

Chapter One

Understanding your Goals and Reading this Book

Why do you Play Poker?

Here are some possible reasons:

- ♠ Fun
- ♠ Diversion
- ♠ 'Action' or addiction
- ♠ Social interaction
- ♠ Challenge
- ♠ Profit

All motivations to play – except for addiction – are legitimate. Be thankful that most players are playing for the first few reasons on our list; otherwise, there would be no money flowing in. Many players claim that profit is their motive. But if they don't track their 'winnings' or work to improve their game, these words ring hollow. Everyone wants to win, in some abstract sense, yet only a minority are willing to put in the work required. By opening this book, you have placed yourself in this minority. Whatever your reasons, understand why you play and align your actions with your goals.

Players fall into two categories: recreational and professional players. The

fundamental difference between the two categories is mindset. Professional and semi-professional players are working, recreational players are playing. You can still make money as a recreational player; you'll simply need to work hard and select the right games.

Recreational Players

The vast majority of players are recreational players who want to have fun and gamble. This is great; poker makes a fine hobby and everyone starts off this way.

Recreational players should focus on:

- ♠ Having fun
- ♠ Playing the smallest game that is still exciting
- ♠ Improving their play
- ♠ Reading a good poker book every few months
- ♠ Conducting themselves with honor and integrity
- ♠ Not spending too much time or money playing
- ♠ Obtaining bonuses and rewards
- ♠ Having a balanced life
- ♠ Not tilting

This book has everything you'll need. Take the lessons seriously and you'll become a winning player. Recreational players should first focus on the short-handed and rakeback & bonuses chapters.

Professional Players

Professional and semi-professional players truly play for profit and are by definition winning players. Anyone supplementing their income with poker is considered a 'semi-pro'. At most 1% of poker players fit into this category. Lots of people play golf well without fancying themselves as professionals. The path to becoming a pro isn't for everyone.

Professional play is all about maximizing your winnings and minimizing your risk. Focus on:

- ♠ Only playing when you think you have an edge
- ♠ Tracking your results, either by hand or by using a poker-tracking program
- ♠ Reading a good poker book every month
- ♠ Getting the best rakeback and bonus deals possible
- ♠ Spending 10% of your playing time working on your game
- ♠ Practicing good table and seat selection; keeping good notes on players
- ♠ Conducting yourself with honor and integrity
- ♠ Understanding variance and mentally preparing for the inevitable downswings
- ♠ Having fun
- ♠ Not tilting

Aspiring pros should thoroughly read and understand everything in this book. Being a good poker player is about more than just playing the game well. Soft skills are equally important. You've probably heard stories of top pros that are prone to tilt or blow their money at the craps table. Some players don't understand variance, cannot accept that other players are better (at least that session) or play at the wrong sites and limits. One pro we knew had been playing for two years and had never even heard of rakeback!