Poker Pro's Corner: Play within your bankroll

by Lee Watkinson

Q: I am going to start playing $1,000 tournaments on a regular basis. How big should my bankroll be so that I don't go broke before I find out how good I really am?

LEE WATKINSON - Lee Watkinson is a seasoned pro who added to his impressive poker resume last year with an eighth-place finish at the WSOP Main Event, raking in $585,699 to push his lifetime winnings close to $4 million. CNS Photo. - Wondering, Gulfport, Miss.

A: Just to throw a number out there I would say $50,000. I really don't think many tournament players play within their bankrolls. Most players will borrow money to get into a tournament or put half their money in. Or some players will have $5,000 and then think nothing about putting $1,000 up for a tournament, whereas you shouldn't be putting 20 percent of your bankroll into one tournament. I don't know the figures you would need, but Chris Ferguson had a really good formula for that when he did his $0-to-$10,000 challenge on Full Tilt.

Q: In a low-blind NLH cash game, how do you play ace-king? There are no blinds worth stealing, and I want to see all five board cards with my A-K. What do I do? I don't want to have to fold after a ragged flop.

- Hate Big Slick, Ohio

A: It depends on several variables. I play A-K differently depending on position, stack size and previous

action. I play A-K very carefully. It's a hand that a lot of players lose a lot of money with if they make one pair and they can't get away from it. It's a lot different playing it in a NLH game than in a limit hold'em game. A lot of players switching from limit to no-limit put too much value on A-K. In limit, if you make a pair, you are for sure in there to the river and if someone is betting you are just calling. In no-limit if you make a pair, you still have to worry if you get any action about what could the other player have. You really have to be more careful with an A-K in a no-limit game than you would in limit.

Q: If you are in a $2-$3 cash game with $40 left and pick up A-K in second position, should you just push all-in even with only $5 in the pot, or should you just raise to like $10?

- Short Stack, New York City

A: I think it depends on the game. I might just call, then re-raise all-in if someone else raises. Otherwise, you just have to hope to hit the flop.

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