readers and not pretend poker is a bed of roses. Pauly McGuire and Tony Dunst, two of our best writers, will take you behind the scenes and show both gambling failures and victories along with the life of the players outside of the casino.

Our aspiration is to attract up-and-coming poker pros to our pages, and we're proud to welcome aboard the WSOP 2008 runner-up Ivan Demidov, who will be a featured columnist of PokerNews UK & Europe.

More to come...

This first issue has been compiled by a completely new team and, although we hope it's perfect, we're fully aware of how unlikely that is. So we welcome your comments and suggestions on our new undertaking. Let's all have a go at success— you, the readers, and us, the magazine team. Dig in!

Best regards,  
Ilya Gorodetsky

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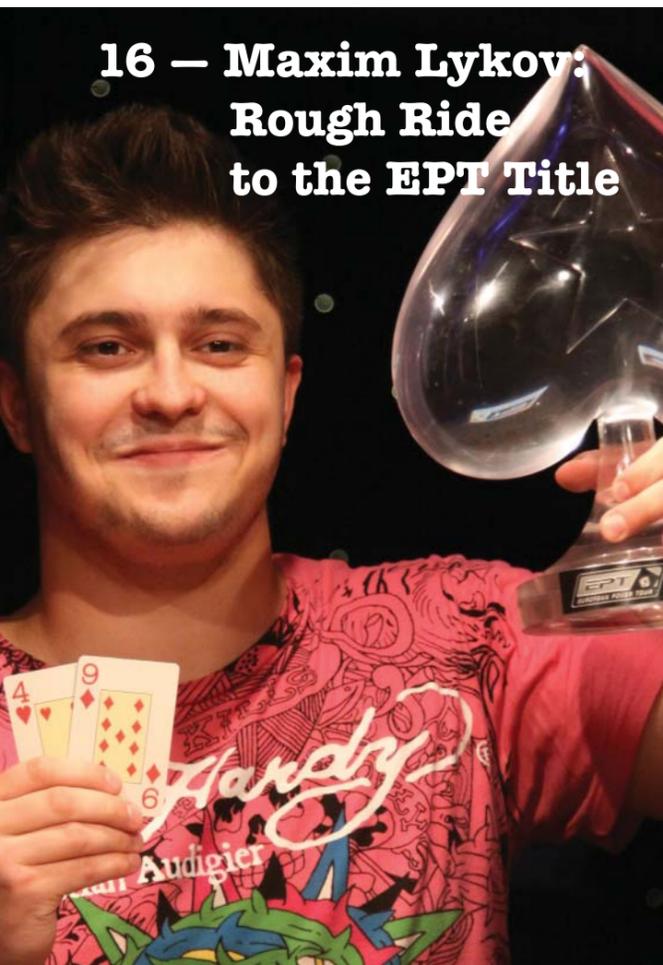
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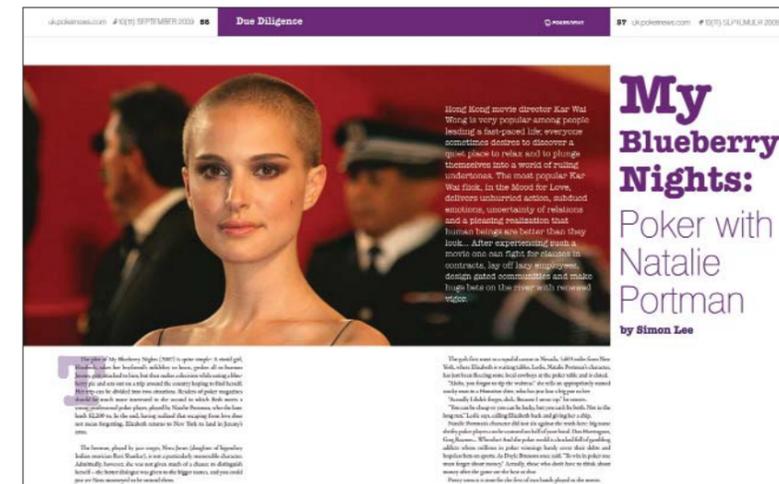
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## WPT – Revival of a Legend

Former online poker legend Prahlad Friedman made a sound comeback at the WPT Legends of Poker event that took place in August in L.A. Friedman outlasted 278 competitors to take down the \$1,009,000 first prize. November Niner, Kevin Schaffel was the runner-up, while Todd Terry took third place.

## WPT in Europe

Two WPT events took place in Europe in August and September. The WPT, Slovakia gathered 100 players who paid €4,900 for the opportunity to win the coveted WPT bracelet. Alec “traheho” Torelli held the chip lead going into the six-player final table, but busted 4th. Famous Hungarian online pro Peter “Belabasci” Traply finished 5th, while first place went to another Hungarian, Richard Toth, who won €104,000.

The next stop was Cyprus. The first WPT Merit Cyprus Classic coincided with the EPT in Barcelona, negatively affecting the attendance of this \$10,000 buy-in event. There were just 181 players in the WPT. 32-year-old French pro, Thomas Bichon won the bracelet and \$579,165. Former world champion Huck Seed narrowly missed the final TV table, finishing 7th.

## November Nine, The European Version

The main event of the Partouche Poker Tour was played in Cannes, France. This huge tournament features a 3 million euro guaranteed prize fund, and the participants enjoy an excellent structure similar to a WSOP Main Event. There were 521 entrants, and nine of them made it to the final table, which was fashionably postponed to two months hence, in November. Swedish pro Michael Tureniec leads the field with more than 3 million chips. The tournament will be concluded on November 21st, and the winner will receive a cool million euros.

## Macau madness

There was a lot of tournament action in August in Macau. Two major poker tours hosted events there: the APT and APPT.

23-year-old Frenchman, Adrien Allain took the 2009 Asian Poker Tour Macau main event title, outlasting 324 opponents including his final table rivals JC Tran, Casey Kastle and David Steicke. Allain, who qualified online at PKR.com for just \$5, got \$391,547 for first place. David Steicke won the APT High rollers event, beating Nam Le for the title.

The main event of the Asian Pacific Poker Tour and \$541,161 went to Dermot Blain from the UK, while Vladimir Geshkenbein from Switzerland won the high rollers tournament for \$266,735. The legendary Johnny Chen finished second in the latter event.

You can find the non-poker guide to Macau in this issue of our magazine at page 22.

## WCOOP Underway

The World Championship of Online Poker started on PokerStars. The schedule features 45 tournaments with \$40,000,000 in guaranteed prize funds, includes the greatest variety of poker games on the internet (badugi, 2-7 lowball and 5-card draw poker are played exclusively on PokerStars) and three very interesting high roller events. The Main Event has a whopping \$10,000,000 guarantee tag.

The championship is underway and will be reviewed in detail in the next issue of PokerNews.

## Poker Hall of Fame: Minus Dwan

Tom Dwan's name was removed from the list of the Poker Hall of Fame nominees. “With all due respect to Mr. Dwan, one of the game's most exciting young players, he does not currently meet the criteria for Hall of Fame selection,” a statement from the Poker Hall of Fame Governing Council reads. Dwan does meet most of the requirements, except for the “test of time,” which, as it turns out, is by far the most important one, as there are some candidates who hardly “successfully played poker against acknowledged top competition for high stakes.” The remaining nominees for 2009 are Barry Greenstein, Dan Harrington, Phil Ivey, Tom McEvoy, Erik Seidel, Mike Sexton, Men “The Master” Nguyen and Daniel Negreanu.



## UB Cheating Scandal Final Decision

The Kahnawake Gaming Commission released its final decision regarding the UltimateBet cheating scandal. The owner of UltimateBet had returned a total of \$22 million to its affected customers and paid a \$1.5 million fine. It was confirmed that the cheaters were able to view their opponents' hole cards.

The Commission named 1994 WSOP Main Event champ Russell Hamilton as the main abuser, also mentioning 31 anonymous people who were associated with him in the matter. The investigation revealed 23 accounts with 117 different usernames used to facilitate the cheating. These lists are available online – feel free to check your own hand histories!

## WPT Goes To Party

The World Poker Tour Enterprises (WPTE), owner of the WPT brand, was sold to Party Gaming for \$12.3 million and an additional 5% of future gaming income. WPT founder, Steve Lipscomb expressed excitement about the deal: “PartyGaming's acquisition is financially superior and we look forward to working with one of the pioneers and leaders in the poker and online gaming markets.” The deal must be finalized by February, 2010. WPTE reported significant losses in the last couple of years (\$7.4 million in 2007 and \$12.5 million in 2008). feel free to check your own hand histories!



# Kyiv Steps Up, Kicks Off EPT Season Six

by Martin Harris

Kyiv, Ukraine may be one of the oldest cities in eastern Europe, but this summer it became one of the world's newest poker destinations. The opening stop of the sixth season of the PokerStars.com European Poker Tour took place August 18-23 at the Kyiv Sports Palace, with 296 entrants competing in the Main Event for the EPT trophy and the €330,000 first prize. It was a terrific week of poker, one which I had the good fortune to witness while helping cover the event for PokerNews. In the end, the 21-year-old Russian Maxim Lykov emerged with all the chips, though not before a memorable week of fun and competition.

When the schedule for the new EPT season was first announced in the late spring, the original plan had been to kick things off in Moscow at the Radisson SAS Slavyanskaya. The choice to stage an event in Russia's capital appeared to have been a good idea, a chance to build on the steady increase in poker's popularity country has seen over the last few years. However, in late July the government suddenly declassified poker's status as a sport in Russia, thus making it subject to newly enacted anti-gambling legislation. A new home for the EPT's debut event had to be found quickly, and the decision was made to move the event to neighboring Ukraine.

I had previously spent a lot of time traveling in other parts of Europe, but had never made it as far east as Ukraine. For those unfamiliar, Kyiv is a huge, sprawling city - some estimate the population at around 3 million - with a long, varied history, evidenced in part by its diverse architecture. Those of us covering the event did not have many opportunities to explore the city, although we did get a chance to do a bit of sight-seeing,

visiting the marketplace where locals sold both "touristy" items as well as locally produced arts and crafts. We also were able during the week to sample some of Ukraine's justly famed cuisine, including its fine breads, various dumplings, borsch, salo (pork lard), and, of course, the butter-soaked chicken dish that bears the city's name.

The Kyiv Sports Palace, located near the city's center not far from the Dnieper River, was chosen as the new venue. At first glance, the large, cavernous arena, once host to the Eurovision Song Contest and more recently to the World Cup of Gymnastics, appeared an unlikely place to hold a poker tournament. The space was divided in half by large, amber-colored curtains hanging from the high ceiling, with one side filled with poker tables and the other occupied by the media. In fact, if one didn't look up at the rows of bleachers - the Palace has the capacity to seat 6,000 spectators - the resulting atmosphere wasn't too far removed from that produced by a large casino or ballroom. That said, the sound of rain hitting the roof during a storm midweek or the occasional meow of the black cat that lives at the Sports Palace served as reminders we weren't in the Amazon Room at the Rio in Vegas.

The week kicked off with a rousing opening ceremony featuring performances by the four-man percussion ensemble, Ars Nova, and a dance group, consisting of over fifty men and women whirling and twirling their way through several impressive numbers in traditional Ukrainian dress. A welcome message from the Minister of Youth, Family, and Culture came next, followed by the official launch of the tournament by Ukraine Poker Federation honorary president Gary Bowman, tournament director





Thomas Kremser, and EPT founder John Duthie.

There were several events on the schedule, including a €300 + €30 buy-in Ladies' Event won by Anna Yamshchikova of Russia. There was also a €20,000 + €500 buy-in High Rollers event in which Shaun Deeb (U.S.) bested two other competitors, Nikolay Evdakov (Russia) and Andrew Feldman (U.K.).

Most of the attention, however, was on the €4,700 + €300 buy-in Main Event. The 296-player field meant a prize pool of €1,391,200 would be divided among the top 40 finishers. That total well exceeded the 235 players who participated in the Russian Poker Tour's May 2009 side event in Moscow, thus breaking the record for the largest poker tournament ever held in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

A total of 33 different countries were represented at the Main Event,

with about half of the field coming from Russia (116 players) and Ukraine (33). As is the case at many (but not all) EPT events, the rule at the tables was English only, and we saw players having to be reminded of this rule on several occasions. Language barriers did not appear to hinder communication between the players too greatly, however, and I witnessed many examples of players from varied backgrounds communicating and enjoying getting to know one another as they battled for chips.

One period during which players unexpectedly got a chance to socialize came on Day 1b when a power outage forced an unscheduled half-hour break in play. Word was a construction crew that had been working nearby had accidentally cut through a main line, and suddenly the vibrant tournament scene was plunged into darkness.

At the moment the power went out, I was standing between two tables,

trying to follow the action on both. One featured the Italian Dario Minieri, whose frequent raises and aggressive play had made the table a fun one to watch. At the other, a huge hand was developing between Pier Paolo Fabrietti (also of Italy) and the Ukrainian Alexander Rykov.

The pair had already built a huge pot when the river card made the board 10♣3♥9♦K♦6♠. Rykov pushed out a sizable bet, then Fabrietti, who only had Rykov barely covered, announced he was all in. Rykov thought for a while, then made the call - and in the very next instant all went dark. As it happened, Rykov had pocket kings for a set, and Fabrietti mucked, his tourney all but over at that point. It was as though for the Italian the lights going out was somehow symbolic.

Players immediately pulled out their cell phones, shining the lights the devices emitted onto the cards and chips. Hands on other tables that had

been interrupted were completed with the further help of flashlight-wielding tourney officials. Rather than cause consternation, the incident did not seem to bother the players too greatly, most of whom appeared to take it in stride. It also proved an occasion for the staff to prove their mettle, and they handled the situation with the same professionalism they demonstrated during the entire week.

There were quite a few notables among those who made the trip for EPT Kyiv, including Deeb, Evdakov, Feldman, Minieri, Luca Pagano, Alexander Kostritsyn, John Kabbaj, Gus Hansen, Faraz Jaka, Ivan Demidov, Vitaly Lunkin, Cristian Dragomir, "Miami" John Cernuto, and Katja Thater. None of those would still be around on Day 4, however, when one of the most interesting hands of the event took place between the American Andrew Malott and Ukraine's own Alexander Dovzhenko.





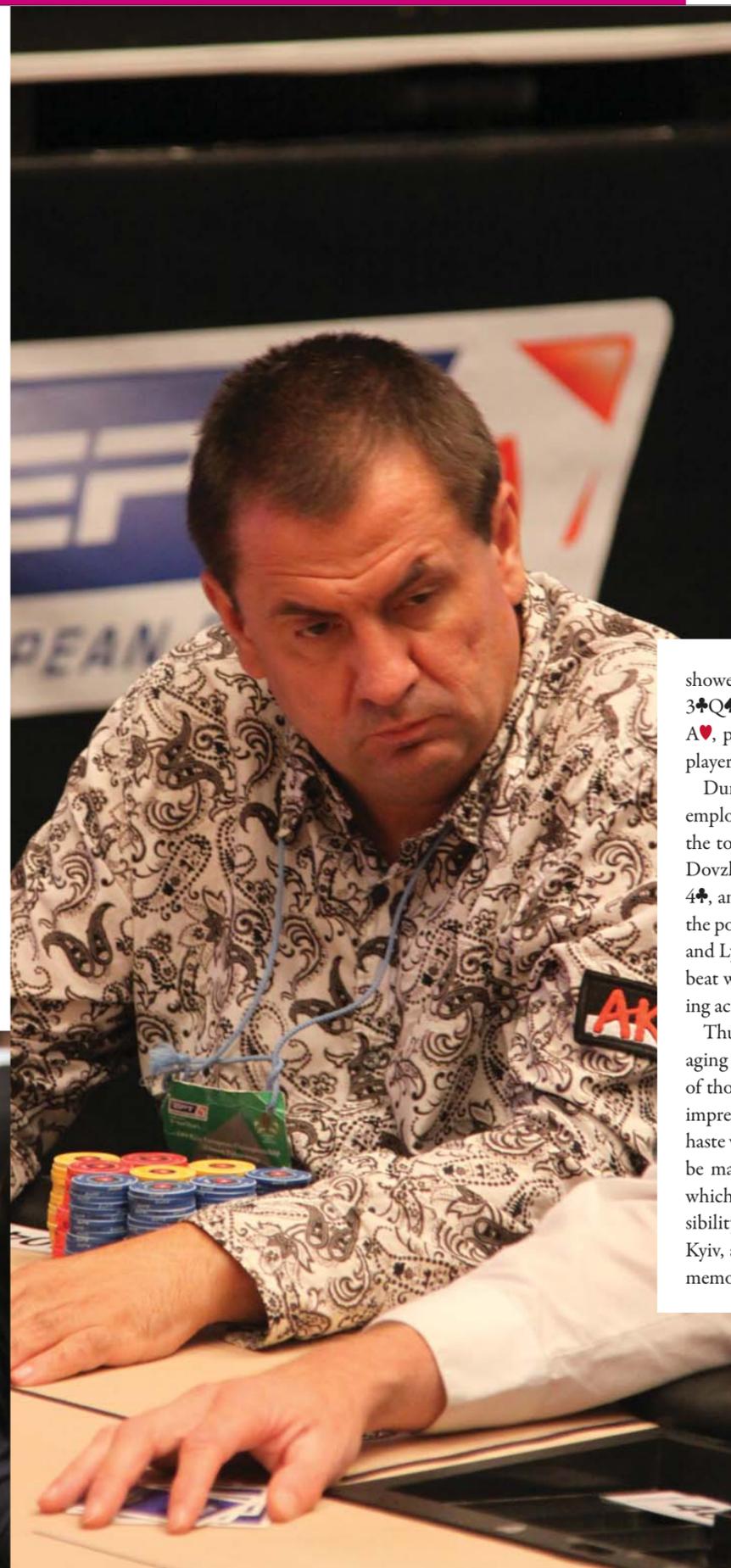
At the time, there were 13 players left battling to make the eight-handed final table, and Malott and Dovzhenko were the big stacks at their short-handed table. Malott put in a preflop raise to 31,000 from under the gun (a little more than 2.5 times the big blind), and Dovzhenko called from the cutoff. The flop came  $9♥4♠Q♣$ . Malott continued with a bet of 45,000, and Dovzhenko considered for a while before calling. "You should have folded," said Malott. The turn then brought the  $A♥$ . Malott checked, Dovzhenko very deliberately bet 100,000, and Malott swiftly check-raised him to 240,000. "I tried to tell you, friend," he said. "You should have folded."

Dovzhenko wasn't listening to his opponent's advice. "All in," he said. Malott quickly called, showing  $A♦4♦$  for two pair. Alas, Dovzhenko had him with  $Q♦Q♠$ . The river was the  $9♦$ , and the amiable Malott congratulated Dovzhenko on a well played hand as he departed.

That big pot helped make Dovzhenko one of the big stacks for Sunday's

final table, although all were chasing the Russian Max Lykov who had ended each of the previous three days as the chip leader. It wasn't long after the final table began, however, that Dovzhenko pushed past Lykov and into the chip lead following a big hand in which he drew pocket aces versus Belarus' Vadim Markushevsky's pocket kings. That hand eliminated Markushevsky (who chopped PokerStars WCOOP Main Event in 2008) in 8th, and he was followed to the rail by Torsten Tent (Germany) in 7th, Adrian Schaap (Holland) in 6th, Lucasz Plichta (Poland) in 5th, and Arthur Simonyan (Russia) in 4th.

