

Chris Ferguson: Goin' Pro

Tips for the readers of [key:IC]

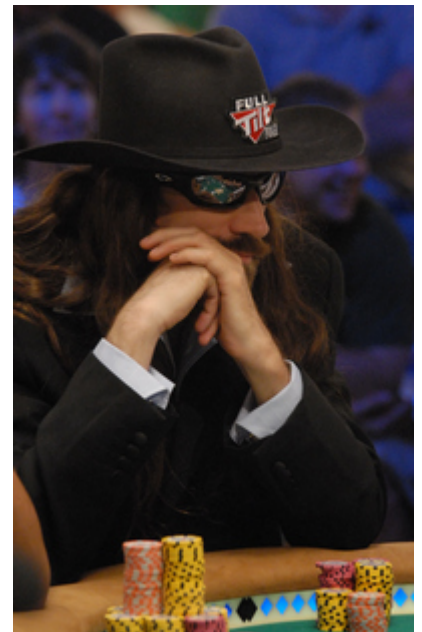
„Should I quit my job and play professionally?“

„Should I drop out of school and just play poker full time?“

I get these questions all the time and I always give the same answer: „Unequivocally, absolutely not. No way.“ Clear enough?

If you want to explore being a professional poker player, you have to start out doing it part time. Spend your off hours thinking about poker and studying the game. Read and play and learn.

Before you even think about quitting your job to play full time, you should be making more money at poker than you are in your current employment. Don't think that one big tournament win provides all the evidence you need that you're ready to play professionally. You should be showing consistent profit over a period of at least six- months. Only at that point should you even entertain the idea of becoming a full-time pro.



Even then, you should be wary about taking such a step. Poker is a great pastime, and playing it casually is a lot of fun when you love the game. But when you become a pro, you have to play poker five or six days a week. In time, playing cards will start to feel a lot like a job. I happen to love every occasion I get to play, but for many people, it can become a grind.

On the tournament circuit, you can play well and still go

months – or even years – without a big cash. In ring games, the hours can be brutal. When you're a cash-game pro, you want to be playing when the other players are off their game. This means you should start late, when people are getting tired and gambling a little more than they should. So you might play from 11PM through the morning, and sleep most of the afternoon. Keeping these kinds of hours can be difficult for those who want to maintain a more traditional social life.

Another risk is that you may not play enough. It can take a lot of self-discipline to put in enough hours at the table. With no boss on your tail, you might find it tough to put in the hours that you need at the times that are most profitable.

Before you make drastic changes to your life – before you even ask the questions posed at the start of this article – you should know that poker will work for you. You should have long, profitable periods that serve as evidence of your abilities. You should have put in enough hours to know that you can really enjoy the game, even when it becomes the center of your professional life. You should know that you can endure some long, tough, unlucky stretches.

If you're really sure you've got what it takes and poker does become your career, I look forward to meeting you at the table.