

Ace Meets... Lothar Landauer

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In the interview series „Pocket Aces“ Poker Digest* columnist Rolf „Ace“ Slotboom meets famous poker people, some of the best tournament and money players in the world or people who have, in one way or another, been of influence in the way this exciting game is played nowadays. In these interviews, Rolf will try to gain some insight in the way the best players, authors and casino managers feel towards the game, how they do what they do, what they hope to accomplish or have already accomplished, and what's their view on how to make the beautiful game of poker bigger and better than it already is.

In this series, Rolf will confront his guests with a list of 23 questions. These questions deal with issues that, in Rolf's opinion, are very important in today's poker. Today's guest is Lothar Landauer, one of the most successful European tournament players and a very important figure behind the growth of poker that Europe is experiencing right now.

*This interview took place before Poker Digest magazine was bought by Card Player.

1. Who are you? What are considered to be your major accomplishments in poker and what do you think your major accomplishments are?

- 1993: Runner-up at the Master Classics No-Limit Hold'em Championship event in Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 1994: European Champion Seven Card Stud at in Baden, Austria
- 1996 & 1997: Runner-up at the European Stud Championships in Baden (split with winner), there were 400 participants each event, this „Poker EM“ as it is called has now become the biggest Stud

tournament in the world

- 1998: 6th in \$ 2500 Stud event at WSOP in Vegas, and 11th in the \$ 5000 Stud

2. Date of birth, place of birth. Marital status, current and former jobs etc.

I was born February 15, 1961 in Germany, and am not married. I'm partner at „Poker Europe Holdings“, owner of a casino consulting company, casino manager and part-time tournament poker player. I have studied Economics and had a real estate office for about five years, after that I played professional poker for about eight years.

3. Where do you play poker? What games / limits? Do you prefer tournaments or cash games and why?

I have no fixed place where I play, I travel a lot and play during tournaments. When playing cash, I play mostly pot-limit Omaha or limit stud with buy-ins between \$ 400 and \$ 1000. I prefer tournaments, because I love to play competitions and because I like the atmosphere. Also, I think that good tournament players have a big edge if the tournament structure (i.e. the limits increase) is OK.

4. Have you read any poker books, do you use any computer software to improve your game? If so, which books and software do you consider to be best and / or has influenced your poker game the most?

I've read a lot of books and also tried Wilson's software. In my opinion, some of the best poker books are Sklansky / Malmuth / Zee's „For Advanced Players“ series, the Stud, Hold'em and the hi-lo book as well, and also Bob Ciaffone's „Omaha Hold'em Poker“. I guess the „7 Card Stud for Advanced Players“ has influenced my game the most.

5. I've written a lot about the right attitude at the poker

table, about the „proper way to behave“. What do you think this „right attitude“ should be and how do you judge your own behavior at the table in this respect?

The right attitude is to never say a bad word to the dealers, since they only do their job and have no influence on your good or bad luck. You should always be a gentleman at the table, and never complain if somebody is winning against you with cards he never should have played, because this is exactly your long-run advantage. A player, it doesn't matter how successful he may be, will never get any respect from me if he doesn't know how to behave at the table. I think I behave in a correct way at the poker table, in line with what I stated above.

6. What do you think your main strengths in poker are? How do you think most other players view you? Are you well liked by your fellow players and if so, do you think this is because they like you as a person or because they might think you're not much of a player?

My main strengths in poker are my discipline and the ability to learn from other players. I am good at adjusting my game to the conditions and players at the table, I don't go on tilt and limit my losses. In short: I know my limits.

I think most other players see me as someone who knows what he's doing. I think I'm well liked, because of my behavior at the table and because I'm always willing to help, when somebody needs advice or any other information about poker.

7. Do you still keep accurate records? Have you always done this? Did you always have the strength to write everything down accurately, even when things weren't going well for you (i.e. during a bad run)?

I keep records, as I have always done. No bad run can have any influence on this.

8. What do you think are the most important characteristics of the professional tournament player?

To be aggressive whenever necessary, to use the right strategy at every stage of the tournament, and to analyze the playing styles of your opponents very quickly.

9. What do you think are the most important characteristics of the professional money player?

Patience, discipline, the ability to find a good game and to withstand a long run of bad luck.

10. Would you rather be a top tournament or a top money player and why?

A top tournament player, for reasons see answer to question 3.

11. Who do you consider to be the best:

- Limit hold'em money player *No experience*
- Pot-limit Omaha money player *Surinder Sunar*
- All games money player *Ray Zee*
- Limit hold'em tournament player *No experience*
- Pot-limit Omaha tournament player *Surinder Sunar*
- No-limit hold'em tournament player *Phil Hellmuth*
- All games tournament player *T.J. Cloutier*

12. It's a fact that a lot of tournament stars don't perform very well in cash games. Do you know any top tournament players you would welcome in a live game and why?

No comment.

13. It's also a fact that a lot of excellent cash game players don't do well in tournaments. Which top money players would you welcome in the big tournaments „as there will be more dead money now“?

No comment.

14. As you might know, I'm a money player myself, I hardly ever play tournaments. This is partly an ego-thing,

because I like to win all the time and in tournament poker that's just not possible. On top of that, it's hard to determine who is the „best“ tournament player, simple because there are no objective rankings (the ones that exist favor the people who enter the most tournaments, and the # 1 on these rankings is therefore not necessarily the best player). I am working hard to develop some sort of worldwide tournament competition, where -just like in other sports- you will have to qualify to enter and, if you don't perform well, you bust out. You will receive points (not money) after each event, and at the end of the year you will receive prize money based on your rankings. A competition like this should be interesting for sponsors and the television networks, and the players shouldn't have to come up with their own money anymore. What are your thoughts on the current situation and how do you view this new poker competition?

