
Foreword by Rob Hollink

When Rolf Slotboom asked me to write the foreword to his book I was very flattered. Wondering why I felt like this, I came to the conclusion that this feeling of delight was *not* only caused by these human primitive instincts that automatically tell us to feel happy every time someone asks us for something that is important to them. No, it was very clear to me that I was happy that I had the chance to tell the rest of the world what kind of a player Rolf is. I have discussed his pot-limit Omaha game with numerous other players for years. The reason he was the centre of our discussion so often, was because his irritating game was extremely hard to beat. Irritating. Yes, extremely irritating, that's the way I always felt about his game. I am pretty sure that no one in the whole world was more sick about his game than I. But I knew full well that this feeling was caused by my own inability to react to his strategy in a proper way. Actually, frustration with my own limitations was what made me feel sick.

From 2001 to 2005, we played regularly in the same game in Amsterdam. Our PLO game would usually start around nine o'clock. Sometimes Rolf had already put me on tilt before it had even started. I always wanted to play, no matter who was playing or how many people were playing. I was always ready to start the game, because that was what I had gone there for: to play poker. But sometimes we would not quite have enough players to get the game started smoothly. Let's say there were four players who were all ready to start up the game, but who would only play if the game was five-handed. And then Rolf was still playing the limit hold'em game. Sometimes, I was even stupid enough to go over to him and ask if he would be willing to join us. Of course, this was always useless, because if he had been interested, he would have been at our table already. His answer was then always something like, that his short-handed game was not so good, that the potential contributors were not there, that he would probably join later, etc. So

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despite being the biggest winner in the whole pokerroom, he was not prepared to open his own business. Do you understand? Can you imagine how I felt about this? But the truth is, I knew he was right. This was not the composition of players he was looking for.

Then, once the table had become juicy enough for him, Rolf would come over to our game and take the seat to the immediate right of the most aggressive player, someone who was willing to gamble a lot with the worst hand. He most times bought in for the minimum, played very tight and almost never made the first raise. Hoping that the loose players would raise it up rather too aggressively before the flop so that a reraise from him would be big enough, he would have more or less all his money in the pot with the best hand – basically before the pot had even started. Sounds like a simple strategy? Well, this is a point where many discussions about his game began. Many of his opponents were oblivious to the strength of this style. Besides that you get it all-in with the best hand, you can also get a lot protection post-flop, because the big stacks can still push each other out of the pot. And Rolf always saw the river... Another advantage is of course the dead money. There were always players who paid the first raise, but were not prepared to go all the way – and this benefited Rolf.

For many opponents, he was just a lucky guy. Often he would win the pot with a backdoor flush or straight, or even just top and bottom (normally Rolf had the aces) pair. Let me give you an example how many pots of these went. Before the flop there is some raising and Rolf takes the opportunity to reraise to 270. Three players call and the four of them see the flop. The pot is 1080. Player A, in the small blind has 2460 left, holding 9♠-8♣-6♠-5♦. Player B, in the big blind has 2340 left, holding K♠-K♥-Q♥-10♣. Rolf has left 150, and his hand is A♠-A♥-7♥-6♣. Player C has 2500 left, holding 6♦-5♠-4♦-3♠.

Then the flop comes 9♦-8♦-2♣. Player A likes the flop but knows that Rolf is going to bet his last 150 for sure, so he decides to go for a check-raise. Player B is not so happy with the flop and checks. Rolf of course bets his remaining 150. Player C decides to call the 150. Now player A, with top two pair + gutshot, raises the pot to 1680 to make player C pay for his draw. Player C does not know if his weak flush draw and his bottom-end gutshot are good if they hit, so he folds, and it is just between Rolf and the strong player A now. The turn and river cards are the J♦ and the 2♥. Rolf beats player A, having just made two pair aces and deuces.

See here the strength of the post-flop protection. What actually happened is that four players saw the flop, and Rolf ended up in third place at the river. But because number 1 and 2 had already folded on the flop, Rolf walked away with a net gain of 1110. This was just an simple example how some pots went, with many people completely unaware of what had really happened.

Of course, the fact that players don't see what is really happening, is what makes poker so great. We are all making the best moves and the finest plays we can. But

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not many of us are aware that the capacity of our brains is limited, and that someone else could simply be a bit smarter.

I hate it, but also *my* brain is limited. But it is good enough to recognise Rolf Slotboom as the best short-stack pot-limit Omaha player in the world. And therefore, I am sure that all players will elevate their games tremendously by incorporating Rolf's views and insights.

After this book, pot-limit Omaha will never be the same.

Rob Hollink is the 2005 European Poker Champion, having won the inaugural EPT Grand Final for a €635,000 first prize. He is one of the few players in Europe who excel in both cash games and tournaments, live as well as online, and he is one of the best pot-limit Omaha players in Europe.

For more poker info you can visit www.robhollinkpoker.com. Rob can also be found playing at www.robspokerroom.com under his own name.