

Chapter Twelve

Super-Short Post-Flop Play

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Introduction

This section discusses how to play the flop, turn and river in a super-short game.

If the hand is multiway, play it very similarly to a short-handed game, but don't be afraid to make a few more moves; the other hands will be weaker than normal and players won't be keen on competing against two opponents.

Heads-up, the hands are so much weaker that you can make frequent plays for the pot. Otherwise the play is fairly similar to a short-handed game. This section highlights differences between the games to avoid repeating material.

The following post-flop tips are geared towards 2- and 3-handed games that are heads-up on the flop.

Tips

Any pair is good

Any pair goes to a showdown unless you have a read on your opponents. Bet every street unless your opponent shows aggression. Even bottom pair, bottom kicker can be paid off by a number of hands (typically ace-high). Against aggression your choices are between calling down and reraising. You can certainly fold weak pairs when the action warrants, but don't make a habit of it or you will get run over.

Win the pot

There are many more bad hands than good ones and aggressive raises will allow you to win more than your fair share. If you are being reraised or otherwise outplayed, then accept that you are overmatched and leave the table.

Making a move for the pot is more powerful if you have outs to fall back on. Flush draws are huge and even inside straight draws on the flop will complete one time in six by the river. This adds enormous expectation to your bets. Calling your draws won't work nearly as well though; your pot odds aren't good and you can't win by your opponent folding.

Make continuation bets

If you are the pre-flop raiser, bet the flop. If your opponent likes to call the flop and fold the turn then make a continuation bet. Sometimes you'll be

raised and need to fold your bluff. Those are the breaks and the extra pots you win will more than make up for this. Occasionally you'll have a hand and can call his raise or otherwise play back at him immediately or wait until a later street.

Slowplay more with position

Heads-up (after the flop), you'll need to slowplay more with position. Often your opponent has nothing, but if you raise he will fold. You need to just call and let him bluff his chips off. Raising too soon saves him money on future hands too; he'll have a good read on you when you fail to raise the flop or turn.

Out of position you'll need to play the hand faster, because you don't want to check/call the flop, have him check the turn behind you and then fold when you bet the river.

Raise draws on the turn

Most players will read flop raises as a possible draw, while few will draw the same conclusions about turn raises. Don't think of draws as pot odds, think of them as a sign to make a move for the pot. Raising and reraising the turn on a semi-bluff is a powerful move that wins pots. Remember that these plays don't need to work often to be profitable, especially since you'll win extra money when your draw actually comes in.

Make Moves

Make the golden moves (described in the short-handed chapters) often in these games. Having a tricky image is critical super-short.

How often to bluff

The short answer is: Whenever you think it will work and more than in a 6-handed game.

The following are all indications that bluffing is correct:

- ♠ You have a few outs. This is the most important consideration on the flop and turn.
- ♠ Your opponent has a tight style. Bluff less and value bet more against opponents that happily call down with king-high.

- ♠ Your image is not wild. Frequent bluffers will cause good players to re-steal against you, potentially costing you a lot of chips.
- ♠ Few draws. The fewer the draws, the fewer the hands that are likely to play against you. Someone holding K-9 against a board of Q-8-3 is not likely to call down.
- ♠ You have been folding a lot. Observant opponents will give you credit for a hand. Be warned that they will only fold borderline cards; any decent pair will still call down.
- ♠ You are playing a heads-up game. These games require many more bluffs.
- ♠ Your opponent has not shown strength. If your opponent likes to call the flop and fold the turn you'll need to bluff two streets against him. Against someone who folds the flop when he misses bluff the turn much more rarely.

Theory of Maximum Bluffs

You must be willing to bluff and semi-bluff one more level than your opponent is capable of. If he is willing to bluff raise the flop, then you must sometimes bluff reraise. If he rarely bluff raises the turn, then never bluff reraise the turn. To use this theory effectively you'll need to watch and note what sorts of bluffs each opponent makes.



WARNING: Bluffing frequency requires a good balance and depends upon your opponents. Ease off if you are being called down too much by weak hands and concentrate more on getting full value when you do have a pair.

The following sections give brief treatments of each street. The way to generally play each street is discussed in the short-handed chapters.

The Flop

Out of position against a raiser

Many hands will consist of someone raising and you calling from the big blind.

Out of position, checkraise on the flop with any pair, draw, overcards or a feeling your opponent doesn't have anything. You need to contest and win those pots, especially against players who don't like to continue without a pair or ace-high. Get your money in and force him to make a tough decision. Remember that the majority of the time you should have something or else you will be too easy to exploit. Your checkraise percentage should be between 20-30% depending on how often you reraise pre-flop (checkraise the flop a bit less if you reraise a lot pre-flop).

Against a raiser

Don't be afraid to give up when you have no hand and few outs. Calling even one small bet on the flop is a mistake if you intend to fold the turn and your opponent is likely to make a continuation bet.

Example

3-handed \$10/\$20. You have A♣-7♥ on the button. You raise and only the tight small blind calls. The flop comes Q♣-J♠-5♦ and you get checkraised. What do you do?

Answer: Fold. Your opponent could be on a draw, but you likely only have three outs, not enough for a call. If you have a good read then calling down with ace-high is fine here. Sometimes call and raise the turn for a free showdown too since you might get a low pair to fold.

To provide balance you will sometimes need to call with very little heads-up as well as with good hands or you will become too exploitable. They must not be too sure where they stand when you just call the flop.

Good opponents will raise on a variety of hands on the flop, so a raise or checkraise does not offer much information. If a passive opponent raises, assume they have a good hand or draw.

Capping with draws

Many players cap the betting on a draw but will not do so with made hands; they'll either call down or raise the turn. You can exploit players who do this by reading their 4-bets on the flop as a draw. If you are on a draw as well you can consider bluffing or bluff raising the river to steal the pot when you both miss.

You have the initiative

Bet.

The Turn

Good players will be raising on a very wide range of hands (as should you), but not in equal proportions. If your opponent can raise light you'll have to call down with any pair or ace-high. These call-downs are very borderline and so you must rely on your reads. Don't get discouraged if you guess wrong; hand reading is very difficult and pros are wrong all the time. These types of plays are one reason why super-short play has so much variance.

Don't be afraid to reraise on top pair or better. Aggressive players can put in a lot of money on medium cards and you'll need to make them pay the maximum. With five outs they'll often have pot odds to call the reraise on the turn but your profit will come when they call the river too.

Trapping with position

If your opponent is very aggressive then you can check the turn with medium-weak cards to pick off a bluff on the river. Suppose the pot is three big bets and your opponent has three outs against you (one overcard). If he will fold the turn and bet the river if you check then you stand to gain. 6% of the time he'll beat you (winning four big bets) but 94% of the time you'll win an extra bet, a huge net win. Another advantage of this play is that you will teach him not to always bluff the river when the turn is checked around.

You can make this play out of position as well if he likes to bet whenever you check to him.

The River

The river isn't much different to short-handed games except that players will be more aggressive. This means more river bluffs and bluff raises. You'll need to call down and bluff raise more often than in short-handed games. As usual, keep these raises under control. If your raises aren't working, do them less.

If you check the turn in position with a hand that can win a showdown, you must call the river regardless of what card comes. Similarly, if your opponent checks the turn in position, go ahead and bet the river with any hand that cannot win a showdown. Even if he traps you once in a while (as was discussed earlier), you will win enough of these to show a profit.