The remaining three players - Dovzhenko, Lykov, and Vitaly Tolokonnikov of Russia - were nearly even in chips, each having around 3 million, when dinner break arrived. Soon after they returned, the blinds were 40,000/80,000 when Tolokonnikov opened with a raise to 210,000, Lykov reraised to 550,000, Tolokonnikov shoved all in, and Lykov, who had his fellow countryman barely covered, made the call. Tolokonnikov



showed  $7♥7♦$ , while Lykov tabled  $A♦J♣$ . The race was on. The flop came  $3♣Q♠5♥$ , and Tolokonnikov's pair was still ahead. But the turn brought the  $A♥$ , putting Lykov in front. The river was the  $8♦$ , and suddenly just two players remained.

During heads-up play, Lykov was much more assertive than his opponent, employing the same aggressive style he'd displayed for the entire week. On the tournament's final hand, Lykov once again raised from the button and Dovzhenko called. Both checked the  $4♠J♦7♠$  flop. The turn brought the  $4♣$ , and Lykov checked again. Dovzhenko bet 400,000 -- nearly the size of the pot -- and Lykov check-raised to a million. Dovzhenko then pushed all in, and Lykov quickly called. The Ukrainian showed  $J♣10♥$ , but Lykov had him beat with  $9♦4♥$ , and the  $A♦$  on the river meant the trophy would be heading across the border to Russia.

Thus concluded another successful EPT event, as well as a most encouraging introduction of professional tournament poker to Kyiv, Ukraine. All of those present at the Sports Palace - players and media alike - were highly impressed with the staging of the event, particularly when considering the haste with which EPT Kyiv had been pulled together. Whether the EPT will be making a return trip to Kyiv remains to be seen, but the success with which the inaugural event was carried out certainly bodes well for that possibility. I know my PokerNews colleagues and I greatly enjoyed our time in Kyiv, appreciating the hospitality of the Ukrainians and taking home great memories of a remarkable, exciting week of poker. 🍀



# Maxim Lykov: Rough Ride to the EPT Title

by Ilya Gorodetsky

**Maxim “Decay” Lykov** has always had the reputation of a rising Russian poker star, despite his somewhat bumpy career. This summer he finally fulfilled his potential by finishing third in the star-ridden \$5,000 NL Holdem Shootout event at the WSOP and winning the EPT Main Event in Kyiv. Maxim talked with the PokerNews editor-in-chief Ilya Gorodetsky right after his triumph in the Ukrainian capital.

**Ilya Gorodetsky:** Maxim, tell us about the early stages of your poker career. Was there anything special about it?

**Maxim Lykov:** Absolutely nothing. I got acquainted with poker back in 2006. As with many novices, I started with freerolls then switched to micro-limits and so on. At a very early stage I registered at the most popular poker forum in Russia, and gradually familiarized myself with such concepts as third barrel, check-raise, etc. This forum gave me a lot and stimulated my further study of poker.

**IG:** Where did your online nickname, Decay, come from?

**ML:** When I was playing Quake 2 and Quake 3 I had the nickname Smile, because I thought of myself as a funny guy. Then I realized that it was somewhat hackneyed and accidentally stumbled upon the word “decay.” Actually, I did not know exactly what it meant when taking it as a nick. I just liked how the word looked and sounded. It stuck to me very quickly.

**IG:** As far as I know, you have been progressing very quickly. In the summer of 2007 you had a very good run. Your bankroll reached \$100,000. How did it happen?

**ML:** A friend of mine lent me \$1,000 and took me out to a poker club where I won about \$3,000 on the first night. I became a frequent comer to this club, winning almost every day. Back then I thought that poker was a simple game and a great place for easy money. At the same time I started playing NL 5-10 on the internet. I had a fantastic upswing and increased



my bankroll to around \$70,000. Having no idea about bankroll management I tried different games and got into the most expensive ones. Unsurprisingly, my bankroll experienced huge swings. I was playing and managing my bankroll in a very reckless manner.

**IG:** You have a trademark hyper-aggressive style. Have you had it from the very beginning of your poker career?

**ML:** Like many players I started loose-passive, but pretty soon realized that aggression helps to win a lot of pots vs. weak opponents. The only problem I had was how to control my aggression. Sometimes I could not understand why an opponent called my bluff while holding just a third pair. Later I realized that playing poker one has to be able to switch gears.

**IG:** What helped you to wise up?

**ML:** After yet another downswing, I realized that I owed my previous success pretty much to the luck factor. It was a very strange situation. You keep playing the game that brought you a lot of money, but this time nothing goes your way. It took me a lot of time and hard work to figure out what was going on and to make the necessary corrections.

**IG:** You had the reputation of a very promising player, the hope of Russian poker, some said. However, at one point your bankroll plummeted to about \$2,000. How did you get through it and not lose your heart?

**ML:** It was a very hard time. I knew that I had made a name for myself but at the same time could not afford to play the limits I was accustomed to. Basically in this situation one has just two options – either give up or try to

climb back from the bottom. So I managed to get back to the lower limits by playing very responsibly.

**IG: How important was your 2nd place finish back in November 2008 in FTOPS 5K event?**

**ML:** This result was vital for me. First of all, I must say that I owe a lot to my former backer Sergey "Gipsy74" Rybachenko for this success. He believed in me and put his money where his mouth was by backing me, although I was in a real predicament, both in poker and in my personal life. Without his generous help I'm not sure what I would've done. This result gave me a fantastic boost of confidence and a substantial increase of my bankroll. Unfortunately, I had to spend most of the prize on things non-poker.

**IG: The very beginning of this year was not particularly good for you either. Your breakthrough occurred in May...**

**ML:** Indeed. From January to May 2009 I played a lot of cash on the internet NL \$200 and NL \$400 but barely broke even. The thing was that I was playing really well but things just weren't going my way. Finally I decided to start from scratch and entered \$10-30 tournaments. I think within a few months I played about a thousand SNGs. I analyzed a lot of hands and quickly realized that I had the potential to make my game much better.

About this time, together with my friend and fellow pro poker player Andrey Zaichenko, I made a deal with the newly formed JokerTeam, which included Vitaly Lunking and several strong Russian players. The long term contract that we established was very important to me. Finding myself on this firm ground gave me a huge boost of extra self-confidence.

**IG: Just before the WSOP you won an event at the Red Sea Cup in Egypt. Did it inspire you?**

**ML:** It was a very important victory for me. I started getting the feel for live tournaments.

**IG: What is the difference between live and online tournaments for you?**

**ML:** Usually, I play much more aggressively online. As for live games I have been working a lot on reading tells lately. Actually, it is much easier for me to fold a very strong hand in a live tournament if something indicates (and very often it does!) that the opponent has a monster. There are no such things on the internet. I have to admit though that I still feel more comfortable playing online.

**IG: Tell us a little bit about the first two tables in the \$5,000 NL Holdem Shootout event at the WSOP where you finished 3rd (\$145,062).**

**ML:** It was my third tournament at the WSOP. In the first one I lost a critical coin-flip, in the second I moved all-in with a straight on the turn, the opponent called with a flush-draw and hit one of his outs on the river. I was a little bit annoyed and disappointed, but felt that since I did nothing wrong sooner or later everything would be OK. At my third tournament I immediately spotted many top players that I had seen playing on TV so often. Moreover, there were only 280 participants in this event. I felt a little intimidated but had no way back. After all you go to Vegas to play poker!

My first table featured a constellation of top pros including Carlos Mortensen, James "mig.com" Mackey, Allen Cunningham and Scott Montgomery. At the very start I suffered jitters but quickly realized that all these great players were human beings too. After a rather tightly played start I switched gears and pulled off a few nice bluffs. I also made a couple of good value bets against Allen Cunningham. I put him on the right hands. I think my opponents were a little bit perplexed because this change in my game was so quick.



Heads-up against Scott Montgomery took several hours. Six or seven times I was up something like 8 to 1 but every time my opponent came from behind with a couple of all-ins won with two random cards and we started all over again. Finally I broke his resistance with A-A vs. A-K. For some reason Scott refused to shake hands with me, which I found a little surprising.

The second table was much harder for me, because the opponents were less predictable. At the beginning Lex Veldhuis (who had position on me) was rampant over the table, 3-betting and 4-betting virtually every pot. At this point I got lucky and doubled up with K-K on the button vs. Lex's A-K in the big blind. It gave me a comfortable stack. This cooler did not stop Veldhuis who kept terrorizing the table and knocked out two opponents. It was no surprise that we met in heads-up. Having fewer chips I realized that I was no match for him in a super aggressive game and decided to slow down and wait for the right spot. At this stage it was critical to maintain my stack, which I did with a couple of big 4-bets. Still by the time the most important hand was played I had about 300,000, whereas my opponent had twice as many.

I called his raise with A-2 from the big blind. On the flop A-7-4 (two clubs) he made a continuation bet after my check. I decided to mix it up with a check-raise, representing a flush-draw. After his call the turn brought an offsuit 8 and we both checked. After a blank card on the river I realized that it was an excellent moment for a bet because most likely the opponent would put me on a flush-draw. In other words there was a good chance that Lex would try to steal the pot with a bluff. That is exactly what happened. He met my bet with a huge raise, I called. Lex said "nice call" and I scooped a monstrous pot.

It was the key moment because I played this hand unconventionally. I broke the pattern so to say. Soon after that Veldhuis made a huge 3-bet all-in and after some deliberation I called with A-J. It was a great relief to see my opponent's A-4. Neither of the streets improved his hand and I made it to the final table. Frankly, I was elated.

**IG: You were probably more excited then than after winning the EPT Kiev. Would you say so?**

**ML:** I guess you're right. After all it was my first final table at the WSOP. Of course, had I known that later in the year I would win an EPT event I would not have been that excited (smiles). However, I fully realized that at that point I had a good chance to win the bracelet. 5-6 max tables – that's my game.

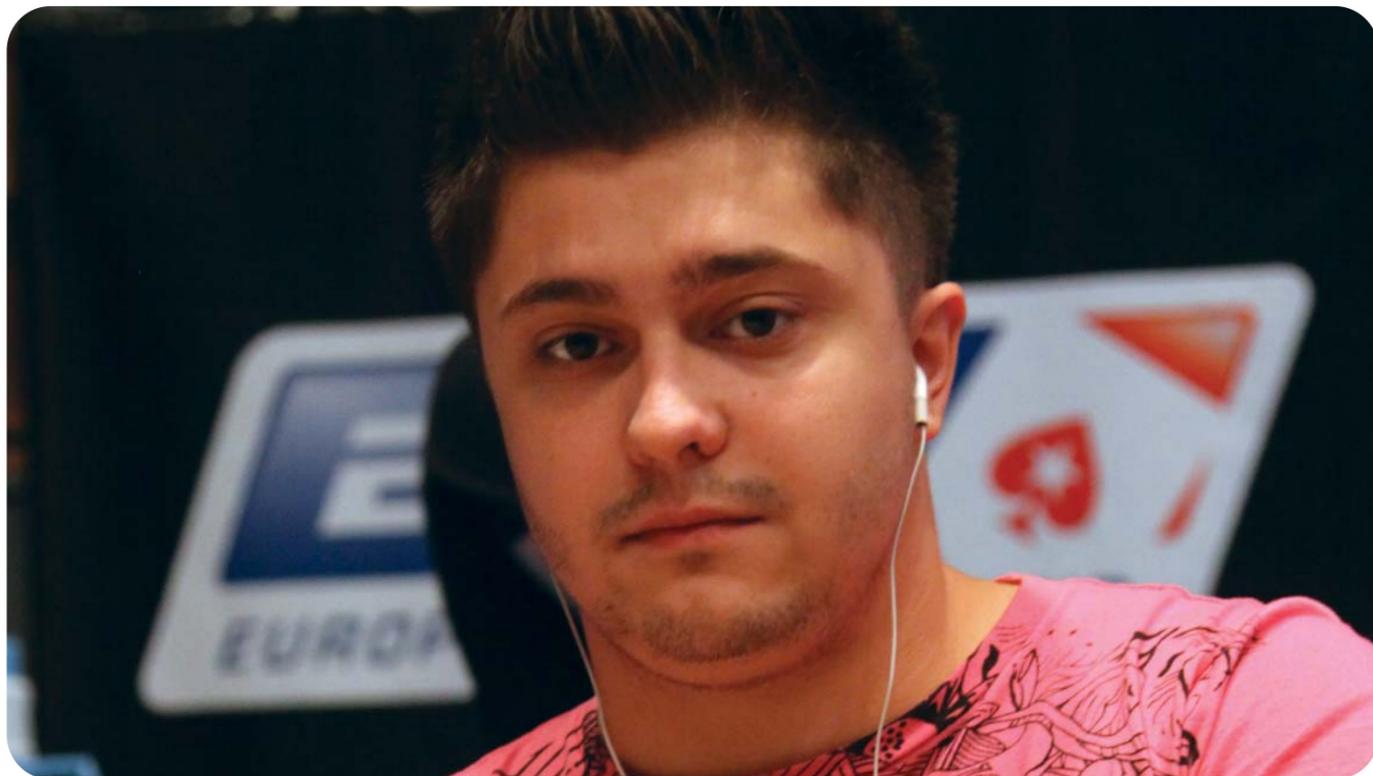
**IG: Were you upset after finishing third?**

**ML:** Right after the event I was nearly broken-hearted. In a MTT any place except first is a reason for regret. But since then I have realized that it was an excellent result for just my third WSOP event, and with such a strong lineup.

**IG: Right before the EPT in Kyiv you wrote in a poker forum that you were determined to have a good run in this event. Was this just wishful thinking or did you have some premonition?**

**ML:** Thanks to extensive grinding online I felt that I was in very good shape. Naturally I hoped for the best, but first prize came as a pleasant shock, although not that big one. I was ready for the event and fully realized that the field in the tournament was not as strong as say, \$100 freeze-out at PokerStars. Many participants of this EPT event have obvious leaks in their game and I know how to exploit them. In such situations the most important thing is winning coin-flips.

**IG: Your real quest for the title started in the middle of Day 2, but**



before that the situation looked rather gloomy. How did you manage to turn things around?

**ML:** In the first part of the second day everything went wrong for me. At some point my stack shriveled to around 9-10 M and I started pushing all-in from the button and cut-off. When a very tight Italian player called my all-in from the cut-off with K-J suited with his whole stack, deep down I said goodbye to the event. To my surprise he turned over the hand I could only have dreamed he'd have – K-9 off-suit. Enraptured, I just prayed for a blank board. The dealer opened a jack and I doubled up.

The second critical hand (there were just three of them during the course of the tournament) was played soon afterwards. A good player raised from the cut-off and I called from the small blind with pocket nines. The flop came 9-6-8. He made a continuation bet to my check. At this point I realized that it was a very good moment to build up the pot and with this in mind I check-raised him. The opponent called which could mean only one thing – he had a very good hand. The turn, a Q, was not particularly good for me. Indeed the opponent could have called with a J-10 for example. Nevertheless, I continued boosting the pot as I had some outs even in the case that he had made a straight on the turn. He met my bet with an all-in move, I instantly called and saw

the best hand I could imagine - a set of sixes.

Just before the EPT I lost several important hands with set over set. I knew that sooner or later it would turn my way. It was a Godsend to get lucky at such a critical moment of the tournament. From then on I started wreaking havoc at my tight table with multiple raises. This aggressive play helped me to increase my stack and comfortably make it to Day 3.

Honestly, I don't know. I just felt so comfortable when playing heads-up. At this point I was 300% sure that I would win the whole thing. My emotions after it was all over were something like: "OK, another tournament is over, thank God I won it. It's time to go to bed." I would be insincere though to say that I did not enjoy taking pictures with the trophy and all the fuss around me.



**IG:** Let's skip a day and talk about the tournament finish. Many were impressed with your call with king high in a very important hand. Could you invite us into the "depths of your unconscious" and share your reasoning behind this call?

**ML:** There were two tables remaining with about 12-13 players still in the running. Just before this hand I had lost three or four pots in a row – my opponents ousted me with 3-bets. I guess many thought that I was on tilt but in reality I was cool and clear-headed. When you play aggressively you should be prepared for 3-bets from your opponents now and then. So, to the hand itself...

*Detailed analysis of the key hand of EPT Kyiv can be found on page 64 in the column "Hand of the Month".*

By the way, Vitaly made it to the final three and I considered him the most dangerous opponent. Ironically, I won a pivotal coin-flip against him (with a price tag of about €100,000). Sometimes luck is on my side.

**IG:** After winning the title you were calm and self-composed. It was even more surprising because I know you as an emotional and expressive person.

**ML:** Honestly, I don't know. I just felt so comfortable when playing heads-up. At this point I was 300% sure that I would win the whole thing. My emotions after it was all over were something like: "OK, another tournament is over, thank God I won it. It's time to go to bed." I would be insincere though to say that I did not enjoy taking pictures with the trophy and all the fuss around me.

**IG:** What are your short-term plans? How far do your ambitions go?

**ML:** I am going to play online, focusing primarily on MTTs. I also plan to try mixed games which I really like and Texas NL heads-up. As for the live games, I am going to participate in EPT events and extensively prepare for the next WSOP.

**IG:** Tell us, how to win Lady Luck's favor?

**ML:** Lady Luck comes to those who really need and deserve it. ☺

# MACAU:

# POKER AND WOMEN



For the last two years now, the two largest tournament series in Asia have run a tournament in Macau at the end of summer, in August for this year. The Asian Poker Tour led off in both cases, this year running an event with a buy-in around \$4,400 US dollars. Immediately following was the PokerStars Asian Pacific Poker Tour, holding a main event a little over \$5,000 US dollars this year, up from last year's \$3,200.

I've been going to play poker in Macau for the last three years now, and to put it quite simply; it's a weird place. For most of its history Macau was a colony under the loose rule of Portugal, and was only handed back to China in December of 1999. Macau had been functioning as the Las Vegas of Asia for quite some time, but during the period it was handed back to China it was considered a triad infested place that few would want to spend serious time in.

When the Chinese took over they set about cleaning the place up immediately. Just a decade later Macau is teeming with international investments and developments from major players in Las Vegas like MGM/Mirage, Steve Wynn, and Sheldon Adelson. Most of the big name properties are finished, though a few are still under construction including an addition to the Macau Wynn hotel. The streets are safe unless you mind being hounded by street walking prostitutes who are unsafe in other ways, but we'll get to that later.

