

Erik Seidel: Looking at the Long-Term

Tips for the readers of [key:IC]

Tournament poker can be a very tough business. No matter how good you are, you're bound to encounter long periods where things don't go well. On the tournament circuit, even the best players can go several months – or even a couple of years – between significant cashes. These dry spells can be tough to deal with if you don't develop a solid mental approach to the game.

I think the down times are particularly difficult for younger players who have some success early in their careers. They come to expect great results and can become overwhelmed when things go badly in a long string of tournaments. They may grow frustrated and are apt to assume they're making mistakes. They make changes in their games that aren't well thought out, and they suffer because of it.



To endure the long, tough stretches, serious players need to understand that bad runs are inevitable. They're part of this business. And while there's something to be said for going into every tournament with a positive attitude, it's also important to be realistic. If you expect to win every tournament you enter, the disappointment that accompanies repeated bust outs could be very damaging to your psyche. I know that early in my career, my confidence suffered when I went through a rough stretch.

Over time, however, I learned to focus my attention in productive ways. Now, when I'm playing in a tournament, I concentrate on making the best decisions I can. I try to approach every hand in a thorough and effective manner. If my focus is good at the table, I can be honest with myself as I assess what I'm doing well and where I need improvement. I'm not likely to fall into the traps that ensnare other players. Many refuse to admit mistakes and insist that a bad run is due to bad luck alone. Others believe they're playing well when their results are good, even though they're playing poorly and are benefiting from a great run of cards.

After a tournament is over, I'm quick to remember that tournament poker requires the temperament of a marathoner, not a sprinter. If I play well and consistently make good decisions, I'll be rewarded, though it may be a long time before I see the results I'm looking for.