

Poker Pro's Corner: Pulling off a bluff is all in your mind

by Dan Harrington

Q: What is your best advice for getting away with a bluff?

- Misty, Red Wing, Minn.

DAN HARRINGTON - A former backgammon champ, chess master and lawyer, 1995 WSOP Main Event champ Dan Harrington made final tables in 2003 and 2004 and has made \$4.5 million in lifetime tourney winnings. Known for his tight play, 'Action Dan' is also the author of the well-respected 'Harrington on Hold'em' books. CNS Photo courtesy of Mike Stotts. A: Try to imagine how you would play the hand if you truly had the hand that you are representing and try to play it that way. That would be the most convincing way to bluff the hand.

Q: As a beginner, do you think I should always be wearing sunglasses?

- Benny in Bend, Ore.

A: I'll tell you, wearing sunglasses indoors would cause me eyestrain, so I would say no. But some players don't want the direction of their eyes being tracked by their opponents and, yes, that would keep them from following your line of sight, because generally your eyes follow what you are thinking.

Q: I have had trouble getting away from relatively strong hands. How can I know when I am beat and should get off the hand?

- John V., Evanston, Ill.

A: Getting away from strong hands is one of the toughest things in poker. The only thing you can do is try to assess what the action was that led up to this point. Is your opponent capable of betting a hand that is weaker than the hand you have? If you don't think he is, then another thing to consider is the pot odds you are getting. If you are getting 4-1 or 5-1 pot odds and you think there is a reasonable chance you have the best hand, then you are supposed to call. If you don't think you have the best hand, then you throw your hand away.

Q: How much of the game is math-based?

- Can't Count, Fargo, N.D.

- It is tough to assign what percentage is the math, but in no-limit hold 'em, I would say it would count for somewhere in the 40 to 60 percent range, and the rest is reading your opponents and reading the situations.

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