Many of the casinos share their name with their Las Vegas sister casino, such as the MGM, the Venetian, the Hard Rock, and the Wynn. They're not

by Tony 'Bond18' Dunst



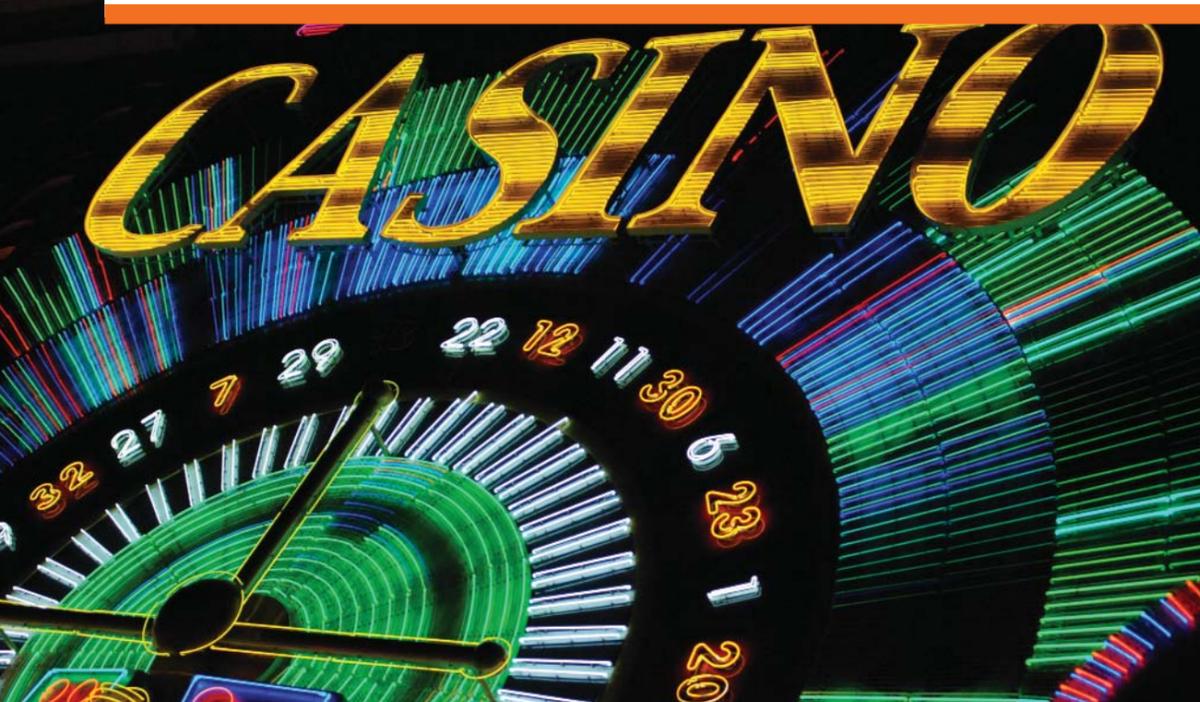
quite as big, but inside they look just as glamorous though you'll notice on the gaming floor that most of the tables are baccarat, a favorite of the region. Apparently everyone in Macau really enjoys watching the dealt equivalent of a coin-flip then giving the house 1% equity for having witnessed it.

There are a number of excellent restaurants within the casinos, though the town is short on traditional entertainment. Most casinos don't operate a show like in Las Vegas, though the Venetian does have a Cirque du Soleil currently running. Price wise things are comparable to the US within the major casinos, but simply step outside and suddenly everything gets vastly cheaper. There are tons of good restaurant options beyond what the casinos offer, including a pretty sweet Korean BBQ place just down the road from Star World.

Most people get to Macau by flying into Hong-Kong and taking a 45 minute ferry ride to the island. You can get a ferry directly from the airport so you never have to go through Hong-Kong customs, though I advise going back to visit the city during your trip as it's vastly more interesting and diverse than Macau. Macau also has its own airport, though it's small and not a ton of airlines fly directly into it.

Both major tournaments attracted a heavy expatriot crowd, though a number of Chinese still showed up in both. The Chinese players are extremely new to the game in some cases but there's nowhere near as many mega fish Asian businessmen that everyone seems to think there is or would be. The game has yet to really take hold in mainland China and many of the Chinese playing are from Hong-Kong, as poker has not been broadcast in mainland China at this time.

I didn't bother playing poker until the start of the APT main event a few days into my trip. I spent the first couple days getting drunk and chasing the models that were hired by the APT to promote the tournament. A few notes about chasing promotional models in situations like these; in order to have a real shot you need to get them into a social setting. Tons of guys will try to game them while they're on the job, but it's highly improbable that they'll give out a phone number or agree to meet up with you while everyone at their work is watching. Be friendly and normal while they're working and try to get everyone out in a group setting, and then start flirting.



Anyway, I busted the tournament in a few hours trying to re-steal over my friend Jay 'SEABEAST' Kinkade in a spot that, upon discussing it with him later, was not a very good one according to Jay, though others were more conflicted. I had several days before my text tournament so my friends and I decided to explore and tear up the Macau nightlife for a few nights.

How much you enjoy the Macau nightlife depends entirely on your disposition towards one thing - whores. If you like whores, you'll love Macau. If that's not your scene, then going out is going to suck. Whoring is a massive industry in Macau and it's completely kosher; a huge % of poker players wind up at the spas but due to the stigma involved few ever talk about it. The stories they come back with are awesome.

I went out in search of normal women in the bars and clubs around Macau and had a terrible time. Even when I picked up a girl who I was extremely confident was normal she wound up asking for \$500 HK (about \$60 USD) to go home with me for the night. I stormed off in a flurry of profanities and infuriation, on much bigger tilt than poker could ever put me on after spending over two hours chatting her up.

There are three main routes for whoring in Macau; the spas, the clubs, and the street. The spas literally have menus in them, containing sexual options and concoctions that couldn't even be dreamed up on craigslist. The clubs are an option and many bars in Macau are specifically hooker bars (and as I found out, they're tough to dodge even in the places not known for it) and I'm told most of the girls there are also safe as they're often for-

mally employed by the clubs. The street is where you can run into trouble. A local friend told me most of the street walkers are girls who are banned from the clubs, so stay away from that.

After busting the tournament I wasted the next few days away being social with friends and people around the tournament circuit. I was told there were (and consistently are) fantastic cash games running at the Wynn, particularly when there aren't so many international pros in town to clean up the games. However, poker is still in its infancy in Asia and there are few places to get a game. The Wynn runs the most by far, but you can get games at the Grand Lisboa and Star World as well. Most casinos don't even have a poker room, and whether the game truly takes off in the region is yet to be seen. I certainly hope so.

I played the APPT main event on the final starting day after spending some time in Hong-Kong with friends. I busted after a fairly standard suckout where my opponent had a number of outs. I had the option of sticking around to play in the high rollers event, but decided I wanted to get out of that city and go arrange an apartment in Melbourne for the upcoming WCOOP. I went back to my hotel, changed my flight, and got out of there as quickly as possible. Not that I advise against visiting Macau for poker or any other reason, as I fully intend to go back every year. It's just that two weeks is more than enough in that place. ☺



# EPT Barcelona: American Invasion Continues

EPT Barcelona is a tough tournament to play. And not just because of the strong competition – the best European players are somehow used to that, but due to the city itself. It's pretty hard to make accurate decisions playing poker only 5 minutes walk from the beach and being practically on the same street as Sagrada Familia, probably the most famous building not only in Spain, but in Europe in general.

However, 478 players decided to take the "risk" of playing poker in sunny & beautiful Barcelona in early September. The number of players was significantly less than expected and a bit disappointing for the organizers, compared to the 621 participants in 2008. Probably the main reason for this mini-disaster was the weird timing of a WPT event in Cyprus, which attracted a number of Las Vegas pros who probably felt they would feel more at home in a tournament hosted by Bellagio's own Jack McClelland. As a result of this scheduling, the WPT Merit Cyprus Classic, while managing to "spoil" the Barcelona event, had yet another poor showing for a WPT. Well, Phil Ivey, who finished 2nd in Barcelona in 2006 prefers Bobby's Room nowadays anyway...

Besides the weather, poker players had to fight another problem this year – thievery. The thieves probably also worked on their "game" and came up with some new tricks this year. Daniel Negreanu (and who else?) became their first victim. This is what Daniel had to say in an exclusive video-interview for PokerNews.com: "Barcelona is my favorite city and remains so despite being robbed. And the way I got robbed was so creative...There was a French couple who were like big fans and they wanted a picture. I took a picture with them and somehow, along the way... I come back to the room and they got my wallet. I lost some cash but the most annoying thing is that there were my green card, my credit cards and stuff. But I'm trying to calm down, to realize that it's not a big deal, there was no gun involved, they didn't stab me. So now I'm trying to focus on playing well and at the moment I'm doing a good job in this

department and am playing really well." Maybe Daniel should get his wallet stolen everyday as he finished Day 1 among the chip leaders but busted pretty soon during the calm & robber-free Day 2.

Another bit of thievery happened to a woman from Ukraine. She was standing near the Casino Barcelona entrance when a stranger asked her something in broken English. Before she realized what was going on a couple of guys dressed as policemen approached them. They told her that the man had just put something in her purse (possibly drugs) and they needed to check it. No drugs, but €3,000 was found, taken out from her purse and then... returned with apologies. As soon as the "policemen" and their accomplice left, the woman discovered that something wasn't right. Unfortunately for her the €3,000 had found a new home... Well, there was some talk about possible security problems in Kiev, where the first event of EPT Season IV took place a couple of weeks earlier. No doubt this woman is smirking at the allegations that Ukraine was the more dangerous place.

But let's get back to the tournament. Daniel Negreanu wasn't the only poker star to fly to Barcelona. During Day 1A all eyes were on defending champion Sebastian Ruthenberg, from Germany, but he didn't have much going for him and was out in the very end of the first session. Well, he won €1,361,000 in 2008 so he probably didn't really need the "modest" €850,000 which the eventual winner took in 2009... After Day 1B, Monte Carlo's EPT Grand Final, 2009 runner-up, Matt Woodward took the chip lead with arrogant & dangerous Lex Veldhuis on his heels. On the other side of the spectrum were a lot of "name pros" including former world champions Peter Eastgate & Carlos Mortensen and EPT winners Julian Thew & Constant Rijkenberg – for them the first day of the event was also the last.

Day 2 was quick and brutal. Reporters couldn't manage to find any logical explanation as to why the pace of play was so furious. Despite the perfect structure introduced at EPT events in 2009 more than 100 players

were felt during only two starting 75-minute levels. Well, I already mentioned the beach and the city architecture but let's not forget about Barcelona's fine restaurants and its wild nightlife... Anyway by the end of the day the money bubble was burst as only 72 players remained. Unexpectedly, Dutchmen Lex Veldhuis, who was chip leader for the most of the day was one of the two players eliminated on the exact bubble. However he lost most of his chips, not because of his branded "crazy" style, but after a brutal bad-beat when most of his chips were in the middle with a set versus Lars Bonding's open-ended straight draw. Those who followed Lex's Twitter page knew that he wasn't happy about the outcome almost immediately.

Day 2 was also the first one when a bolt of lightning, named Matt Laposie, struck. The 22-year old Canadian who qualified for the tourna-



ment at PokerStars and usually plays online under the name "lapozie," finished the day with the biggest stack. Only his tablemates knew that comparing to him even Lex Veldhuis himself would seem tight...

The plan for the 3rd day of PokerStars.com, EPT Barcelona, was to play down to 24 players. A long day was fully expected but once again the players knew better. In five levels the field was whittled down to 23 players. Among those who didn't make it through Day 3 were the lovely chess grandmaster Almira Scripchenko (two recent cashes in EPT events and a WSOP final table), former chip leaders Matt Woodward & Diego Arias Rodriguez, online phenoms Jorn Walthaus & Thayer Rasmussen, and Team PokerStars Netherlands Pros Noah Boeken and Thierry Van den Berg. All these players still did win a bit of money in Barcelona, which is always nice.

by Ilya Gorodetsky

Lapossie stayed on top of the leaderboard for most of the day but the last hand of the evening propelled Georgios Kapalas from Greece to the chip lead. Kapalas and Swedish high-stakes cash player Samer Rahman were the two chip leaders at their table. Both were so aggressive that a “bloody ending” was inevitable. This is the hand that finished the tournament for Rahman:

He raised from the middle position to 30,000. Kapalas reraised to 85,000 from the button. Rahman made the call. The flop came down 8♣7♥4♠. Rahman checked, Kapalas bet a hefty 110,000. Rahman made the call. The turn brought the 9♦ and again Samer checked. Kapalas reached for more chips this time and made it 175,000 to go. Rahman stared at his opponent and then made the call. After the river fell the K♥, Rahman pushed the last of his chips into the middle. Kapalas snap-called holding the nuts - J♠10♥. Rahman rivered two pair with K♦7♦. This time Rahman's stubbornness didn't pay off.

Day 4 was the first I witnessed with my own eyes as I went to Barcelona to provide live commentary for EPT Live. The EPT Kiev, 2009, Day 4 was quite a tiresome undertaking for me as I first played myself all the way down to 19th place before making my way straight to the commentator's booth. In Barcelona I didn't make my life much easier, though I did decide against playing in the event. – this time I tried to see as many city views as one possibly can in several hours and I was running all around the city with a heavy laptop in my bag...

When I found my place in the secret room where EPT Live is produced all the talk there was about the five former EPT winners still in the running. A second win in an EPT Main Event is still a record up for grabs and this tournament had all the chances to make history. Bertran “Elky” GrosPELLier, Roland de Wolfe, Mike “timex” McDonald, Jens Kyllonen and Jan Boubly all made it to the final 23 players with decent stacks. However, all former champions were far away from the four clear chip leaders – Kapalas, Lapossie, Mark Goodwin (England) and Patrick Bueno (France); there was a rare more than 700,000 gap between Bueno in 4th and German TV star and poker player Joram Volklein in 5th.

It looked like four spots at the final table were already booked as the chip leaders had an almost average stack for an 8-handed final table. Well, September 8th proved once again that poker is never easy. Experienced Frenchmen Bueno started playing extremely confidently at the featured table, raising and reraising a lot of hands, but pretty soon his opponents started to resist and from that moment everything went wrong for the \$50,000 HORSE 2008 final-table. He lost several big pots post-flop, but the main damage came from pre-flop confrontations versus Tony Ojala (Finland). 4-4 versus K-10 – 10 on the river... A-Q versus 9-9 – ace in the door, but 9 on the river.

Sweating and clearly disappointed, Bueno went from riches to rags and went out in 17th place. It was a brutal 30 minutes span for France as two of the former EPT winners, Elky and Jan Boubly, busted too. Elky was playing an unexpectedly calm game at the featured table until he was crippled by fellow EPT winner Jens Kyllonen in a hand somewhat typical for the late stages of the biggest online tournaments. Kyllonen raised from the button. GrosPELLier came over the top from the small blind, all-in, which was called after a short deliberation... Time to show your hands - Q♣3♣ for Kyllonen, 4-4 for Elky. Kyllonen flopped a queen and Elky was doomed.

There were two players who went deep in two EPT tournaments in a

row, as Joram Volklein (Germany) and Oleksandr Vaserfirer (Ukraine) both had made it to Day 4 in Kiev two weeks earlier. They improved on their results in Barcelona, but never had a chance to win the whole thing – the German cash-game pro went out in 20th place and Vaserfirer, one of the best Ukrainian players, settled for 16th. Volklein was visibly disappointed with such a showing.

There were still three former champions remaining, but the chances for a two-time EPT winner were bad, as only Kyllonen had a decent stack while de Wolfe lost a huge pot with A-A versus K-K and McDonald wasn't able to find any spots to chip up at the featured table. A new line-up there included three chip-leaders and while Marc Goodwin was playing really tight and reading Stu Ungar's biography. Kapalas and Lapossie came to the table with all guns blazing.

In fact it was a real Lapossie show as the Canadian youngster was practically in every pot with mixed results. Usually he won a big pot post-flop with some thin value-bet or a hero call only to lose these chips immediately after 4-betting the pretty tight Englishmen, Asa Smith and folding to an all-in. Being out of position against such a maniac is a dubious honor and Kapalas was bleeding chips until a tireless “Lapozie” bluff check-raised him twice during one hand! The Greek had the goods this time and came over the top all-in winning everything he had lost before in one hand. Unfortunately, the end of the day was not so good for Kapalas, as he lost a number of all-ins versus shorter stacks and was even on the verge of elimination with 9 players remaining.

Meanwhile at the outer table it was all over for Roland de Wolfe who won't have any good memories about this tournament despite his 15th place finish. Not only will his crucial loss with A-A haunt him, but also the weirdest hand of the tournament, which he played on Day 3. In a blind battle versus young German Tobias Renkenmeier, he bluffed big on the river on the A-high board and was called. Roland showed a king and declared “King high,” but his opponent duly asked him to show both cards, but de Wolfe declined and mucked! Immediately Renkenmeier opened Q-6 for nothing, but Q-high and was awarded the pot as the only player with live cards at the showdown. Roland tried to protest, but tournament director Thomas Kremser made a correct ruling as de Wolfe had nobody to blame but himself for mucking a winning hand. Video of this hand has made it to the internet forums and I strongly recommend Mr. de Wolfe not visit 2+2 to read what online lurkers have to say about this hand and his persona in general...

Soon there were no more former winners in the field, as Kyllonen & McDonald were both busted by PokerStars qualifier Carter Phillips from the US who put on a clinic at an outer table and became soon became chip leader. The 9-handed unofficial final table definitely lacked star power as the only former known player (except for Marc Goodwin with more than \$1,000,000 in live winnings) was lively and strong Dutchmen Julien Nuijten, who had an LAPT win under his belt. Unfortunately, despite the number of short-stacks at the table, Nuijten became final-table bubble-boy, losing with A-K versus Goodwin's A-Q.

Enjoying early breakfast with my British colleague James Hartigan, we discussed what we could expect at the final table. James was anticipating several quick eliminations and then a long short-handed battle. My take was that everything was in Matt Lapossie's hands – the man from Canada definitely had chips and a style that could determine the game speed. Anyway none of us could have predicted how fast the action would unfold.



Practically all the short stacks doubled up during the first orbit! Kapalas lost with K♣Q♣ versus Goodwin's A♦10♣ - he was eliminated in 8th place after playing a really good tournament. Next to go was... Matt Lapossie. “Someone should tell him that there is another gear,” - James Hartigan observed during our breakfast. Obviously Matt didn't have a good adviser or just didn't pay attention to his advisor's words. He made two very dubious plays at the final table. First when he reraised the last Spanish hope Santiago Terrazas, who was opening very tight from early positions. Terrazas pushed and Matt had to call with A♣9♣, that was no match for the Spaniard's A♥K♣. After that Lapossie became one of the short-stacks and soon made another huge and over-risky move. In the battle of the blinds he 4-bet very tight Tony Ojala with J-4 off-suit only to be snap-called by pocket queens.

Lapossie was extremely confident in himself and claimed afterwards that he had no regrets and doubts in his decisions. I doubt he would have insisted on this without the cameras in his face, though. Well, if he does his homework or the kind of task my school English teacher called “Mistakes Corrected” we'll definitely see this talented player on more big final tables pretty soon.

With the Canadian's departure the play calmed down significantly and the next bust-out happened only after two big hands clashed (Ojala's Q-Q versus tricky played Phillips's A-A). Phillips took full control of the table after that, playing nearly flawless big-stack poker. His next victim was young British pro, Asa Smith (5th place and €200,000). Then it was Goodwin's time to shine – he was practically imperceptible at the final table, but he caught the right cards when he needed them – he busted Romanian Mihai Manole coming from behind with A-9 versus A-10 and then his top pair held up against Santiago Terrazas's flush-draw. In all fairness Manole and Terrazas both had their fair share of luck earlier and should have been content with the final result.

It all came to a duel reminiscent of the American War of Independence. “Old” conservative Great Britain was represented by Marc Goodwin, 49, and 20-year old online pro Carter Phillips was the face of young & ambitious America. The heads-up duel lasted for several hours with everything going according to this “scenario” – Phillips won a number of small pots, but Goodwin stayed on par picking up a couple of Carter's bluffs. “The Brit with the book” (Goodwin brought his lucky Ungar's biography with him once again) was on the ropes once, but doubled up when Phillips went too far with his read and called Goodwin's all-in on the turn with only a third pair.

In the last hand of the day Goodwin played exactly the same way as in the hand when he doubled up (check-raise the flop, all-in on the turn), but this time he had only a gutshot. Nevertheless it was a tough call for Phillips and he was thinking for almost 10 minutes before calling off with top-pair. A blank on the river meant that one more young American conquered a big European tournament as he won the first prize of €850,000. It was a well-deserved win as Phillips was definitely the best player at the final table. Sometimes justice triumphs... even in the game of poker.

