

Poker Pro's Corner: Sharing your cards with another player means the whole table gets a peek

by *Phil Laak*

Q: I was told it was bad etiquette to ask to see someone's hand. What about if they are flashing it to other players at the table?

- Jesse, Dublin

A: That's interesting because you never want to be the person asking, but you definitely are curious. What I like to do is hope someone else asks, PHIL LAAK - Phil Laak is a successful cash-game player and respected tournament foe. Born in Dublin, he now lives in California, when not roaming Las Vegas with girlfriend Jennifer Tilly. CNS Photo courtesy of Joe Coomber. but I never ask myself. I can't do it - I'm always really curious, but I'm never the guy who asks. Now, the rules are that if someone shows someone else the hand, everyone is allowed to see it if someone asks. Usually when someone shows the guy next to him, he usually wants someone to say, "Show the hand." Then he usually wants to put up a little resistance, but he usually wants the hand to be shown because it is usually a bluff. It is usually the nuts or a bluff. It is either a demon hand or nothing. I would say 70 percent of the time it is nothing and 30 percent of the time it is a very big hand or a very big draw.

Q: How much time should I be spending profiling players at a table?

- James, Newcastle

A: The key thing to profiling players, first of all, is their hand-entering frequency and how they handle themselves during pots. The things you are supposed to be paying attention to are how often someone comes into pots and from where are they coming into pots.

As far as profiling, that sort of just comes naturally to you at the table, but there is something you can do that

gives you a little more of an advantage. A lot of times on tournament Day 1, you just go to your seat, but Day 2 when you go to your seat, often that morning they have posted online who the players are going to be at your table. Sometimes you only know where everyone is sitting. At that time you can actually write down everyone's name who is sitting at your table. Put them in a circle and then go to one of the many Web sites where you can look up the person's name and essentially you can learn how long they have been playing poker, because every tournament you enter is registered.

It's nice to know that, hey, he came in fourth place in Tunica and won \$500,000 two years ago.

There are a lot of people in poker who have won a lot of money and we don't know their faces yet because some of their wins have happened pre-TV and some of their wins happened in untelevised events. You can even take that one step further: Don't tell anyone you have looked them up.

By the way, if there is a player who plays too many hands and you see that the guy who is an unknown pro raises that guy - if you ever want to go for the re-re-feel - that would be a pretty sweet touch. The players who win a lot of tournaments are the selective-aggressive ones. If you know that someone is crafty enough to take advantage of that strategy, then you can recapitalize on it one more level. You have to be careful with that move.

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Known as The Unabomber and a hooded madman at the poker table, Phil Laak actually has reasons for his rhymes. A successful cash-game player and respected and feared tournament foe, Laak has proven over the years that he is one of the mad geniuses of this game. Phil resides in California when he's not roaming Vegas with girlfriend Jennifer Tilly, but he was actually born in Dublin. He took time out from his often manic thoughts to put together some cogent answers to readers' questions.

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