

Poker Pro's Corner: It's not easy being the new guy

by Huck Seed

Q: How long should I be watching the table coming in as a new player to get a feel for the game?

- John, Wisconsin

HUCK SEED - Huck Seed is a respected tournament player and the 1995 World Series Main Event champion. He has won almost \$3 million in tournament cashes and owns four WSOP bracelets. CNS Photo. A: I'm going to play conservative for a little bit. It could take up to an hour to feel like you know the table well, depending on how the hands are going. In no-limit, a lot of times hands aren't shown. There may be a guy who you don't get to see his hand all day and really not know what he's doing. Sometimes it can take days or more to get to know how a guy plays. It is tough when you get to a new table and you don't know the people or what's going on. Hopefully, there will be people you have some kind of history with and have played with before so you can build off of that. I would definitely wait a round or two before I got too involved.

Q: What do I do if I pick up a hand against the chip leader - should I be avoiding him?

- Mike L., Tampa

A: I don't see any reason to avoid a chip leader early in the tournament. If you have a big stack and another guy is the chip leader, toward the later stages you can stay out of the way, especially if he is showing he is willing to gamble. If you have chips, you don't need to gamble against the big stack.

Then, the reverse could be true - if you are a big stack and another guy is a big stack and you can tell that he doesn't want to play with you, then you should try to run over him. You just have to play poker and see what they want to do.

Also, other big stacks will play more reckless against you because they think you won't call against a big stack and they will continuously call with nothing and you can bust them. There is a lot of skill involved with two big stacks against the other and it is mostly reading the other person's strategy. If they switch it up against you, you have to be tricky. That is where a lot of skill comes from in these tournaments - if you are big stack and you can get someone else's big stack, now you have a monster. The general basic strategy is to stay out of their way, but then it becomes more complicated than that, because if two people are supposed to stay out of the way, then one person should steal from the other.

Q: When should I be showing my cards?

- Mark the Shark, Texas

A: Poker is all about reading people and seeing how they react to different things. You can see how different people react to showing different things, so you can show them cards and see how they react to that.

A respected tournament player and 1995 World Series Main Event champion, Huck Seed answers readers' questions this month. When the 6-foot-7 Vegas resident isn't making his crazy prop bets, you can find him playing tournament poker both live and online at Full Tilt. Huck was an engineering student at Caltech when he took a leave of absence to pursue poker. That was 18 years ago. Today, he has raked in almost \$3 million in tournament cashes and owns four bracelets.

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