The young, shy American was visibly shaken and on the verge of tears. It was funny for us, though when he mentioned that he had been waiting for this success for quite a long time as he had started his professional career 10 or 11 months before. Let's hope Carter doesn't soon learn how tough poker can really be.

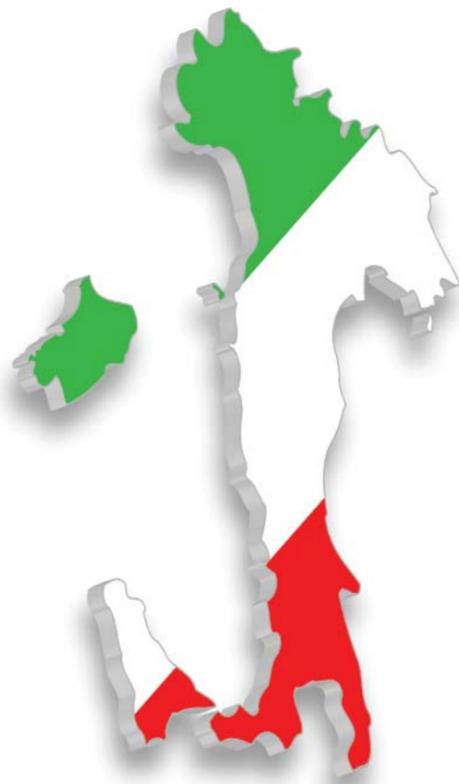
Phillips, who plays online as “bdybldngpkr” already has a number of big online scores, including several wins in \$100 with rebuys at PokerStars and a 1st place in the Sunday 500 tournament in May. He was backed in the Barcelona event by Mike “SowersUNCC” Sowers and Mark “diphtrng” Herm. Sowers had a really nice week money-wise as he took 2nd in the \$10,000 WCOOP High Rollers event just a couple of days earlier. Congratulations to the new winner and his team! And see you in London where yet another American, Michael Martin, will try to defend his 2008 title. ☺



by Misha Savinov

# POKER UNDER ATTACK

## OR LOL GOVERNMENTS



If something isn't broke – don't fix it. If governments were guided by this common sense logic, there would be a lot less pain for poker fans in Russia and Italy. Russian authorities have stripped poker of its sport status, in one fell swoop making outlaws of its players. They did not, however, take any action against online poker, unlike the Italians. The situation in Italy is a nightmare for the poker community: effectively online poker has been banned, as it is only permitted in those poker rooms that have Italian-based servers and can only accept Italian players.

### RUSSIA: VICTIMS OF SLOT MACHINES

In Russia poker became a separate casualty of anti-casino law enforcement. About two years ago the government announced that on July 1st, 2009 all casinos outside specially selected territories would be closed. It looked like good news for the rapidly growing Russian poker community; poker enjoyed the status of a sport, and professional players were looking forward to meeting gambleholics who would have to turn to poker clubs after the casino closures.

But signs of trouble appeared on the horizon early in 2009. After a successful series of Russian championships and Russian cup tournaments (\$10k and \$5k buy-in respectively) in 2008, the Russian Poker Federation (RPF) was unable to organize a single event for the next year. They did not want to hold these tournaments in Moscow casinos, wanting to be as distant from the doomed casino industry as possible; however, none of the non-gambling venues they negotiated with were interested in carrying out poker tournaments.

Meanwhile, poker kept developing in Russia. Two stages of the PokerStars sponsored Russian Poker Tour took place in St. Petersburg and Moscow, with the St. Petersburg

main event being televised on the national sports channel. The European Poker Tour (EPT) announced its Moscow stage would be in August, clearly not expecting any problems with anti-gambling laws. In April, a 24/7 poker channel appeared on cable networks and on satellite TV. In June, Vitaly Lunkin won the \$40k buy-in WSOP event and moved to first place on most annual ratings charts, which seemed like a big sporting achievement for the RPF – at least on a formal, bureaucratic level.

Nevertheless, RPF insiders were surprisingly pessimistic – or painfully realistic, as it turned out in July. A few days before July 1st, I was told that there was a 40% chance for poker to be banned along with the casino gambling industry, despite its legal sport status. The attacks began immediately after the preannounced casino closures. Yury Luzhkov, the populist mayor of Moscow, raised his voice, calling poker clubs “Trojan horses” and threatening to throw them out of his city. Without legal backing, Moscow authorities began to



put pressure on poker clubs and their owners or landlords using warnings and countless health and compliance inspections.

Since the mayor's wishes came into contradiction with federal regulations, the situation had to be resolved quickly. Critical mass was reached when Russian Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, hinted in a TV interview that the issue with poker clubs needed “clarification.” On July 20th, the Sports Ministry removed poker from the sports registry, thus placing it under the scope of the July 1st anti-gambling law and legalizing the hunt on poker clubs.

The reasoning behind the Sports

IN RUSSIA POKER BECAME A SEPARATE CASUALTY OF ANTI-CASINO LAW ENFORCEMENT. ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT ON JULY 1ST, 2009 ALL CASINOS OUTSIDE SPECIALLY SELECTED TERRITORIES WOULD BE CLOSED. IT LOOKED LIKE GOOD NEWS FOR THE RAPIDLY GROWING RUSSIAN POKER COMMUNITY; POKER ENJOYED THE STATUS OF A SPORT, AND PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING GAMBLEHOLICS WHO WOULD HAVE TO TURN TO POKER CLUBS AFTER THE CASINO CLOSURES.

Ministry's radical decision was sudden and seemed without deliberation, making it all the more obvious that they were following a direct order. So, what was the catalyst to banning poker?

Forget the conspiracy theories. It is simpler than that. After July 1st, many smaller casinos kept some revenue streams coming in by changing their labels to 'poker clubs,' and by 'hiding' the roulette and slot machines next to a couple of poker tables. Such cover allowed them to survive a few more days, a week if they were lucky, but the profit of each of those extra days was so substantial that it was worth it for the owners. In terms of revenues, offline poker loses to slot machines with a huge margin. The Russian authorities solved this problem in the simplest possible way, by outlawing the cover: poker, altogether. Of course, they could have acted more sensibly by inspecting poker clubs that had a license from the RPF (just 14 in Moscow and about 70 in the entire country) and forcing the rest to close, but who told you that authorities always behave sensibly?

The clubs got the message and gave up. The EPT was forced to move the venue of the Moscow stage to Kiev, where (ironic isn't it?) it produced the first Russian EPT champion. Then the state-owned TV channels kicked poker off the screen despite some excellent viewer ratings. Poker magazines, with nowhere to sell, were forced to shut down, and top pros, such as Ivan Demidov and Alexander Kravchenko, announced that they were considering emigrating from the country.

However, internet grinders didn't notice any changes. On August 2nd, two Russian players topped the Sunday Million for the first time, winning more than \$400k combined. This is something anyone in Russia can still do legally.

**ITALY: MONOPOLIZE.IT**

Hello,  
 Thank you for your email.  
 We can confirm that, due to Italian laws, in a few days it will no longer possible to access the PokerStars.com software from Italy.

*Should you require any further information regarding this matter, please contact us from the email address registered to your PokerStars account.*

*If you are an Italian citizen who lives abroad you can play on .COM poker sites after the law passes on July 29th 2009.*

*To continue playing on PokerStars.COM after July 27th at 9pm CET or to request the reinstatement of your PokerStars.COM after the above date, you MUST supply the below listed documentation to prove that your permanent place of residence is not Italy:*

*A copy of two bank statements (one recent plus one older copy)*

*A passport/ID copy showing the non-Italian residency stamp. Note that valid dates must be visible and the residency must be permanent.*

*Should you decide/need to move abroad in the future, please email us your new address details and supporting documentation. We will then reactivate your old account and make the necessary address change.*

*Please note that we cannot reactivate old .COM accounts for customers to use while abroad, on short trips or vacation. Italian residents cannot register new PokerStars.com accounts while abroad for reasons other than relocation or permanent residency.*

In that fateful month for us, July of 2009, thousands of poker players living in Italy had their worst nightmare come true. Imagine: you wake up one morning, log in to PokerStars, and receive a message that you cannot play there anymore because of new regulations from your government.

The origins of this prohibition were back in 2006,

when the Italian government forced all internet providers in the country to block citizens' access to non-Italian gambling sites. It was a brilliant attempt to monopolize internet gambling and keep all revenues inside the country, which failed to strong opposition from the European Union. Under the threat of severe fines and sanctions, the Italians had to capitulate, but they did draw an important conclusion: in order to jam poker, first deal with the EU.

For the next two years Italian authorities discussed this issue with the European Union, trying to figure out how far they could go. In the meantime, blissfully unaware, Italian players signed professional contracts with the largest poker rooms, and the country hosted a regular EPT event in Sam Remo and an inaugural WPT event in Venice. No one expected the blow that was to fall. The EU decision made in February of 2009 that allowed the Italian government all the freedom they were asking for somehow went unnoticed by the poker community. Not for long. The changes to online poker regulations came within a few months, and were severe.

Since July 27st, 2009, the game has to be played under rules written by Italy's State Monopolies Autonomous Administration. Non-Italian poker rooms are not allowed (they must be both registered and operate their servers in Italy). Cash games are not allowed. Foreigners are not allowed. Long sessions are not allowed (after a certain amount of time the system kicks you off). Finally, the highest buy-in allowed is 100 Euro.

The largest poker room that complies with these regulations is the Italian branch of Pokerstars: PokerStars.it. Their spokesman is quoted by PokerNewsDaily.com:

*"The law that was passed recently by the Italian Parliament has made it very clear that offering real money online poker games to Italian residents can only be done by the sites that hold an AAMS license, like our PokerStars.it site, and the operators that breach this provision are committing a criminal offense... The Italian Government has directly requested PokerStars to stop providing services to Italian customers on its ".com" site after the new law comes into effect."*

One comment from 2+2 about the Italian ban:  
*"RIP classic tourney move: Pre: Raise, Italian calls from SB. Flop: Italian pots, call w atc. Turn: Italian pots, call w atc. River: Italian pots, shove, Italian folds."*

However, the scariest thing about the Italian scenario is that it can now spread across Europe, breaking the poker community into regionally disconnected loci or forcing players to break the law. With the EU permitting such a radical change in Italy, no country is safe anymore.



"RIP CLASSIC TOURNEY MOVE: PRE: RAISE, ITALIAN CALLS FROM SB. FLOP: ITALIAN POTS, CALL W ATC. TURN: ITALIAN POTS, CALL W ATC. RIVER: ITALIAN POTS, SHOVE, ITALIAN FOLDS."



by Eugeny Atarov

Lady Luck can play a very important role both in real life and in poker. Sometimes it is enough to find yourself in the right place at the right time to become a star. Without it even a very talented person might be doomed to obscurity. Although Vitaly Lunkin is a very strong player with a solid winning record in Russia, the rest of the world has only recently become aware of his existence. After his impressive showing this summer, including a victory in the \$40,000 anniversary tournament, second place in the \$10,000 PLO Championship and fourth prize in the \$50,000 HORSE event, he quickly became the breakthrough of WSOP 2009, and a real talk of the town.

Despite this string of fantastic results, the poker community still does not know much about Vitaly, barring rumors and some scraps of information. So, who are you Mister Lunkin? This world class backgammon, five-in-line player and winner of two WSOP bracelets has kindly agreed to fill in some gaps.

**PokerNews: When entering a tournament, do you usually expect to win?**

**Vitaly Lunkin:** I try to get match-ready before any event. As the years go by it is gradually more difficult to handle the pressure of long tournaments, but I have a routine I go through to prepare myself for such marathons. Every morning I do exercises, both fitness and special energy sets. It enables me to pace myself and to maintain a high level of concentration. Besides, I never set my sights so high as a win; my objective is somewhat more primitive – to make it to the next day with a good stack. You have to advance step by step.

Of course, you never know how you will do before you sit down. Sometimes you don't have much confidence until the penultimate day or even the final day. The times I won the event, I always started with a glimmer of hope that turned into more of an assurance. It happened last year at the WSOP. After being on the brink of elimination I won a critical hand and realized that from that very moment I would crush the table. This self-perception change convinced me that I was better than my opponents and gave me the fortitude to win the event.

**PN: Do you play always for first place or do you consider yourself a consistent player with getting-into-the-money at the back of your mind?**

**VL:** I consider myself a consistent player. "Distance" implies participating in every more or less important tournament. This is not my approach, as I actually do not play very often. For example at last year's WSOP I participated in seven events. This year I played just a little more. Even in Russia I did not enroll for events. These two years, however, I have had many big cashes. Probably I am lucky, which as we all know, is one of the most important ingredients of success in poker.

**PN:** Do you have your own concept of tournament

## Who is Mr. Lunkin?

strategy?

**VL:** Many players start fighting for first place from the very beginning. I am not that quick off the mark. Usually I am quite satisfied to have made it to the second day with an average stack. Of course I wouldn't mind being the chip-leader, but it is not necessary. To make a long story short – I consider any tournament as a satellite for the final table.

**PN: Do your colleagues share your philosophy?**

**VL:** I have no idea. Probably some people do although I have never discussed it with other players. I am not a particularly sociable person. I don't read poker forums very often (and never post myself); when a friend tells me about an interesting topic or an article I might give it a glance, but nothing more. I don't have much time! Such activities are very energy and time consuming. I have no desire to waste my time on such trifles.

**PN: You are one of few who often talks about an emanation of a biological energy, a psychophysical condition and of special exercises. Is it really a vital issue for you?**

**VL:** Let me put it this way: Young players, who have enough energy, should not worry about such things. While getting older, people gradually lose energy, it gets dispersed. That is why people should know how to retain and funnel it. It is no secret. All I do is a special set of supporting exercises during the breaks. It helps me to withstand the pressure and allows me to follow what is going on at the table as closely at the end of the day as at the very beginning. Everyone has his or her own formula. Some people practice yoga, others swim and go to the sauna, etc. My set of exercises help me to



be fresh and to feel more confident at the poker table.

**PN: How would you describe your style? Sometimes you seem to play very tight and cautiously, but at other times quite aggressively.**

**VL:** I have no style! Frankly, I don't understand what it is, why one has to stick to a certain style. If we divide a tournament into stages, at the very start I usually play tight-aggressive and don't enter many pots. Then it depends on the table mix. Sometimes I play super-tight for hours if I don't like the dynamics at the table. Poker is somewhat similar to wrestling. You have various "weaponry:" holds, ankle trips, etc. Everyone decides for himself what level of aggression he can afford.

Sometimes you just don't know what to do. You try one thing – it doesn't work. So you apply a different approach – no good. The opponents size you up, adjust their game. Playing in one style is the shortest way to defeat. Poker requires flexibility, the ability to switch gears.

**PN: What is the best aspect of your poker game?**

**VL:** I think my post-flop game is my strongest asset, although thanks to the internet I have managed to pull up my pre-flop game as well. After all every opponent has his weak points – my job is to find and take advantage



of them. As for my strongest quality... hmm... let's put it this way – Lady Luck.

**PN: At what stage are you in your poker career?**

**VL:** Strange as it may sound, despite all my recent victories I think that my poker career is at an early stage. On one hand I have a good overall understanding of the game; I am good at reading the table. On the other hand, there are still many things to work on. I would compare my poker game to a building with a solid foundation that still needs some renovations. That is what I do: reshape, rebuild, renovate, and tear down. It is an everlasting process.

I see that many strong internet players nevertheless have some gaps in their abilities. For example a poor understanding of deep-stacked play. Most of them don't know how to play in such a situation simply because they have never been there before. Another flaw that stems from multi-table play and extensive usage of poker software is an inability to switch on time. The situation has already changed, but they continue to play under the old scenario.

**PN: Does poker take all your time or do you have other interests?**

**VL:** I don't want to dedicate my entire life to poker, but I must admit it takes up about 80% of my time.

**PN: Looking back, to what extent have you changed after seven years in poker? Did the victories at the WSOP and in Russian tournaments make the difference?**

**VL:** I think deep down I am still the same. The point is that a victory doesn't mean much by itself. It doesn't change that I constantly have to demonstrate my strength so that no one thinks I was just lucky. In other words, I am not going to stop. As I have already mentioned I am at the front end of a long haul. If you see a person every day for ten years in a row, you barely notice any changes, but once you meet the same person after a long break the changes are striking. Let me restate it – Victories don't really change much. After all tournament poker is just like a river that keeps flowing, irrespective of your desire. You always step in these waters with the same feeling. ☺

**PokerNews:** Matt, tell us more about you – where are you from, who are your parents, where did you go to school?

**Matt Hawrilenko:** I was born just south of Boston, MA (where I currently live), attended public high school and then Princeton University. I majored in public policy and worked in finance for 2 years after graduating. My grandfather was born in the Ukraine in 1900. He was a mathematics teacher and an officer in the White Army, and was forced to flee Russia in 1929. And according to my dad, a great poker player.

**PN:** Really? I wonder if you asked what kind of poker it was?

**MH:** Haha, no idea what type of poker it was. My dad has been known to be... creative in his memory.

**PN:** Prior to poker, did you play any games that are known to produce poker players – Magic the Gathering, cyber games, chess?

**MH:** Not really. I started playing poker in college, and when I went to work after college, at Susquehanna International Group, they trained us to play poker because they felt there was a lot of overlap between poker and options trading. The founders of the company had previously been professional poker players. It's funny, if poker had been more lucrative when they were playing, they may have never founded the company, and I may have never left it for a more lucrative career in poker!

**PN:** What impact did that training have on your poker career?

**MH:** Well, I was already a pretty strong poker player before that, so I did well in that part of my job. We played mostly HORSE games, although we'd play a bit of NLH. I had actually won a satellite to the WSOP Main Event my senior year in college (2004), after I had accepted the job offer but before I actually started working. Word of that got back to one of the founders, who invited me to fly out to Vegas with him and a few others on his private jet!

It was a pretty awesome experience. One of the other people on the plane, as it turned out, was Bill Chen. We got to talking and realized we had similar ideas about the game, coming from fairly different approaches. I used mostly intuition, whereas he used game theory. Being a bit of an academic, I immediately saw the benefit of his and his partner, Jerrod Ankenman's, approach. So I linked up with those guys and they taught me most of what I know today, including the good stuff.

**PN:** Can you give an example of an idea you discovered intuitively and got Bill Chen's mathematical confirmation?

**MH:** Nothing particularly earth-shattering, but probably the first one was the idea of playing a jam-or-fold strategy at about the 10x BB level at the end of sit-n-gos. At the time, people still thought it was right to limp, see a lot of flops and try to "outplay" their opponents, whereas I liked jamming hands like 98o, K2, etc. Back then, people would give up so easily, folding when they had way more than enough of an overlay to call in marginal spots. Sadly, it didn't stay that way for very long on the internet, as everybody started catching on. Back then, when internet players would play live tournaments all the live pros thought we were terrible and taking the skill element out of the game. In reality, we were just taking them out of their comfort zone and they weren't adapting well.

So basically the gist of the idea was that when you have a lot of equity but you're not deep enough to play it well after the flop, you just shove your chips in and claim your equity now.

**PN:** Where did you start playing poker?

**MH:** My junior year in college I started playing a little bit for very small stakes. Losing \$20 was a bad night, and losing any more than that physically hurt. That summer, I got a job working in education policy in Washington DC. A friend and I waited until the last minute to find an apartment. We found something on the internet the day before we had to move down, called the guy up and locked it in. When we got there, we were in a pretty bad part of the city and were nervous to leave the house after dark, so we started playing internet poker. I deposited \$100 that summer and have never since redeposited.