Rolf, I think the situation we have at the moment is not okay. Every sport needs sponsors and we don't have any real one. The final table should be televised at every championship event (just like in the PokerMillion) to make poker more popular.

15. A while ago, I wrote a rather controversial article about tipping. The article dealt with the situation in Vienna, where the dealers' wages are relatively low, but instead they rely on tips from customers. In fact, because people tip so much over there, the dealers even pay the house for every half hour they're in the box. In the article I stated this meant that people are probably tipping too well, and that I therefore could not and would not tip as much as the average player in the house. After all, I already pay table money via rake and / or time collection so the house can provide for (among others) dealers; if we are also expected to tip them extremely well we would be paying twice for the same

thing, I argued. What are your thoughts on the subject and how do you put these thoughts into practice; i.e. how much do you tip in the tournaments and in the live games?

In my opinion, the dealers should be paid by the house. If somebody wants to tip, he is free to do whatever he wants, but he should not feel obliged to do so. I usually tip 2% of the prize money in tournaments, and in cash games whatever's usual.

16. What are your favorite poker places in the world and why?

Baden, Austria (see my listed successes).

17. In Europe, the main structure of poker is pot-limit. Poker purists claim that limit poker is no poker, however in the U.S. a lot of professionals don't want to play pot-limit and the casinos are reluctant to offer it, fearing it might break the weaker players too soon. In my opinion, pot-limit and limit poker can very well co-exist. In pot-limit poker (unlike in limit) there are often big winners, and this attracts a lot of new customers (especially the gambler-type of players) who are not interested in a „boring“ limit game. I think it is good for poker business if players see it's possible to win big on any given day. What are your views on the subject?

I agree with you, Rolf. In my opinion, pot-limit and limit poker can very well co-exist.

18. In the U.S., if people talk about pot-limit, they always mention pot-limit hold'em. In my opinion, pot-limit hold'em is not a good game because the weaker players have virtually no chance of winning and therefore the game will almost certainly die out. In pot-limit Omaha however, even weak players are often able to book mammoth wins (even though it is in fact a highly skillful game), and therefore the games will tend to

thrive. This having said, in the U.S. a lot of people seem to think PLO is „all just luck“, because they keep thinking in limit hold'em terms like „having the best hand stand up“. What are your thoughts on this?

Pot-limit Omaha is not at all a game of luck, quite the contrary in fact. The best players will always have the money in the end, the only thing they need is a bankroll big enough to cope with the swings.

19. Just like fellow Card Player columnist Mr. Bob Ciaffone, I am known to be a little bit of a rules freak. My main concerns here are the ways most casinos handle the „one player to a hand“ and „English only“ rules, often doing nothing to enforce them strictly. On the other hand, interpreting and enforcing some of the rules too strictly often harms the new, inexperienced players and benefits angle-shooters. What are your thoughts on the subject?

No comment.

20. Do you regularly visit or even contribute to discussion forums and newsgroups like TwoPlusTwo, RGP, Poker Pages and / or European-poker.com? If so, which do you think is best and why? Also, on RGP you can post anything you like, but on TwoPlusTwo a lot of posts are deleted because they are deemed offending, inappropriate etc. In my opinion, there is a lot less unfriendliness and personal attacking on TwoPlusTwo than on RGP, maybe because of this. On the other hand, quite a few people claim that most posters who are barred from TwoPlusTwo are barred simply because they disagree with the ones who are running the forum (Mason Malmuth, David Sklansky and Ray Zee). Do you have any opinions on this?

I never visit forums, so I have no opinion on this.

21. On these forums, a lot has been written about cheating in poker. For instance, Men „The Master“ Nguyen has been accused of signaling other players during hands

(especially his „horses“), stealing chips from tournaments to use them in later events etc. Also, there are rumors that a few players in the big money games in the Bellagio have percentages in each other which might influence the game's honesty, and basically goes against the entire meaning of the game: playing one against one (in tournaments, this percentage thing is even more common). Do you share my concern here and how do you think these problems can or should be faced?

It's the player's decision to take part in a cash game or tournament. If he or she is afraid of things like this, it might be better not to play. I think it will be impossible to try to stop things like this from happening, especially when there's big money involved.

22. The two major poker publications, Poker Digest and Card Player, both have the policy to report on poker from a positive point of view. Any scandals that may occur, any injustices, quarrels or cheating allegations are avoided as much as possible. That is: the magazines will not actively search or investigate these kinds of questions, and they will report about them only when there is a compelling need to do so. With this policy, they will try to promote the game of poker more effectively, the readers will feel more comfortable going to the poker room and the overall casino business might benefit in the long run. Do you agree with this policy, or do you think the magazines should be more alert regarding the wrongs that are also part of the game?

In my opinion, the magazines should be a little bit more alert regarding the wrongs that are also part of the game.

23. A lot of people claim the future of poker is golden. The big tournaments are always full, there seem to be more new players than ever, Internet poker is booming and it will be just a matter of time before television networks

and sponsors discover the game. At the same time, the juice in tournaments and the rake in live games keeps getting higher, a lot of poker rooms are being closed down and even the prestigious and innovative TOC is history. What do you think: is the future of poker golden- or maybe not?

If a big name from the non-poker-related industry, like for example Microsoft, is getting interested in tournament poker, then the future will be golden. In any other case, I think the future will be okay but nothing special.