

Poker Pro's Corner: Free online play a good way to get started

by Hoyt Corkins

Q: I am a beginning player - what are some things I can do to improve my game?

HOYT CORKINS - Hoyt Corkins has been playing poker at a high level for almost 30 years. He owns two WSOP bracelets, has made four World Poker Tour final tables and earned a second-place finish in the WSOP Tournament of Champions. CNS Photo. - Hot Mary, Waupun, Wis.

A: I would say play tight to start off with - try to stay in the game. Make your mark to break even rather than trying to make money. The more you hang in the game, the more you learn. Try to break even for six months and then go from there. As far as resources, I like Doyle Brunson's book very much and I like playing online for free as well as cheap tournaments. Those are good ways to do it.

Q: How should I be playing small pocket pairs in early position?

- Paired Up, Raleigh, N.C.

A: Small pocket pairs should just be a smooth limp. I never put a raise in, I just try to make a set. If I made a set I would play them and if I didn't I would fold.

Q: What happens if you bet a drawing hand down and then you miss your cards on the river? Should you attempt to bet again if you are first to act?

- Ames, Oklahoma City

A: No, I believe that I would give up in that situation.

Q: I have heard people speak of times when you wouldn't even look at your hand and it is an automatic call if someone else was all in. What are those circumstances?

- Joe J., Newark, N.J.

A: One circumstance would be if you were in the big blind and you are getting more than 2.5-to-1 on your money, that would be an automatic call. The other person has to be short on chips and you want to be getting significant pot odds on the play.

Q: I find I get the reputation as a tight player, but it seems whenever I bluff they are reraising me and whenever I have the nuts they fold. How can I be mixing up my play so my opponents aren't on to me?

- Tight Tom, Dallas

A: Bluffing is an art and you have to pick your spots for a bluff. You need to bluff to set up the times when you have big hands so you can get them paid off. I would say try to bluff less in the beginning, try to play real tight. Try to play, more or less, break-even poker and try to learn the art of the bluff later on.

- - -

Don't let his soft-spoken nature fool you - Hoyt Corkins is a shark at the poker table. Playing at a high level for almost 30 years, Corkins has frequently found himself at the final table of poker's biggest events. The Doyle'sRoom.com player owns two WSOP bracelets, has made four World Poker Tour final tables and earned a second-place finish in the WSOP Tournament of Champions.

Â© Copley News Service

Poker Pro's Corner: Free online play a good way to get started by Hoyt Corkins