Meet Matt Hawrilenko, one of the best fixed limit holdem players in the world. These days Matt rarely finds customers in his favorite game, but shows consistent results in high stakes mixed games, and runs insanely good in multi-table tournaments. At the World Series of Poker 2009 he made three final tables and won his first WSOP bracelet, increasing his lifetime tournament winnings to \$1,289,243.



**matt  
hawrilenko**

A Perfect Poker Player?

by Misha Savinov



**PN:** A good reason to lock yourself in the world of online poker! Which poker room was that? What did you play – cash, tournaments, or everything?

**MH:** That was PokerStars. At that time, I played .10-.25 NLH, whenever I'd try to move up to \$1-\$2 LHE, I'd get crushed! I moved on to MTTs and sit-n-gos, and started seriously playing ring games in the summer of 2005. I quickly took a liking to heads up limit holdem, and when I was doing well there, expanded to short handed. These days, I play up to \$2,000-\$4,000, although the game that goes the most, at least right now, is the \$400-\$800 7- or 8-game mix. That game is a lot of fun. I still love LHE and think it's a beautiful game, but it does start to get a little tiring after a while, and playing the other games and having to think a little differently about hands and hand reading keeps things interesting.

I play a few tournaments but not too many. I go out to the WSOP each year and rent a house with friends who also primarily play on the internet. It's great fun – our version of summer camp.

**PN:** What is the origin of your screen name?

**MH:** I wrestled at Princeton and my teammates called me "Hoss." The TBF part of the nickname is a secret.

**PN:** When did you start playing poker for a living? What bankroll did you have at that time, and how hard was it to make that decision?

**MH:** I started playing for a living in the summer of 2006. I had been toying with the idea for over a year, but told myself I had to stick it out 2 years at my job before I finally made the decision. And it was an easy decision. When I made it, even my parents supported it. I was making more at poker than many of the best traders at my firm were making trading and I still had a lot of work to do before I was anywhere near as good a trader as those guys, and I already knew I was a good poker player. At the time I left, I'd already made 7 figures from poker.

**PN:** It is kind of unusual that you started playing fixed limit from heads-up, not full ring. You just tried it and found you had more of an edge there? And why did you decide to go for limit instead of the more popular no limit variation?

**MH:** Your edge as a poker player is essentially a function of how many decisions you make better than the other guy. In heads up poker, you get to make many more decisions than you make in full ring, and I think a lot of them are less obvious. I actually think it's much easier and more natural to make the transition from HU to full ring rather than the other way around. That's also the way I started learning mixed games. And limit as opposed to NL, I just think it's more fun. It plays faster, you make more decisions and, being a naturally curious guy, I like the fact that I get to see my opponent's hand a lot more frequently than in NL.

**PN:** How did you improve your game? There isn't really a lot of information on fixed limit heads up.

**MH:** I think the most important thing was mindful play and mindful analysis. I hate the idea of multi-tabling and going on autopilot where you aren't thinking anymore – you may as well be working on an assembly line. I liked to review my hand histories on a hand replayer with my cards concealed, and I'd try to read my own distribution based on the actions I took. In the beginning, I'd find a ton of situations where I was imbalanced – where I just had way too many value hands and not enough bluff hands and vice versa. This was helpful not only for me to plug my leaks, but also to be cognizant of the types of places where others were most likely to have exploitable imbalances.

As I've said before, Bill Chen and Jerrod Ankenman taught me all the good stuff I know about poker, and most, if not all of it, is available in their book, Mathematics of Poker. The book doesn't really say, "play pocket aces this way and flush draws that way," it focuses more on giving you a set of concepts to work with to hone your own game. It takes time and effort to apply them, but it's worthwhile.

**PN:** Many people consider you the best fixed limit holdem player in the world. Often, there isn't a lot of



We played it over a few days. He got me for a little over a million, but fortunately I ran pretty well in the few weeks after and recovered, more than erasing the hit :-)

action when others see you are sitting at the high stakes table, waiting for them. Whom do you consider to be the top fixed limit players today, September 2009, and how do you rate yourself?

**MH:** Terrence Chan, Phil Ivey, Patrik Antonius, Joe Cassidy, in no particular order. At their level, it's so hard to judge. A beats B, B beats C, and C beats A, so it's hard to judge – particularly with players who are so good that variance will dictate the winner over the course of 10 or 20k hands. I think I rank up there with them. Phil beat me for 300 bets or so over 2,500 hands and I quit him. Obviously, I think he had to run really well to win that much from me as there is no way his winrate is 8 big bets/100, but that's not to say he isn't also a better player – he probably is.

**PN:** What makes Phil and Patrick such good fixed limit players, in your opinion? They don't play a lot of FLHE other than in mixed games, so they don't have as much experience as top online regulars...

**MH:** Patrik has played tons of HU LHE, although he doesn't play too much anymore. He always keeps the pressure on and a lot of players react badly to that, bloating pots that they shouldn't bloat. He always knows about where he's at and despite the fact that he's a tremendous hand-reader, he doesn't let that ability go so much to his head that he makes bad big lay-downs. And Phil, I'm pretty sure, is just an alien.

**PN:** Can you tell us a bit more about that session with Phil Ivey you've mentioned?

**MH:** We played it over a few days. He got me for a little over a million, but fortunately I ran pretty well in the few weeks after and recovered, more than erasing the hit :-)

**PN:** There was another session with another Phil, which you probably enjoyed more. Can you remind our readers about it?

**MH:** I was playing a 300-600 game online with Phil Hellmuth and a few tough players who came in and out. Hellmuth was getting crushed and naturally assumed that it was because his opponents were donkeys. Some words were exchanged back and forth and the transcript made its way around the internet. I won about \$30k in the session. Phil said

it was his worst online session ever, and I'm not sure what he lost because, despite over TEN requests to UB customer support (I literally sent an email every day for 10 days), they never sent me the hand history.

**PN:** What was wrong with his play in your opinion?

**MH:** He never made the pot the right size. He'd slowplay aces or kings by limping before the flop and checking behind the flop – then he'd end up winning a tiny one or going bananas against a guy who he'd let make a better hand. Meanwhile, he'd cap the flop and turn with hands like a third or fourth pair. If his goal was to disguise his hands, then I guess he did that very well as I was usually surprised (and generally delighted) when he'd turn them over.

**PN:** What is your impression of the current state of limit holdem?

**MH:** Most people who think LHE is uncomplicated would be big losers. There hasn't been as much high stakes action as I would like to see recently, but this sort of thing is cyclical. LHE hasn't really caught on yet in a lot of big markets, like Russia and Macau. When it does, I think the game will get popular again.

Generally, people who play LHE love it because you build a lot of big pots very quickly – chips fly into the pot and people don't take forever to make decisions the way they do in NLHE. There used to be a myth that individ-

ual decisions are relatively unimportant because they tend to be smaller than NLH decisions – but that is completely wrong. You generally make more decisions in each hand of LHE than you do in NLH, and the decisions all impact each other, so mistakes can compound really quickly. Since you see more showdowns, you also have more opportunities to learn more quickly about your opponent. It's a fascinating game and a fun game, and when it catches on in these large markets it will be big again.

**PN:** Still, it's a part of all kinds of mixed games rotations, which are immensely popular now. You say you play mixed games a lot, how is it going for you? Which games are your favorite, which are the most challenging?

**MH:** The mixed games are going well! In fact, since I haven't played much holdem this year, mixed games have been my main source of income, which is exciting for me because I know I have so much room to improve.

My favorite games are the games that are more challenging for me. Triple draw is easily my worst game and because of that, it's my favorite. Next to that, stud-8 is my worst and therefore 2nd favorite. I'm also pretty terrible at HU O8. The list goes on and on...

**PN:** Can you share your views on bankroll management? What

should be the proper requirements for limit holdem in your opinion? And have you followed it yourself on the way to the high stakes?

**MH:** Yes, I'm very careful with my bankroll – and bankroll management depends entirely upon what you consider an acceptable risk of ruin. Right now, I personally keep a minimum of 600 big bets in my poker bankroll, though usually it's deeper than that. For most people, 400 is probably fine. I'm also a big advocate of aggressive shot-taking. For example, if you like to keep your roll around 400 bets and get it up to 600, you might consider taking a shot at a higher game with that 200 bet cushion, knowing that if you lose it, you can just go back to your regular game and not be hurt.

**PN:** What was your worst streak over the years? What number of hands would you consider a statistically significant indication of being a winning player at a certain limit?

**MH:** My worst streak was probably about 350 big bets. In truth, I've only had 2 or 3 losing months. As far as statistical significance, it kind of depends on how much you're winning, or losing. For example, over 50K hands, one standard deviation is around 600 big bets, so if you win, say, 600 big bets, you're 84% a winning player. If you win 1200 big bets, it's 98%. This is, of course, if this is a random sample from your results, and not a handpicked hot streak.

One more thing to add, actually: it's important that you realize this only means you were likely to be a winning player in those particular games under those conditions – it doesn't mean that you're necessarily going to adapt better than the next guy as game conditions change with different types of players over different months and different years.

It's important to be objective about your own skill level (which is why if

someone beats me for 300 big bets, I quit them, no matter what my pride tells me).

**PN:** Have you played a bot named Sonia? Do you think you can beat any FLH poker bot today?

**MH:** I've never played Sonia. I felt I could beat Polaris when I played it last year, but nonetheless I thought it played quite well and would beat many high limit players. I think the days of HU LHE are probably numbered, at least on the internet, although I think it will be a long, long, long time before bots are any good beyond heads up. The problem is that the game becomes exponentially more complex for a machine to solve when it becomes 3-handed, as the game tree (the number of possible sequences) blows up.

**PN:** Now let's turn to multi-table tournaments, and first of all congratulations on your WSOP bracelet! It didn't come too soon, considering the number of final tables you made before winning it. Had there been a reasonable chance to win the bracelet before that 5K event?

**MH:** Thanks! There were a few chances. I was at or near the chip lead at the final table of the 10k LHE earlier in the series, and I also was a chip leader with two tables left in the 3k HORSE, where

I ultimately finished 8th.

**PN:** What happened?

**MH:** Same old tournament story. I actually thought the structures were great throughout most of the tournament, although by the end we were only 10 or 15 bets deep or so. You have to win showdowns!

**PN:** Regarding limit holdem tournaments, are there any adjustments you make in your game compared to cash games?

**MH:** Well, the important thing to realize is that I'm playing against different players, generally weaker players than I'd normally see in cash games. In that sense, it's often right for me to open wider, value bet less, and occasionally cold-call raises in position rather than playing 3-bet or fold. The nice thing about cold-calling is that you simultaneously lower your variance and pull more players in and give them a chance to make mistakes.

**PN:** You won arguably the toughest tournament of the series - 5K 6-max no-limit holdem. Can you recall how this event developed?

**MH:** I was actually pretty excited going into the event, with Bruce Buffer – the ring announcer for the UFC – announcing shuffle up and deal (I've done martial arts my whole life and am a big fan of the UFC). I was down to 1/3 of my starting stack after level 2 of the tournament, which tends to happen to me pretty frequently, but the structure was great and I was able to build back up without showing down much, and when I had the occasional coin-flip, I'd win.

I played a bunch of interesting pots leading up to the final table and then didn't have any particularly difficult decisions at the final table itself.

**PN:** Can you share a couple of particularly interesting hands?

**MH:** I've hit the exact bubble on more tournaments than I care to

recall (including the inaugural 50K HORSE tournament, which was a \$127 000 bubble), and my friends give me a pretty hard time about it. So at the exact bubble of this tournament I was one of the chip leaders and I was moved to Faraz Jaka's table. Jaka was one of the few players who had me covered and I quickly found out was playing extremely aggressive on the bubble.

So a few hands in, he opens second to act and I reraise him from the small blind with 8♥5♥. He calls. The flop comes A-10-9 with two hearts and I'm thinking to myself, "Oh no, here we go again." So I bet 2/3 of the pot and he calls, leaving myself with a pot-sized bet. The turn is an off-suit 3 and I shove in. He tanks and eventually folds. He eventually made the final table. He was super aggressive, at least preflop, and at least moderately aggressive after the flop. I played a few more big pots with him, one of which, the following hand, I'm still not sure about:

With two or three tables left, I started the hand with 1.4M in chips and he had around 1.8M. Blinds were 12K-24K with a 3K ante, and I made it 65K two off the button with Q-10 off. Jaka defended his big blind and the flop came K-J-9 rainbow. I opted to bet 75k which is a little low given the board texture and pot size, but close enough to a standard continuation bet. Jaka called. The turn peeled off a Q, now Jaka checks. This card is really an action killer, but I think I can induce a bluff by checking here, so I decide to check it behind. The river pairs the K, and now Jaka bets 450K into the 300K pot and I tank.

The biggest problem here is that my distribution now holds a lot of full houses and given my turn check, I shouldn't have many straights. It was possible I was calling to chop, but given the fact that I should hold a lot of full houses here, I thought it unlikely he'd make such a large overbet with just a straight, and there's a good chance he would have led the turn with a straight. Given that the K paired, I couldn't imagine very many hands that he'd be bluffing, either. He certainly wouldn't be bluffing a Q in that spot, so all I could really come up with for bluffs was a hand like A9 or 98 and again, the overbet bluff just didn't feel right in that spot, so I ultimately decided to let it go. Feedback from my friends has been very mixed. It's funny, when you win a tournament you shouldn't have to second guess any hands you played, but this one has been bothering me ever since.

**PN:** What were your feelings after winning the last hand heads up?

**MH:** The biggest one was relief. I've had disappointing World Series the last few years and it was really eating away at me. I was happy to finally get a big tourney under my belt. Then, I realized it was a bunch of money – and that felt pretty great, too! It was particularly gratifying to get the win in NL as I've been working pretty hard at it, but in just about every NL tourney I play, at least one person at my table says, "I didn't know you played this game!"

**PN:** What do you do with the bracelet? Did you wear it on some occasions?

**MH:** I wore it at my day 1 table of the main event – and people played terribly against me! Of course, it's the main event and the softest poker tournament in the world, so it's hard to draw too much of an inference. Other than that, I've been threatening my wife that I'm going to wear it

I think it's hugely important to keep a balanced lifestyle and have goals outside of poker. That way, if things in poker aren't going so well, hopefully something else is, to keep you mentally happy. Personally, I do martial arts and have recently been training for a marathon.

out with her somewhere. Its look isn't exactly what one would call classically appealing.

**PN:** What are your goals in poker now? Do you see yourself playing in, say, ten years from now?

**MH:** Hard to say. Right now, I'm just concentrating on trying to improve in every game. Poker is still really interesting to me, despite having played a lot of it over the past few years, so right now I'm just enjoying that challenge and also trying to fill the coffers a little bit. So many things can happen in 10 years that it's hard to predict. I'm sure I'll still be playing poker in 10 years in some capacity, although who knows whether or not it will be professionally.

**PN:** Outside poker, what do you like to do? How do you keep a balance between poker and your social life?

**MH:** I think it's hugely important to keep a balanced lifestyle and have goals outside of poker. That way, if things in poker aren't going so well, hopefully something else is, to keep you mentally happy. Personally, I do martial arts and have recently been training for a marathon. My wife is an amazing runner – she was a three-time All American champion in college and won the Philadelphia Marathon a few years ago.

**PN:** What martial arts do you practice?

**MH:** I have black belts in two different styles of kung fu and recently started training in jiu jitsu. I also wrestled in high school and continued in college.

**PN:** Ever had to use it in a fight? Or maybe you let it drop that you wear a black belt at new tables during live tournaments?

**MH:** Haha, no and no.

**PN:** Finally, what piece of advice can you give to poker players who wish to reach your status someday?

**MH:** First, I'd say be humble and respect your opponents: you can learn from anyone, even if they're not as good as you. Second, always keep your brain engaged. Poker is more fun and more rewarding that way. Third, take the long view and live a balanced lifestyle. Lots of people can be happy and make money over one year – the trick is to do it over the long haul. ☺

# WSOP Europe: Before the Start



## Year 2007

### Preliminary events

The WSOP Europe gave European pros who had no possibility or bankroll to go to Vegas a new chance to win a WSOP bracelet, and they jumped at the opportunity immediately. Tomas Bihl from Germany was the first winner when he outlasted Jennifer Harman in the £2,500 HORSE event. The final table also featured Kirk Morrison, Chris Ferguson and Alex Kravchenko. The PLO £5,000 event was taken down by fearless Italian, Dario Alioto who denied PokerNews' own Tony G his first bracelet.

### Tendency

"Here come the Scandies!" The main event of the series was strongly dominated by the Scandinavians. Gus Hansen, Patrik Antonius and Janne Lamasa took chip-leads early and though none of them made it to the final table (Hansen was cooled with Q-Q vs K-K on the final table bubble) there were two Norwegians, two Swedes and Theo Jorgensen from Denmark among the final nine. Eventually the Scandinavian most deserving of the title, a... girl, took the £1,000,000 first prize home.

### Hero

It was all about Annette Obrestad. She was already well-known as a very strong online player with a number of difficult wins under her belt, but it was the first big live score for the 19-year old from Norway. Her win was a very nice present not only for her, her backers and family, but also for the whole poker community. Imagine, a teenage girl winning a major poker tournament. It was big news all over the world, even covered on major news networks like CNN and the BBC.

### Hand

The most memorable hand was played between future winner, Obrestad, and her runner-up, John Tabatabai, from Wales, not at the final table but much earlier. Being two big stacks at that moment they clashed in a major pot with, let's be honest, mediocre holdings...

With only several days remaining before the start of the WSOP Europe Main Event in London, it's high time to revive our memories on two previous WSOPE seasons.

by Alex Ferder

Annette raised with 2♦6♦ (she insists that she doesn't play like that anymore) and Tabatabai flatted on the button with 8♣7♣ (not a premium holding also). The flop came 9♣6♣Q♣ - a bottom pair for Obrestad, up-and-down straight draw for the Welshmen. Here comes the fireworks! Annette checked, Tabatabai bet 21K in the 47K pot, but Obrestad check-raised him to 65K. John didn't believe her and came over the top with 140K, more effectively turning his draw into a bluff. This move would have worked against anyone else in this situation, but Annette pushed all-in with her more than 650K stack. Tabatabai smiled it over and folded after getting the chip-count. Wow!

## Year 2008

### Preliminary events

Jesper Hougaard became the first man in poker history to win WSOP bracelets on two continents when he took down a £1,500 NL Holdem event, besting dangerous American youngsters Evgeny Timoshenko and Adam Junglen. £A 2,500 HORSE tournament saw Ivey & Lisandro at the final table but 2008 wasn't their year (in 2009 it would have been different) as the event was won by Sher Khan Farnood, a citizen of Afghanistan, a country yet to be known for its poker. The £5,000 PLO went to a "usual suspect," as Theo Jorgensen finally got his WSOP bracelet after a disappointing performance at the WSOP Europe main event final table in 2008.

### Tendency

"Ruskies are dangerous!" An established poker nation came up on top in 2008, Mother Russia. The WSOP Europe main event was the pinnacle of the Russian assault as two Russian players – Stanislav Alekhin and Ivan

are deep thinkers."

### Hero

Though the John Juanda win was an amazing achievement as he played absolutely brilliantly through the whole tournament and managed to stop the Russians from taking the bracelet, we have to go with Ivan Demidov as the "hero." He became the first player to make it to the final table at both the WSOP and WSOPE main events – an amazing feat by itself, but the hottest player of 2008 managed to do it in the same year. Simply unbelievable.

