

Throughout this guide, I have stressed the importance of approaching recreational Poker as a not-too-serious game. A game meant for fun and camaraderie, to be played fairly, with betting stakes everyone can afford. The various groups I play Poker with play fairly tame betting stakes, with most betting rounds capped at **\$2.00** or less. But playing for low stakes doesn't change the fact that everyone likes to play well, and everyone likes to win. So now it's time to address the topic of Winning Ways for recreational Poker.

***“When someone declares there isn't that much to learning and playing Poker, get him into your Poker party – right away!”***

If you leave the Poker party with more money than you arrived with, then you are a winner. By that definition, more than one player can be a winner. In fact, it's possible for one player to lose money and for all others to win, sharing the one unfortunate player's losses. But have you ever noticed that there is often one player who takes the lion's share of the winnings? Why does that happen? Why is there often a big winner?

Winning at Poker requires the employment of various strategies and tactics. Some are designed to help you win particular games and others are used to influence the overall play at the Poker table. I can't promise you that the information in this chapter will teach you how to become the big winner *every* time you play, but I'm confident it will help you achieve that status more often. At the very least it will help you on your way to winning more often than losing. If you're a consistently poor player, moving into the winner's circle may not happen at your very next Poker party but you should immediately find yourself losing less and less often if you can learn and begin to apply some of the information in this chapter.

When I play Poker it's usually with friends. And when I do, I'm using disposable income so I'm not playing with a hard-nosed “take no prisoners” attitude. Nevertheless, I rarely lose money at playing Poker and I often win big relative to the betting stakes. One of the reasons I win often is that I never participate in Poker games where the betting stakes are too high for me. If more money were at stake I might give in to emotion,



make poor decisions and end up losing. When you play Poker with affordable betting stakes – whatever “affordable” is for you and your group – it promotes a mentality of relative indifference toward the money being bet, which in turn allows you to play with more objectivity.

**☛ If you're not too worried about how much you may lose, you are more likely to win.**

A good Poker game (by this I mean the entire event), in its purest form, creates an environment in which the players give one another a social license to manipulate and deceive one another. It's sort of like declaring a “time out” from good behavior. (No wonder guys like it so much!) Such normally unacceptable behavior is anticipated and expected of you by your opponents. They know good players will camouflage intentions and attempt bluffs. But if that were all it took to be the big winner, everyone would know how to win. So where does the winning edge come from? Why is it that certain players can routinely win while others routinely lose?

There is no single secret - no magic formula - to winning at recreational Poker. Being a successful player comes from a combination of things. You need to adopt a certain mentality about the game, possess and use information to your advantage (odds, game dynamics, and most important, intelligence about your opponents and the hands they are playing), and focus and concentrate on behaviors and details. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to expounding on the following winning factors:

- \_ An appreciation for the dynamics between luck and skill; how much influence each has on the outcomes,
- \_ Watching and reading the cards; including some basic knowledge of the card odds and statistics (covered in the previous chapter),
- \_ Understanding and influencing your opponents, and
- \_ Having and executing a winning game plan.

Good players – players who win – know and apply all of these factors, in the right mix and timing, in the appropriate situations, given the opportunities presented. Certainly, playing more Poker is always good because experience can help you improve at all of the above. But the key is to

