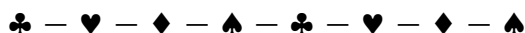


Introduction



It is now around 50 years since *How Good is Your Chess?*, a popular form of chess instructional material, was pioneered by Leonard Barden. In *How Good is Your Chess?* the reader was invited to take an imaginary seat next to a grandmaster in a recent game and deduce each of his next moves, scoring points (or losing them!) according to the accuracy of their answers. At the conclusion of the game the reader was then instructed to tot up their score, and see how well they had fared, using a scorechart provided by the author.

I first had the kernel of the idea of writing a poker book along these same lines some years ago. Fellow chessplayers and the editors of this series, Byron Jacobs and Andrew Kinsman, came up with the idea independently. *How Good is Your Pot-Limit Omaha?* was the first fruit of our discussions, and this book is a companion volume.

The book comprises 58 hands, each of which contains numerous questions for you to answer. In order to get the most out of this book, it is recommended that you work your way through all of the questions for each hand before checking any of the answers. You should not assume that the player of the hand, often myself, made the optimal choice. In this way you will come to each decision 'cold' and will avoid receiving any hint which will help you to answer the remaining questions in the hand. Thus, as far as possible, the play will follow that of a 'live' hand. The analysis of each hand appears at its conclusion.

Hold'em is a much purer form of poker than Omaha. Unlike Omaha, where two players may have hands of virtually equal merit, one with a good made hand and the other with a big draw, in hold'em one player almost invariably has the better hand. In Omaha, there are many purely technical matters to consider, whereas hold'em often boils down to taking a view – which is quintessentially what poker is all about.

How Good is Your Pot-Limit Hold'Em?

Hold'em is mainly played in two ways for money, limit and pot-limit. No-limit cash games are seen relatively rarely these days. It is too easy to smother the drawing hand by over-betting the pot. However, many tournaments are played no-limit. The strategy of playing a no-limit tournament is of a quite different nature to a pot-limit cash game. Casinos tend to prefer no-limit tournaments because it is easier to ensure they reach an early conclusion. They also prefer pot-limit to no-limit cash games because players do not go broke so rapidly. The casinos make their money from table charges and rakes in cash games, so it is not in their interests for players to take an early bath.

The cards and the players may be the same, but the play can be quite different; depending on whether the game is tournament or cash. I know of some players who only play in cash games, and others who play exclusively in tournaments. This seems to me to be a mistake, since both forms are perfectly valid.

Then there are satellite tournaments, in which perhaps ten players all put up the same sum and, when the dust has settled, there is just one player standing. That player then wins a place in the main tournament. Such events often take a couple of hours from start to finish. The main tournament is different as usually more than one place is paid. Another form, another strategy.

To play all the different types of game requires considerable flexibility. That is why we meet so few players who are uniformly successful. This book concentrates on pot-limit hold'em.

My book on pot-limit Omaha was principally set around hands I either played or saw take place in 2002-2003. Except where I have dabbled on the Internet and now one tournament, I have not played any hold'em for some years. You will find that some hands in this book date back a very long way indeed.

As I pointed out in the companion book, the mere act of discussing a particular hand changes the goalposts. You are alerted to the fact that there is something of interest. Life is somewhat different in the hurly-burly of a card-room with money being splashed in the pot and everybody out to get you. Perhaps pure analysis is more suited to games played on the Internet. That is no bad thing; online poker is growing even as I write these words.

In this book standard poker notation is used, most of it which is completely self-evident. It is just necessary for me to point out that A-X denotes an ace with any sidecard and ?-? and K-? indicate that you have no knowledge of both or just one of your cards respectively. An 's' is used to denote two cards of the same suit.

Read and enjoy. Remember that even if you do not want to test yourself, there will be much to learn from our hands. Some of the things that I have learnt in writing this book have been a revelation to me.

Introduction

Some of the hands are partly analysed with fairly complex arithmetic. I know this is a big turn-off for some. Thus there is a government health warning at the start of such sections, in the form of a skull and crossbones.



WARNING: Complex maths follows

David Moskovic tested himself on a number of these questions and his scores are shown in the scorecharts. At the time he had been playing poker for about 18 months. He has also helped in correcting many errors; those that remain are all my responsibility. Danny Copeland is even less experienced, and his scores are also shown.

Stewart Reuben,
London,
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