### Hand

There were a lot of spectacular hands, but we chose a decisive one, even though the play from both participants was far from perfect. The hand almost ended the record-breaking final table between John Juanda and Stas Alekhin, which lasted 22 hours and left both players, absolutely exhausted.

From the button Juanda raised to 165K (blinds were 40-80K) with K♥6♥, Alekhin called with 4♣3♣. K♣Q♥7♣ on the flop, and Alekhin led out with his flush-draw for 325K. Juanda just had a top pair, no kicker hand but he pushed all-in for more than 3,000,000 chips. A very awkward decision, but it proved dead right this time as Alekhin almost immediately called with his weak draw, saying "I'm just tired..." We really hope that this year they won't be playing all-day long at the final table. Endurance should be a factor in poker, but not a decisive one.

## Year 2009

The 2009 WSOP Europe is held from September 17 to October 1 in the Casino at the Empire in London, England. It consists of four bracelet events - a £1,000 No-Limit Holdem, a £2,500 Pot Limit Holdem/Pot



Demidov – made it to the final table and at one moment had almost 70% chips in play between them. Earlier this year, 21-year old Alex Kostitsyn won the Aussie Millions and Demidov himself qualified for the WSOP November Nine with the second largest stack.

Daniel Negreanu wrote in his blog: "The Russians who have begun to dominate the poker scene recently are all excellent games players and they

Limit Omaha, a £5,000 Pot Limit Omaha, and a £10,000 World Championship No-Limit Holdem main event.

Alongside the 4 more traditional events, there will be two special events – The Caesars Cup (a team competition with Europe vs America) and the Betfair Free Million Dollar Game (a freeroll for qualifiers from all over the world). ☺

# Second year syndrome

by Ivan Demidov



I came to poker from computer games in the middle of 2003. For quite a long time poker for me was rather just another interesting game, a pastime, some sort of medium to check my skills facing various opponents, certainly not a way to making a living. When I decided to make poker my only source of income, my approach was far from a professional one.

This period was a kind of courtship I had with poker © I played when I wanted and as much as I wanted, and I wanted to be the best, head and shoulders above the rest. Just like in StarCraft, I was attracted to tournaments. I watched all the TV events, especially the WSOP. When engaging in poker some people dream about winning a lot of money, others seek freedom and self-actualization. As for me, I wanted to win the WSOP and prove that I was worth something.

Like many Russians I “suffer” from an addictive personality. Some people get hooked on vodka; I do to my hobbies. It may sound somewhat haughty, but I can’t do work if it does not absorb me. Actually I lack the so called Protestant work ethic, and, quite frankly, am a bad worker. My only chance to succeed is to immerse myself into a business and do so from the bottom of my heart.

As I student majoring in math I tried programming. It was OK, sometimes even interesting, but not my thing. As a programmer I never worked at any one place for more than a month.

The big events, especially the WSOP, have always been the main incentive and stimulus for me in poker. When grinding through the \$10-\$100 tournaments, playing 6-max cash, I always thought of it as just a necessary

# Circumstances

## with Ivan Demidov

training stage before my trip to the WSOP. This reasoning helped me to analyze the hands, sharpen my skills and overcome periods of apathy and down-streaks, as I could treat it like just practice.

My second prize win at the WSOP main event in 2008 is the high point of my poker career. Sorrow, joy, bewilderment, feebleness and relief –I experienced all these emotions during the event and for a few days after the final tables. But then a weariness and devastation fell upon me. I got mired in the rut of filming, trips and interviews. Poker was relegated to the background. I lost my motivation and even the desire to play. Before the win, I had been driven by the “hunger of youth.” The thirst to prove to everyone and to myself that I could be somebody, that I could gain something of worth achieved at the highest level. Well, I achieved my goal, proved my point ... and? I think anybody who makes a quick ascent to the very top after long years of hope, anticipation, and preparation is familiar with this letdown.

Right after that final table in 2008, I headed for the WPT, then the Aussie Million, and the RPT in St. Petersburg. Although from a technical standpoint I could still very much have been a contender, I didn’t play well. I felt too “lazy” to make difficult laydowns and I wanted to win the tournament at the very start. I started shunning risky calls and pushes. “What if I guess wrong? I can’t afford to make such a silly mistake. I will look stupid,” I often thought.

Objectively, there were some other factors which contributed to my bad showings. When I was the dark horse my bluff often worked just fine, especially if I had played tight for the hour before. Now many people recognize me, my opponents had seen my bluff with A-Q vs. Dennis Phillips at the final table of the WSOP main event. They know my game. Thus, my “table image” is getting more and more blurry. Recently Mike Matusow said that he

only plays tight. Why? Well, he just can’t afford to play aggressively anymore. On one hand nobody believes him, and on the other hand the nuts are paid off anyway. Similarly, in my game, it is very hard to make corrections when my opponent’s decision might or might not be influenced by some external factors I am not aware of. Does he know who I am? Did he watch me play on TV? If he did, will it have an effect on his decisions? Sometimes I feel myself stumbling in the haze. My sight has simply lost its sharpness.

Finally, the last but not least explanation: a very tight schedule. I don’t have exact figures, but I guess that in this last year, filming, interviews, ceremonies, and the like took up about 2 months of my time. I never led such an antsy, chaotic life before. In all frankness I was so caught off-guard that I allowed these distractions to take the place of working on my poker.

Besides, I switched to mixed games. It is very interesting, but requires extensive grinding. As a result my MTT game suffered.

Finally the 2009 WSOP arrived. I was somewhat naively resolved to win a bracelet this time around. In hindsight I realize that I needed much better preparation. Poker is not a fairy tale in which all your dreams come true. In the 2 or 3 months leading up to the WSOP, 2008, I had played 250,000 hands in cash, and also practiced a lot in MTT. This time my MTT preparation before the WSOP was almost zero.

Also some new problems related to my everyday life and psychological mood, which previously I had not noticed, made their presence felt.

For the last 8 months many things have happened in my life. Good or bad, in any case, they helped me to change myself and regain my footing. I am again in a courtship with poker. I again want to play non-stop and get to a new level. I think I have had several good tournaments lately and I am much pleased with my play. Most importantly, I have left all my problems behind and am eager to play some good poker. ☺

# Moneymaker

By Paul 'Dr. Pauly' McGuire

"I have to film a tango lesson," said Chris Moneymaker as he shrugged his shoulders and shuffled off into the crowd.

Moneymaker stood inside the Central Casino at the small seaside resort town of Mar del Plata, Argentina. Although he was playing in an event on the Latin American Poker Tour, he barely had a free moment as he busily promoted PokerStars at every turn. He left one interview and rushed towards another. Even though he was running late, he politely obliged a photo request from a trio of Brazilian fans.

Moneymaker was an unknown amateur when he won the 2003 World Series of Poker and six years later, he's still an international celebrity. It's been a whirlwind journey since Moneymaker's life changed inside Benny's Bullpen when he beat the ever-cool Sammy Farha heads-up. That watershed moment ignited the poker boom sending sent ripples all over the globe.

You can see the exhaustion in Moneymaker's eyes. He's a constant target at the table since everyone in the world wants to take down the guy who started it all. Plus, he can't catch a break among the poker geeks and the overly critical media who obsess over stats like

career earnings. Moneymaker's results have not been impressive since he won the Main Event, yet so many people discredit him, failing to recognize his contributions to the poker industry which are above and beyond monumental.

Moneymaker visited five continents as a poker ambassador, playing in tournaments, and conducting countless interviews. He once walked into a jam-packed poker room in Monte Carlo during the EPT Grand Finale and acknowledged, "Wow, I kinda started all this."

Moneymaker is the modern day version of Jay Gatsby, the main character from F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. Both Gatsby and Moneymaker earned their fortunes in unorthodox manners. Moneymaker amassed his millions through gambling, while Gatsby acquired his wealth through the dirty business of bootlegging in the 1920s. Both were singled out as the fulfillment of the American Dream, that anyone can overcome overwhelming odds to succeed.

At the 2009 WSOP, Moneymaker had a chance to finally get everyone off his case when he entered the \$40,000 no-limit hold'em



## Poker Truths with Dr. Pauly

event, a special tournament to honor the 40th anniversary of the WSOP. The field was small with only 201 runners, but they were considered the premier tournament players in the world. When the first day ended, Chris Moneymaker was second in chips. More than half the field busted out on Day 1 and even though several of the biggest stars in poker were still remaining, all eyes were on Moneymaker's table as he quietly built up a stack. Fans on the rail loved to root for their hero, while members of the media whispered amongst themselves, wondering if this could be the day Moneymaker breaks through.

On Day 2, Moneymaker snagged the chip lead and held it for most of the afternoon until disaster struck. Moneymaker blew his lead and fizzled out of the tournament. He did not make it to the final three tables and failed to cash. That elimination would be the start to a tough WSOP for Moneymaker. He was unable to win another bracelet and he didn't even cash in a single event. His epic quest to prove that his 2003 victory was not a fluke went unfulfilled.

Tunica, MS is about 250 miles (or a four hour drive) from Chris Moneymaker's hometown of Nashville, TN. A couple of weeks after the WSOP ended, Moneymaker showed up to play in the World Poker Open at the Gold Strike Casino in Tunica. After countless trips all over the

world, Moneymaker was no longer avoiding three-bet shoves from Scandis and drunken Brazilians smacking their fists on the table in celebration after sucking out on him. He was essentially on his home turf; where all of the dealers had a familiar Southern drawl, where people still smoked cigarettes indoors, and where gentlemen tried their best not to curse in front of women.

Although it wasn't the \$40,000 NL event at the WSOP, Moneymaker finally won a live tournament, something he had not done since he won the Main Event six summers earlier. Moneymaker took first place in a small buy-in pot-limit Omaha event. The next week, he advanced to the final table of their \$5,000 buy-in Main Event where he finished in third place. He won four times as much for third place than he did for the PLO victory. Alas, the money didn't matter as much to him as the satisfaction that he could go deep and still be a threat. Even though it was only a regional tournament, Moneymaker made two final tables in a week including one victory.

Moneymaker did not have too much time to enjoy his Tunica rush before he boarded a plane and flew to China for another tournament, another photo shoot, and another press conference. Yeah, it was just another day in the life of Chris Moneymaker. ☺



### Juan Carlos Mortensen. \$8,700,896 in winnings

The most notable player representing Spain is, of course, Carlos Mortensen. The winner of the WSOP Main Event, 2001 and the WPT Championship event, 2007, and #13 on the all-time money list, Carlos Mortensen needs no special introduction. The Ecuador-born poker champion is a tough customer, and normally you don't want to see him at your table, no matter online or live, unless you hate money.

Juan Carlos Mortensen was born on April 13th, 1972 in Ambato, Ecuador. His Scandinavian last name comes from his father, who is Danish by origin. After living in Ecuador for 15 years, the Mortensens moved to Spain. Ten years later Juan Carlos started playing poker, and his life has never been the same. In April, 1997 he started playing no-limit holdem cash games, and quickly became a consistent winner. Only a few months after this indoctrination, in October, he decided to test the American waters and traveled to Atlantic City. His first live sessions were disastrous, but he refused to accept defeat and came

down to smaller stakes, regained his starting bankroll and eventually won about 10k within three months.

Back in Spain he continued crushing local games, and gained such respect that his fellow players backed him for the WSOP, 1999. He busted far from the payzone, but once again succeeded in cash games, which allowed him to move to California to play in the Commerce Casino full time. In the next WSOP Main Event Mortensen played completely at his own expense. He again failed to cash, but made decent money in another event, a 3k buy-in, winning 22k. Carlos soon discovered that multi-table tournaments suit his aggressive style very well, and in 2001, we began to see proof of this suiting.

Mortensen started that breakthrough year

# SPAIN

BY SIMON LEE

In this monthly column, PokerNews will introduce three of the best players in a chosen region. The first country under scrutiny is **Spain** – one of the rising European powerhouses. But who are the most dangerous Spaniards in the poker world?



with a victory at the LA Poker Classic tournament, turning the \$300 buy-in into a healthy \$116,722. He won the Shooting Stars event for \$44,550 and entered the WSOP Main Event ready to complete a hat-trick with a historic victory...

Mortensen steadily advanced through the field, making the money with a comfortable stack, and then began to put real pressure on his opponents. His reading ability allowed him to get away with some risky plays, including 5-betting all-in Mike Matusow with Q-8. In heads up, Carlos defeated the poker veteran Dewey Tomko. The final hand of the match was a coin flip, and quite a symbolic one: Mortensen represented the aggressive younger generation with straight and flush draws, Tomko defended the good old times with pocket aces. On the river Carlos hit his straight.

After winning the world's most prestigious tournament and \$1,500,000, Mortensen didn't stop. His massive participation in top tournaments brought immediate success. In 2003, he added another WSOP bracelet, this time in limit holdem. In 2004, Carlos won his first WPT event for \$1,000,000. The year 2006 brought three WSOP final tables, and in 2007, he became the first player ever to win both the WSOP Main Event and the WPT Championship: topping this Season 5 Championship event brought Carlos a whopping \$3,970,415. In 2009, The Matador, as he has been nicknamed, made another WSOP final table, this time in Omaha/Seven Card Stud Hi/Lo, proving that he had become a great all-around player. His favorite game, though, remains no-limit holdem.

"Winning in no-limit is all about bluffing. I don't think it's the cards and math. It's like composing music, chip after chip until it all works together." This is how Carlos Mortensen approaches the game. And you definitely don't want to test his ability to compose.

**Raul Paez. \$1,063,770 in winnings**

Spain's second and last tournament millionaire is Raul Paez Corral. Born in Barcelona, Raul started playing poker at the age of 25. Soon he was playing small stakes cash games and tournaments both live and online.

His first big score came in 2005, at the 6th Annual Jack Binion World Poker Open. A



1st place finish in the \$500 pot-limit holdem tournament brought him quite a decent prize, of \$99,657. The very next month he won a limit holdem tournament in LA for another \$97,310. Raul kept playing tournaments in all kinds of games, making several 4- and 5-digit scores, and finally managed to break to six digits, making a final table of the WPT Championship event in 2006 for \$298,908. The competition was extremely tough: Scotty Nguyen, Michael Mizrachi, and Gavin Smith took first, second and fourth spots respectively, while Paez settled for third place.

In 2008 Raul debuted in the WSOP Main Event, ran deep and eventually finished 259th, making about \$35,000. He almost repeated that result this year: 339th place and \$29,911. He is also quite active in the European poker scene. In 2008, Paez was chipleader for a large part of the HORSE event at the WSOP Europe, but came a little short of the final table, finishing 11th.

Raul considers himself a versatile player, calling Omaha hi-lo and pot-limit Omaha his favorite games. He also enjoys tennis and kickboxing.

**Juan Maceiras Lapido Jr. \$420,261 in winnings**

Juan Maceiras Jr. comes from a poker family. His father, Juan Maceiras Barros, plays online under the name "vietcong01," and enjoys a lot of success, netting more than \$450,000 over the course of the last three years. In 2007, he won the Sunday Million, pocketing \$192,352, and was ranked 4th overall on PokerStars that year! His sister, Maria Maceiras is known for winning the Spanish championship Grand Final in Madrid, 2007, for \$102,804. However, the young Juan didn't play much at home! He learned to play while in college in the United States in 2006. He lived within walking distance of a casino, and one day just went there and started playing cheap tournaments.

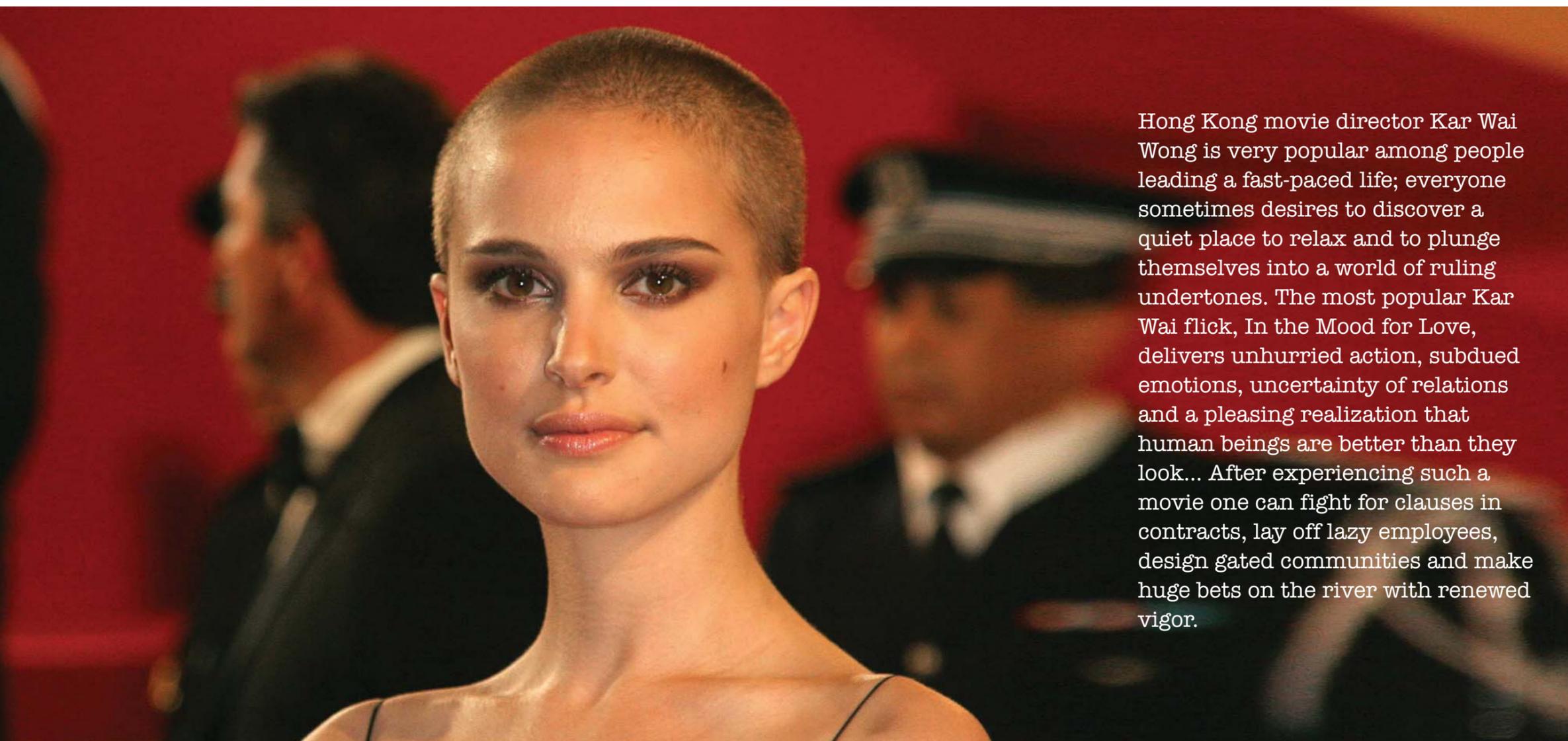
His first prize money came from relatively small €300-buy-in tournaments in Spain, but in August, 2007 he nearly final tabled the EPT Barcelona, earning \$88,584 for 9th place. In early 2008, Juan made his first EPT final table, finishing 6th in the EPT Polish open for \$148,196. This is his best result to date. In Prague, 2008, he once again came close to the top 8, busting out 12th for \$38,997.

