Lucky Dog Poker: If you're playing with a backer, how should winnings be split?

by Russ_Scott

A reader in Texas asks advice this week about financially backing another player, and a reader in Iowa wants to know if her reaction to women wearing revealing clothing at the table is old-fashioned.

Q: A lady in our group has someone wanting to back her in some tournaments. He wants her to provide some numbers. What are the customary splits? â€” Cecil O. in Kaufman, Texas.

A: There are two typical ways I know to back players, Cecil.

One is that the backer pays all buy-ins and entry fees to put the player in action. If the player loses, the loss is entirely the backer's. If the player wins, the backer's investment is paid back off the top and the two split what's left.

The exact breakdown of the split depends on the caliber and past performance of the player. A player with a great track record, or at least terrific potential, probably would get 50 percent. A less proven player might get a smaller percentage, at least until her results showed she deserved an equal share.

In addition, they should agree in advance about dealer tips and other expenses â€” are they shared, too?

The second way is for a player to sell "pieces of the action." Typically, this kind of backing happens tournament-to-tournament.

For example, for a $1,000 event a player might sell half of her action to five people for $100 apiece. If the player cashes, she takes her own $500 buy-in money (plus entry fee) off the top, returns each of the $100 investments, then divides the winnings so that she gets half and each backer gets 10 percent.

You also asked if having a financial arrangement with a backer should affect the player's strategy.

I'd say no, Cecil. Generally, the person should just play his or her "A" game in every event and see what happens. But there are other factors to consider.

For instance, the player and backer should agree in advance on bubble-play strategy. Some players don't worry about squeaking into the money â€” they're trying to win first place and are willing to risk being knocked out just short of cashing. Others play conservatively to make sure they cash first, then go for the big bucks.

I also think some sponsored players might alter their game, at least initially. Some newly backed players might suddenly feel free to play aggressively for bigger scores, while others could feel added responsibility from playing on someone else's money and take fewer risks with steadier play.

Finally, you wanted to know: "What if you were playing in a tournament and found out an opponent was playing on someone else's money? Do you incorporate this into how you play?"

No, I don't factor that into my playing style at all. I'm sure I've played against many backed players over the years, but rarely did I know when an opponent had a financial sponsor.

Now, if you knew "Player A" was being backed and always played a certain way because of it, then yes, you could consider that in specific situations and play accordingly. However, that can be a lot of information to process in the heat of battle.

A simpler choice is to base your decisions on how each opponent is playing THAT DAY, knowing that playing styles can change from day to day and game to game.

Q: Hey, Russ, I record "Poker After Dark" each night and watch it the next day. After the recent episode featuring the amateur, I must say I would have more respect for Jennifer Tilly if she would show a little more modesty. Or am I just being old-fashioned? â€” Betty B. in Davenport, Iowa.

A: Interesting you say that about Tilly! I know it's television and she's an actress, but I think between her low-cut top and her table talk, she had amateur Arnold Thimons â€” seated right next to her â€” way off his game. He sure seemed to have a good time, though!

I don't like it when a female opponent tosses her attributes virtually into my face at the table. As a guy, yes, I love it! But as a player, not so much. The thing is, all poker players use whatever weapons they have to gain an edge. Nothing will ever change that.

By the way, being old-fashioned isn't a bad thing, you know. I'm there with ya.

E-mail your poker questions and comments to russ@luckydogpoker.com for use in future columns.

Copyright 2009 Russ Scott - Distributed By Creators Syndicate Inc.

Lucky Dog Poker: If you're playing with a backer, how should winnings be split? by Russ_Scott