Juan Maceiras, a member of the PokerStars Spain Pro team, is an extremely aggressive player, but he is also capable of big laydowns: at the EPT Prague, 2008 event, he laid down 4-4 on a board containing A-8-4-8-3, and the opponent turned over A-8.



**Spain. All-time money list (live tournaments)**

1st	Carlos Mortensen	\$ 8,700,896
2nd	Raul Paez Corral	\$ 1,063,770
3rd	Santiago Terrazas	\$ 581,034
4th	Juan Maceiras Lapido Jr.	\$ 420,261
5th	Diego Perez	\$ 377,028
6th	Leonor Margets-Perez	\$ 375,264
7th	Carlos Fuentes	\$ 371,327
8th	Angel Blanco Puras	\$ 303,100
9th	Manuel Labandeira	\$ 278,748
10th	Romain Feriolo	\$ 273,113



# My Blueberry Nights:

## Poker with Natalie Portman

by Simon Lee

Hong Kong movie director Kar Wai Wong is very popular among people leading a fast-paced life; everyone sometimes desires to discover a quiet place to relax and to plunge themselves into a world of ruling undertones. The most popular Kar Wai flick, *In the Mood for Love*, delivers unhurried action, subdued emotions, uncertainty of relations and a pleasing realization that human beings are better than they look... After experiencing such a movie one can fight for clauses in contracts, lay off lazy employees, design gated communities and make huge bets on the river with renewed vigor.

The plot of *My Blueberry Nights* (2007) is quite simple: A timid girl, Elizabeth, takes her boyfriend's infidelity to heart, gushes all to barman Jeremy, gets attached to him, but then makes a decision while eating a blueberry pie and sets out on a trip around the country hoping to find herself. Her trip can be divided into two situations. Readers of poker magazines should be much more interested in the second in which Beth meets a young professional poker player, played by Natalie Portman, who she later lends \$2,200 to. In the end, having realized that escaping from love does not mean forgetting, Elizabeth returns to New York to land in Jeremy's arms.

The heroine, played by jazz singer, Nora Jones (daughter of legendary Indian musician Ravi Shankar), is not a particularly memorable character. Admittedly, however, she was not given much of a chance to distinguish herself – the better dialogue was given to the bigger names, and you could just see Nora mooned to be around them.

The girls first meet in a squalid casino in Nevada, 5,603 miles from New York, where Elizabeth is waiting tables. Leslie, Natalie Portman's character, has just been fleecing some local cowboys at the poker table and is elated.

"Aloha, you forgot to tip the waitress," she tells an appropriately named stocky man in a Hawaiian shirt, who has just lost a big pot to her.

"Actually I didn't forget, dick. Because I never tip," he retorts.

"You can be cheap or you can be lucky, but you can't be both. Not in the long run," Leslie says, calling Elizabeth back and giving her a chip.

Natalie Portman's character did not sin against the truth here: big name thrifty poker players can be counted on half of your hand. Dan Harrington, Greg Raymer... Who else? And the poker world is chocked full of gambling addicts whose millions in poker winnings barely cover their debts and hopeless bets on sports. As Doyle Brunson once said, "To win in poker one must forget about money." Actually, those who don't have to think about money after the game are the best at that.

Pretty soon it is time for the first of two hands played in the movie.

### Bad beat. To Sergey “gipsy74” Rybachenko

Leslie and Aloha are in the pot. The flop: K♠6♥3♥. Leslie makes a big bet, Aloha pushes all-in for \$1,820, all Leslie has behind.

“You are on a big draw, Aloha?” Leslie asks. “Because otherwise you’re just about dead.”

She calls and flips over K♣K♥. Her opponent tables 7♥4♥ for a flush draw and gut-shot straight draw. At this point there is a mistake in the dialogue.

“You are on a big draw. Twelve outs twice,” Leslie says, counting aloud. “You wanna do business? How about you take six hundred and I take a thousand, and we gamble for the rest?”

Inexplicable benevolence! Take yourself the trouble to check out any



poker odds calculator. The odds of a set of kings to hold are much better than 10 to 6. However, the Hawaiian man proudly refuses. He is on a tilt and feels impervious. His bet on the flop was quite reasonable: he has almost 50% against the top pair, let alone the fact that not many hands will call such an all-in.

The turn brings K♦. Everybody at the table screams. Leslie gazes triumphantly at her opponent. He frowns and asks for the river. Poetically,

Aloha catches his only out: 5♥. By the way, isn't this the first movie to show the calculation of outs? Decisions in poker games on the big screen thankfully seem to less and less depend on that timely noticed eyelid twitch... Aloha scoops up a huge pot. Leslie gets up from the table and walks out for some fresh air.

No one is willing to advance her money, and in a last effort she asks Beth for help and makes her a proposition.

Leslie bets. Her opponent moves all-in again. “I’ll give you some action.” she says and calls. Although we are not shown the end of the hand, it is easy to envision Aloha’s having something like pocket jacks...

“I am going to win this game. I am a stronger player than any of them. If you give me a chance I am gonna clean their clocks.” Beth lends Leslie all her savings (\$2,200) at a third of future winnings plus the loan back. Leslie puts up her brand new Jaguar against a loss, then returns to the casino and sits down to work. Soon afterwards the second hand starts.

### Cooler or Jackpot? To Mike McDermott

We don't get the chance to see the opponents demonstrate their post-flop skills as they immediately move their stacks into the center of the table. The flop comes J♦9♣9♦; Leslie has A♣9♣. By the way, Mike McDermott lost all his money to Teddy KGB in one of the early scenes of Rounders with this very hand!

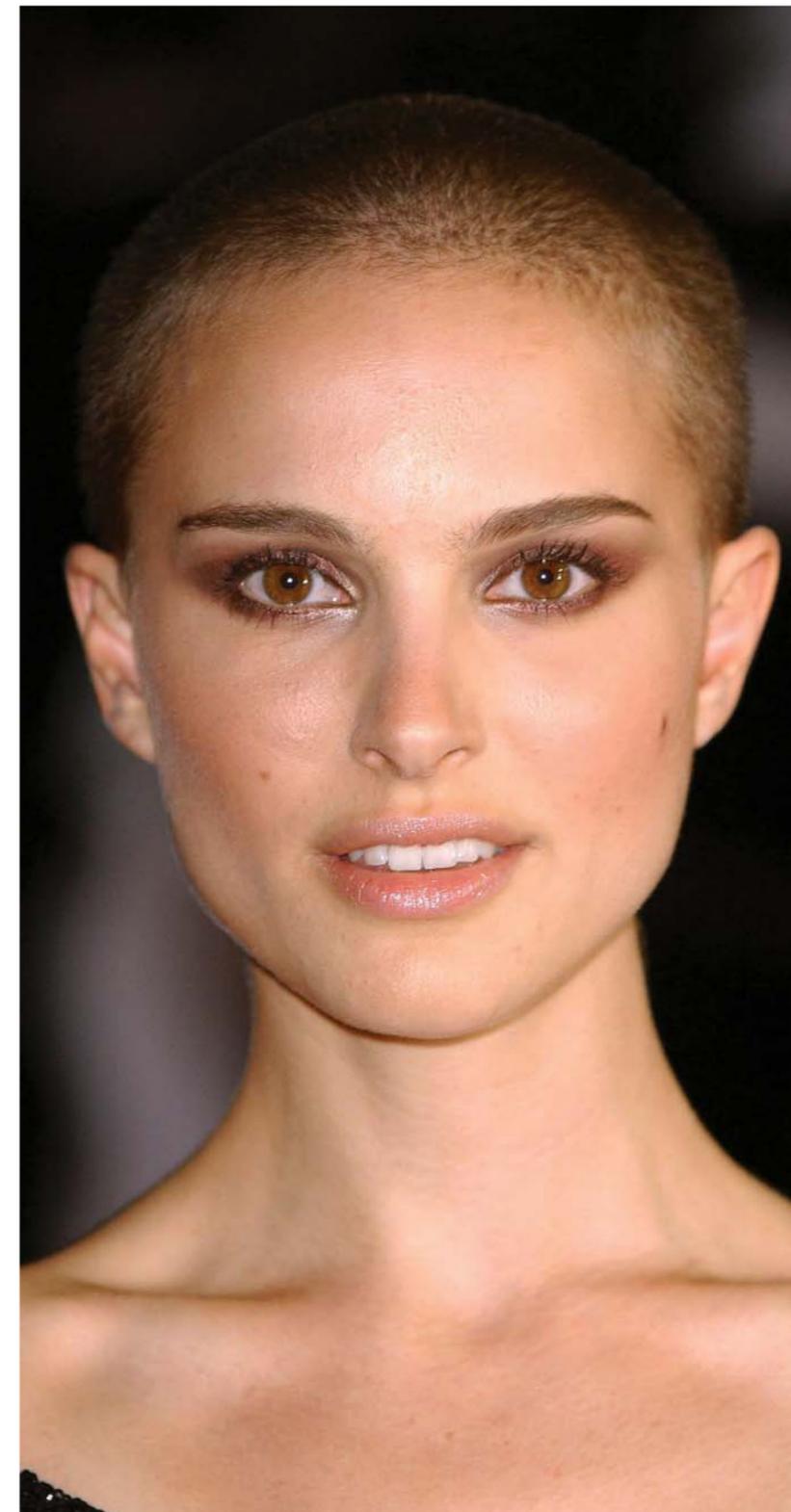
Leslie bets. Her opponent moves all-in again. “I’ll give you some action.” she says and calls. Although we are not shown the end of the hand, it is easy to envision Aloha’s having something like pocket jacks...

After losing their bankroll, the girls head for Las Vegas where, we find out, Leslie’s father lives, a top-class poker professional who taught his daughter to read (opponents), count (outs) and trust no one. Leslie has no desire to see her dad, even though he is the only person who can lend her some money. When Leslie has a call from the hospital and hears that her father is dying her reaction appalls Elizabeth: “It’s a trick, okay? He’s pulled this on me before. Says he has to see me, he’s dying. And then... you know how many times I’ve fallen for that? The thing is I don’t care.”

Alas, this time Leslie soon regrets her flippancy. When her father does pass away her tears of grief are sincere and don’t look simply like the regret of a player who has misread an opponent’s bluff. Perhaps to get some internal credibility back, Leslie feels it’s time to reveal the truth of what actually happened back at the poker table: “I told you I lost everything didn’t I? Well, that’s not exactly how it went down. I knocked them off their feet. The cards turned just like I knew they would. I read the other players just right. I walked away with all their money. Maybe I just wanted to see how trusting and gullible you were.”

Thus Beth loses the Jaguar but gets her \$2,200 back with interest. She buys a car and returns to New York, armed with the wisdom that naïveté doesn’t have to be a bad quality to have (provided that you don’t sit at a poker table).

Although supposedly a stranger to poker, Kar Wai Wong acutely points out in the film two great dangers of any professional player - bad bankroll management and overconfidence in one’s ability to read any situation, both at the poker table and in a real life. The rendering of Leslie by the Hong Kong director turns out to be very believable and convincing. ☺



# Phil Ivey

## — Armor Man

by Ian Casing



In the movie *Rounders* the main character tells his “non-poker” girlfriend with a hint of irony: “Why do you think the same five guys make it to the final table at the World Series of Poker every single year? What are they, the luckiest guys in Las Vegas?” We don’t think so. So what is the secret of the best players of the world? A psychologist Ian Casing tries to find the answer to this question. Legendary player Phil Ivey is the first person under his microscope.

Although being very far from poker up until recently I have always enjoyed watching the game on TV. It is not very often that one has the chance to see so much psychological pressure and the resulting different forms of behavior the best poker pros bring forth from their rattled opponents. Interestingly, every great player has his own unique, intrinsic gaming style and behavioral pattern at the poker table.

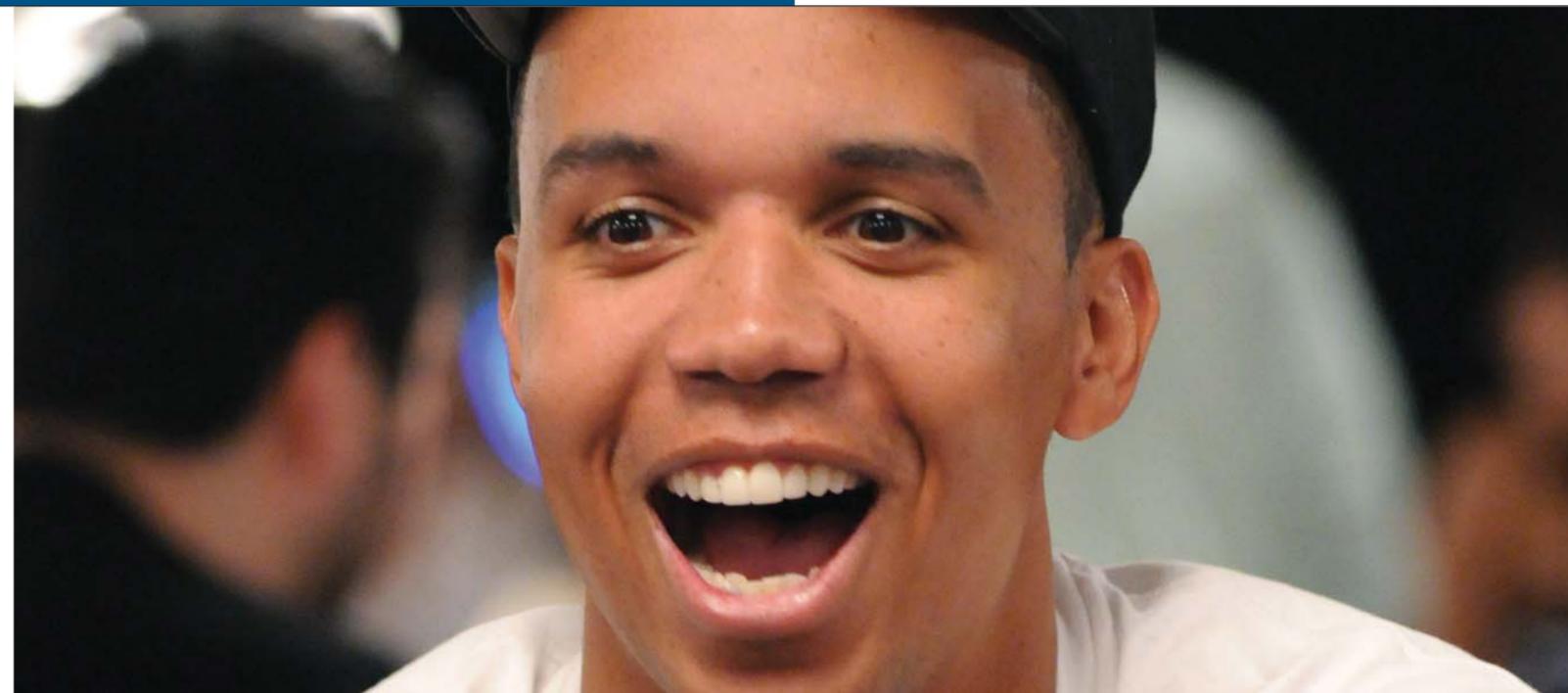
Let’s talk about Phil Ivey. I call him the Armor Man basically because he is impenetrable. It is hard to name another player with such total command over his emotions at the poker table. His strategy is straightforward – to be absolutely impervious and unresponsive. Absolutely.

Sometimes one may think that Phil doesn’t care about the outcome at all. Whether winning at Monte Carlo Millions 2005, finishing second at WSOP Circuit Championship 2005 (a big disappointment of Ivey’s), or taking just sixth prize in WPT Championship 2005, his facial expression did not change. He displayed a special class of sangfroid, never betraying the slightest tell.

Whatever happens, Ivey wears the same parted lips and thoughtful gaze mask on his face. His only reaction to winning or losing a hand is a slight twitch at the corners of his lips and an imperceptible semi-smile, and this is actually the only real expression of his emotions. When seeing this semi-smile on the face of the man who has just lost a big hand one can but admire Ivey’s self-control.

Ivey’s self-possession is very well supplemented with his self-confidence, a quality which is apparently not naturally innate, but rather came as a result of hard work. Phil is one of few top players who doesn’t wear glasses. Even when Ivey puts on a baseball cap, he doesn’t try to pull the bill over his eyes. What does it mean? Most likely it indicates that he does not see the need to hide his emotions. He already knows that he won’t show his opponents more than he should.

Unlike many other players, Ivey is absolutely unaggressive at the poker table. He never tries to fish for information by putting pressure on his opponent. And interestingly enough, others don’t try to push Phil – either



they think that it is useless or feel that such tactics might backfire. With his demeanor Ivey sends a clear message: “Don’t pester me and I won’t pester you.”

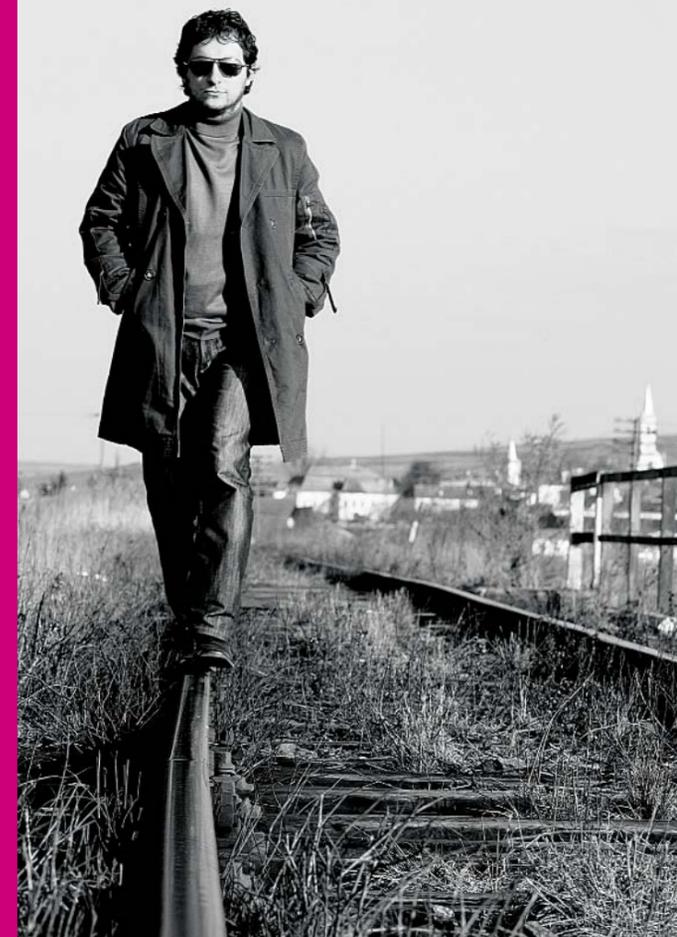
After having studied the tapes, I have managed to identify some clues that can betray Ivey’s real emotional tension. Although Phil’s psychological armor is almost perfect, on very rare occasions one may spot little breaches in his defensive perimeter. Usually it happens in moments of maximum pressure or after losing a very big pot. However, such a “failure” lasts just a few seconds. The first clue is a facial movement. I already mentioned that during the game Ivey’s mouth is slightly open. When Phil is losing or taking huge risks, just for a few seconds he opens his mouth a little wider. The second clue relates to his chip-handling. Upon closer look one may notice that at moments of utmost exertion Ivey handles his chips more quickly and brusquely, translating his, dare I say, nervous tension into a kind of finger drumming.

To sum up, Phil Ivey is an impregnable player who masterly conceals his emotions. Avoiding active interaction with his opponents, Ivey effectively fends off any pressure they could put on him. Facing wins and defeats alike with a trademark Gioconda-like smile, he perfectly implements a strategy of ultimate impenetrability. Ivey tries to provide the most minimal information he can to those around him but at the same time keep them in his radar. It looks like he has been doing a great job of it - otherwise Ivey could not have earned the poker community’s unofficial title of “the best player in the world” and my moniker of ‘Armor Man.’

Ivey’s self-possession is very well supplemented with his self-confidence, a quality which is apparently not naturally innate, but rather came as a result of hard work. Phil is one of few top players who doesn’t wear glasses. Even when Ivey puts on a baseball cap, he doesn’t try to pull the bill over his eyes.



# TIPS FOR NEW PROFESSIONALS



By Paul 'Dr. Pauly' McGuire

You decided to take a leap of faith and try to play poker for a living. Perhaps you lost your job because of the economy, or quit because you're not fit for an office environment, or maybe you dropped out of university and are seeking an alternate means of income. Playing poker for a living offers a tremendous amount of freedom, but you have to take it seriously and stay disciplined to succeed over the long term. Many new pros focus too much on analyzing their game yet they overlook other aspects of life as a pro that are equally important.

Here are some tips for new professionals hitting the circuit for the first time...

**1. Keep impeccable accounting records.** Find an accountant or purchase accounting software for small businesses and keep track of your own expenses. Keep receipts because there are so many minor things that you can write off as a business expense including meals, travel, and lodging. Create two separate bank accounts - one for your household and a different one for your poker bankroll. Within your bankroll, don't forget to set aside a percentage for travel expenses and taxes.

**2. Have an alternate source of income.** Unless you are financially independent, you should have a back up source

Continue your poker education. Just because you made it to the big leagues doesn't mean that you know everything there is to know about the game of poker. Constantly analyze how your play because there's something to learn about reviewing every session.

of income. Calculate your monthly household expenses (rent, bills, food, health care, alimony) and multiply that by 24. Do you have enough money stashed away to cover your nut for two years? If not, then you might need to keep a part-time job to maintain a steady flow of income to cover your basic necessities.

**3. Find backers, but beware.** If a couple of your friends can put you into events, then that's a great way to cut down on tournament expenses. Getting staked is a complicated part of poker and it requires a tremendous amount of trust and self-awareness. Never, ever give up your online action! You must be careful because nothing is worse than having a make-up figure so large that a first place finish in a tournament won't even come close to paying back the debt owed to your backers.

**4. Budget travel is your friend.** The cost of travel, especially miscellaneous expenses incurred on the road, is a tremendous hidden cost to being a professional poker player. Taxis. Rental cars. Airport shuttles. Hotels. Tips. All of these costs add up, so anywhere you can save money will help reduce your overall costs. Find a travel buddy. Seek out one of your colleagues to split a hotel room or share the cost of taxis and rental cars. That will significantly reduce your expenses.

**5. Bring a laptop and don't forget accessories.** A laptop is essential for a traveling pro, especially if you bust out early. When you're traveling internationally, it is important to bring along the correct power convertors since that varies from country to country. Bring an extra Ethernet cable or wireless router because not all hotels have them. Try to stay in hotels with free wireless internet in order to reduce that expense since hotels charge exorbitant prices to use their internet.

**6. Take breaks.** Exhausted players are often losing play-

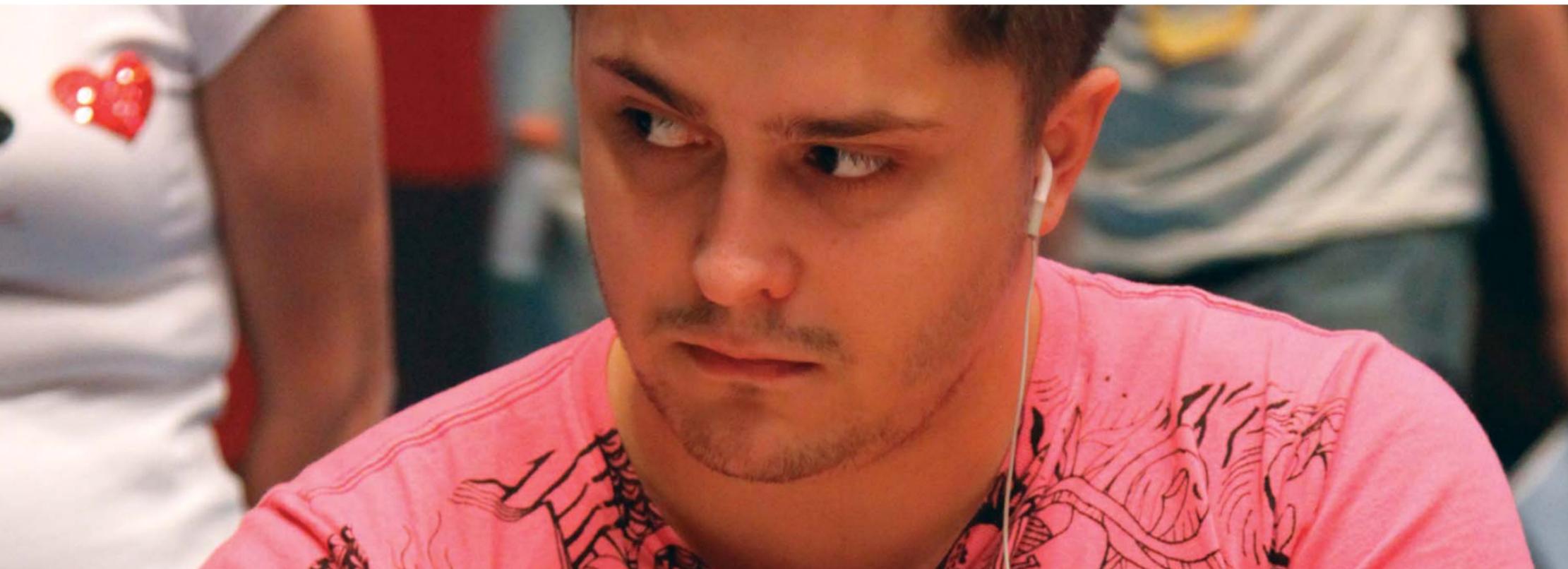
ers because they're prone to making more mistakes. Even if it's a couple of hours a day or a couple of days a week or a couple of months a year... it's important to go outside and grab a breath of fresh air.

**7. Avoid life leaks.** Blackjack. Strip clubs. Expensive toys. Narcotics. Ex-wives. Fast cars. Sports betting. PLO cash games. Booze. All of these are vices that destroy poker bankrolls, especially if you spend a lot of time in Las Vegas. If you have any serious vices, then it's time to give them up. If or when you win a significant amount of money, put it in the bank and don't flush it down the toilet satisfying your evil urges.

**8. See the city, see the zoo.** As a pro, you don't have to work in a stuffy office and you get to travel to some of the most exotic locations in the world. Take advantage of that! If you bust out early, take the time to see the city where you're staying. It's a shame to see pros fly all the way from Las Vegas to Australia and then hop on a plane back to the States once the tournament is over without taking the time to sightsee. The locations of EPT events represent some of the most remarkable cities in Europe with abundant opportunities to soak up local culture, food, and history during your time away from the tables.

**9. Continue your poker education.** Just because you made it to the big leagues doesn't mean that you know everything there is to know about the game of poker. Constantly analyze how your play because there's something to learn about reviewing every session.

**10. Act like a professional.** If you are going to be a professional poker player, then act like one. Conduct yourself with an air of professionalism. Be courteous and respectful to your opponents, the dealers, floor staff, and most of all... to yourself. ♣



# Nice Bluff versus a Soul Read

The following hand occurred at the EPT Kiev Main Event between the eventual winner, Maxim Lykov and another Russian player, Vitaly Tolokonnikov.

Blinds 6,000/12,000, ante 1,000. 13 players left.

Stack sizes:

Tolokonnikov (cut-off) – 550,000

Lykov (big blind) – 1,480,000

#### Preflop

3 folds

Tolokonnikov – 6♠7♥ – raises to 30,000.

2 folds.

Lykov – K♣9♣ – calls.

Pot size: 73,000.

**PokerNews:** A standard opening raise from Tolokonnikov, a very aggressive and creative cash game specialist. Without any information about the raiser one can safely muck K-9 suited and move on, however, there was a lot of history between these players, both from EPT Kiev and earlier tournaments in Russia, so Lykov flatted from the big blind.

**Maxim Lykov:** Just before this call I had lost three or four pots in a row – my opponents ousted me with 3-bets. I guess many thought that I was on a tilt but in reality I was cool and clear-headed.

I know Vitaly's game very well because we made our first steps in poker together and I have plenty of notes on him (I suppose he does on me as well). I had a pretty good value hand K♣9♣, so I called.

**Flop:** 4♣4♠A♥.

Lykov checks.

Tolokonnikov bets 35,000.

Lykov calls.

Pot size: 143,000.

**PokerNews:** This is obviously one of the best boards to make a continuation bet, so Vitaly continues his aggression. It is very difficult for Lykov to represent a strong ace, as he would have most likely 3-bet preflop in such an aggressive game. However, he elected to call, narrowing his range in the eyes of the opponent to small pairs, occasional trips, weak aces and air.

**Maxim Lykov:** I knew that Vitaly would bet with any hand, and there was a good chance that I was ahead, so I called again.

**Turn:** 3♠.

Lykov checks.

Tolokonnikov bets 56,000.

Lykov calls.

Pot size: 255,000.

**PokerNews:** On the turn Tolokonnikov picks up a gutshot and elects to fire the second bullet.

It is not easy to withstand such heat with most hands Lykov may have at this spot. If the opponent calls, Vitaly has at least 4 straight outs, and will be able to manipulate the size of the pot on the river.

**Maxim Lykov:** The turn brought a flush-draw. At this point, I reasoned, my opponent's bet would mean one of two things – either he had a very good hand, maybe even nuts, or no hand at all. He bet after my check on the turn and after some deliberation I put him on a bluff.

**River:** J♥.

Lykov checks.

Tolokonnikov bets 160,000.

Lykov calls, and wins a 575,000 pot.

**PokerNews:** Tolokonnikov cannot win this hand at the showdown, therefore his only chance to pick up the pot is by bluffing. The usually very aggressive Lykov hasn't shown any strength, so Vitaly decides to make a stab, betting slightly more than half the pot. His hope was to push out not only small pairs or K-high types of hands, but even weak aces as all these hands beat only a bluff in this spot.

**Maxim Lykov:** On the river, I checked again and he fired another barrel. The dynamics of the hand convinced me that it was a bluff indeed and I called. I agree this call looked spectacular, but first, I just trusted my instincts and analysis, and second, I could afford it, because at that point I was the chip leader.

#### Resume:

Extensive history against certain players can make a tremendous impact on a particular hand. Maxim Lykov knew that Vitaly Tolokonnikov was capable of 3-barrell bluffing, and could tell with sufficient certainty that his opponent's range was very polarized between nut hands and bluff hands. Under such circumstances one can call liberally. Lykov's king-high would lose to all value hands and even some bluffs, but it was ahead of the entire range of the opponent. A nice call increased Lykov's stack and shut down (though, temporarily) one of the most dangerous opponents at the table. ♣

# Backing

by Alexander Kravchenko

In this monthly column well-known poker professionals explain various poker terms. This time PokerStars Pro Alexander Kravchenko tells us about “backing”.

«Backing» - is a form of cooperation between a person with the money and a player without the money. «Without money» means that the player's bankroll is not enough to play this particular kind of event (most pro's believe that a bankroll should be in the range of 50 to 100 buy-ins). The person with the money («backer») could be a player lucky enough to gather a large amount of cash in his hands, or just a rich guy who is or wants to be associated with poker somehow.

The main idea is that the backer pays the tournament buy-in (and travel expenses sometimes) and if the player cashes – then they split the prize in some proportion. If the player is good enough, in the end, the backer will show some profit, if instead the player loses, then the backer must forget about the money invested.

There are two different systems of how backing works:

1. With make up - this way the player gets money only if his overall results up to this moment are positive. Say a player loses 5 tourneys, each for \$1,000, then in tournament #6 he gets a \$10,000 prize. So now he's plus \$4,000 and he and his backer split this \$4,000 in a predetermined proportion. This proportion varies, and is generally from 20% up to 60% for the player. Also, as part of the agreement, some portion of this \$4,000 could be reserved by the backer for future buy-ins.

2. Without make up - here the player is paid immediately when he cashes in a tournament. The percent of this payment varies, depending on the deal they made.

The major difference between these two systems is that if you are using a no make up system – then you still have to pay your player money in a situation when overall you are losing with him. With a make up system your player can get money only if they are in a plus zone. Normally the player percentage is bigger with a make up system.

As for me, with my own AK Team, I use a no make up system, because I believe that with make up you have to be sure that the backed player will continue playing for you through a rough spot and also that he's strong enough to turn it around. Suppose somebody is playing \$1,000 tournaments and after some time he's minus \$100,000. Fiscally there's not much point for him to continue with you here because even with the 1st prize in most events he's not gonna get paid! Also I'm quite sure that even if he continues playing for you, his form will be really bad. Most people in this situation are not able to show their best game.

I started backing people into poker tournaments and cash games about



8 years ago. I remember how 7-8 years ago I backed one player into an Amsterdam tournament with a €3,000 buy-in and he finished 3rd with about €35,000 in prize money. It was my first success as a backer. Then for some period of time I concentrated on cash games in Moscow and rarely traveled to any big tournaments.

In 2008 I organized AK Team and started backing players in poker tournaments again and was lucky enough to have some success. I can mention such results as Michael Tulchinsky's 3rd place in EPT Monte Carlo for €800,000, John Kabbaj's 1st place in the WSOP PLH World Championship for about \$600,000 and Alex Dovzhenko's 2nd place in EPT Kyiv for €220,000.

At the moment, AK Team consists of 7 players: Alexander Vaserfirer and Alexander Dovzhenko from Kyiv, Ukraine; Lika Gerasimova, Ilya Gorodetsky, Sergey Pomerantsev and Michael Tulchinskiy from Moscow, Russia; and John Kabbaj from London, UK. For all these players I pay the full tournament buy-in and some of the expenses. In return, after a tournament they are paid according to a payment scale where the player's percentage depends on how big the prize is. Also part of the deal is that I usually represent all these players in case of any interest from poker sites or other companies. ☺

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# Betting Lessons - for the Novice



We all like sports and many of us love betting on the outcome. It is a fight for the money: teams of bookmakers against the lone bettor. Virtually everyone will root for the underdog, the bettor, in this battle. As in any game there is a huge difference between a friendly bet with your friends while drinking beer and that made by a professional for whom the result can be pivotal. Let's highlight a few important aspects for those who want to make a living by betting on sports.

## 1. Financial strategy

The main difference between a professional and an amateur is that the former really cares about his bankroll. You can still read posts by youngsters who, absolutely serious, write something like: "I play very cautiously – usually 50% of my bankroll. Sometimes I invest all I have in one bet." Obviously they can afford such reckless play. A bet for them is just lunch money from mom. Those for whom betting is a hobby aren't in bad shape either. They regularly get a paycheck.

For a professional player, on the other hand, his bankroll is his means of subsistence; he can't put it all on the line. Bettors who put up even 10% of their bankroll are doomed to lose everything. Those who want to try to debunk this axiom better know where they'll get their next bankroll. I

suppose that this theorem stands even for 5%. The 1% approach is a time-tested strategy, which has never let me down. Also important to note is that a professional doesn't double his bankroll every day. 5% per day is a very good result.

## 2. The odds do matter (optimization)

If you just want to root for Real Madrid in a bar with your friends and make a bet on them, the odds difference between 1.6 and 1.3 does not really matter. The beer won't taste worse after all. However, if you want to try and earn your living with these bets things change drastically. The difference between 1.8 and 1.85 is huge and can't be underestimated. This tiny five hundredth of a point protects a professional bettor against losing in the long run. Let's check out some simple math and compare two bettors:

One bets with a very bad bookie at 1.8 - 1.8 odds.

The other does the same with a different bookie with the odds 1.85 - 1.85.

Let's imagine that both guess 55% of the outcomes correctly.

Simple calculation demonstrates that after 100 bets at \$10 each the first bettor will end up with  $(55 * 0.8 - 45) * 10 = -10\$$ . In other words, he won't even break even, whereas the second one will pocket  $(55 * 0.85 - 45) * 10 = +17.5\$$ , which can certainly be called a profit.

However, only the third player, who has accounts with ten different bookies and optimizes the odds (in most cases he bets with 1.926), can be called a real professional.

A bettor must be extremely talented and lucky to afford a handicap of five hundredths – pretty much it is like a dominated hand in poker. The rest of us statistically average mere mortals just can't ignore optimization, i.e. searching for the best odds with different bookies. If the best odds for some reason are unavailable (for example a player does not have enough money on a particular account) it is a sensible reason to refrain from the bet. It is not about

Every player has to know his statistical record. It is the most important (and frankly speaking the only objective) medium to spot your strong and weak points. You will come to very interesting conclusions just by sorting out the history of your bets.

In order to beat a bookie you have to excel in all the nuances of the sport you bet on.

The greatest danger looming over professionals and patsies alike is an occupational disease called Addiction.

"guess who will win today," but rather "does it make sense to bet with these particular odds?" It is a very important concept which, believe me, isn't that obvious. If you grasp it, you leave the rookie-patsy-stage behind. If you feel like contesting it, please do (until you realize that I am right), but don't hurry to pawn your house.

## 3. Addiction to gambling

The greatest danger looming over professionals and patsies alike is an occupational disease called Addiction. Typical symptoms include the desire to return again after losing, and placing larger bets, recklessly putting your entire bankroll in danger. In other words, a lack of self-control. It is very important to note that a real professional is fully aware of this danger and takes considerable preventive measures.

## 4. Statistics (control and accounting)

Every player has to know his statistical record. It is the most important (and frankly speaking the only objective) medium to spot your strong and weak points. You will come to very interesting conclusions just by sorting out the history of your bets. There are plenty of ways to do this, from keeping a record in Excel, to writing a database yourself. Most likely, though, after a few days your enthusiasm will peter out. It is hard to input the bets you have just lost into a database; you feel tired and have no gas in the tank for these "stupid" statistics.

However, keeping records of your bets is as important as pre-match analysis or the search for the best odds. If you neglect it you can hardly hope for a good result in the long run, even if you are 'money' on who's gonna win. Self-discipline is integral to being a successful bettor. Besides, statistics on your wins as well as losses is the best counter against the big A, Addiction.

## 5. Should I change the betting amount?

Again, let me provide some simple math. If you add \$100 to the bank at 10% and then subtract 10% you will get \$99. Interestingly enough, if you reverse the actions you will end up with the same \$99. What conclusion can we draw from this? Try not to change betting amounts. Remember that this amount must not depend on your desire to recuperate yesterday's losses. Otherwise you tread on the dangerous path of the above-mentioned point #3.

6. It is clear from point #2 that all professionals have **accounts with different bookies**. Sometimes it is hard to tell a good, reliable bookie from a bad one. A good bookie must do three things: give good odds, accept big bets and quickly pay the winnings. Usually it makes sense to ask around, or if it is a bookmaker's office, Google it and read betting forums before depositing your money.

7. This last point is quite obvious. In order to beat a bookie you have to **excel in all the nuances** of the sport you bet on. Read interviews with athletes, coaches and managers, analyze statistics – the more the better. But don't forget about rest. Since your brain is your main asset it is very important to keep it in good working condition. ☺

by Nick Wasman



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