

THE WORLD'S
BIGGEST CASINO
WHALES

THE
BIGGEST
LOSING PLAYERS
IN ONLINE
HISTORY

POKER KING CLUB
MACAU
MAKES A BIG MOVE
IN MANILA

LOOKING BACK AT APPT
NANJING
MILLIONS SHUT
DOWN

POKER IN ASIA 2015 ▶

TWELVE
STORIES

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December 2015 // **Biggest Online loser**

These losing players deserve our respect and admiration for their sheer perseverance, and above all else, we should remember that they have always been the pillars upon which the world of high stakes poker is balanced

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His divorce costed him more than his gambling habits

Adnan Khashoggi

Adnan Khashoggi is a gambler that every casino wants walking through their doors. Having spent years as a businessman reportedly involved in the sale of military hardware such as aircraft and weapons, he became a serious high stakes gambler for over 25 years. At one point his fortune was said to exceed \$40billion, but eventually, his cheques began to bounce, and casinos came looking for payment. The financial downfall of Khashoggi wasn't entirely down to the Roulette wheel, although that was his favoured game. He also had one of the most expensive divorces in history, costing him an estimated \$850 million. In one 9 week period in 1986, Khashoggi dropped over \$15,7 million on the Roulette wheel, and it if it wasn't for the fact that he spent so much time in and out of court rooms for various disputes and allegations, who knows how much time and money he would have spent playing Roulette.

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST CASINO WHALES



Akio Kashiwagi

Another man who loved Baccarat tables was Akio Kashiwagi. This billionaire real estate investor spent 10 years and \$38 million building his own house, and when he was away, he was often sat in the biggest casinos in America and Europe, playing for \$200,000 per hand, in sessions which sometimes lasted more than 3 days. The fact that Kashiwagi collected beautiful diamonds and valuable artefacts, but refused to ever wear any jewellery was slightly unusual, although the manner of his death in 1992 was more so. Despite being a security conscious man with enemies, he was found stabbed to death by a samurai sword, with no sign of anyone having broken into his home. This occurred shortly after he declared that he could not pay a \$10million debt he owed, but the manner of his death suggested he was killed by a close friend he let into his home, rather than a hit man or known enemy. Kashiwagi remains one of the biggest Baccarat whales there ever was, and died leaving gambling debts estimated at almost \$20 million.

Kerry Packer

Kerry Packer, owner of a media company and one of the richest people in Australia had long been known for apparently placing a bet on anything. There are many stories surrounding this gambler, which are likely a mix of fiction and truth, but one story which best describes the mythical gambling of Packer goes as follows: Packer was sat in a casino when a rich, Texan came up to the table, talking loudly. Not wishing to be disturbed, Packer asked the man if he could quieten down to which the Texan replied "Do you know who I am? I'm worth \$100 million!" To which Packer casually replied "Do you want to flip for it?" Another of the stories linked to Packer includes his winning of \$26 million in one Blackjack session and tipping the dealer enough to buy a house. Whatever the real truth, you could be sure that when Packer arrived in Vegas, the market value of a casino company could alter by a few cents based on whether he has a good day at the tables or a bad one, and whales just don't come any bigger than that. The casino world mourned his passing in 2005, aged 68.





Zhenli Ye Gon

If we're looking for whales who have lost serious money on the Vegas strip, Zhenli Ye Gon would have to be right up there, having reportedly lost over \$125 million between 2004 and 2007. Amid allegations of drug trafficking, police raided Ye Gon's Mexico home in 2007 and seized \$207 million in cash. There was a case brought against him on USA soil which involved the questionable sources of money he was gambling with at Sheldon Adelson's Las Vegas Sands Corp casinos and the fact that they allegedly didn't flag up his transactions for closer inspection. The case against Ye Gon collapsed, but he may still be extradited to Mexico to fight further allegations there.

Terrance Watanabe

One man who can top the losses Ye Gon, is businessman Terrance Watanabe who lost a staggering \$127 million in one year. Watanabe has since tried to sue the casinos in question, claiming that they kept placing free alcoholic drinks beside him in an attempt to keep him gambling. Further legal disputes erupted over Watanabe's refusal to pay \$14.7 million of his debt due to what he described as an agreement the casino made with him to give him back a percentage of his losses. Caesars casino were eventually fined \$225,000 when the case was settled, with Watanabe only having to pay back \$100,000 of the \$14.7 million outstanding. It is important to remember that while the casino gave him drinks, Watanabe was the rarest type of whale. He reportedly made awful decision at the Blackjack table every night and contributed greatly to his own financial downfall. He has sought rehabilitation for his gambling problems and has stayed clear of casinos for the past few years.

Chinese whales?

Despite some whales passing away or giving up gambling, it seems that the world remains filled with wealthy businessmen ready to walk into a casino and catch gambling fever. Many now come from the economic growth of the far east, namely China. It is no coincidence that recent years have seen the growth of casinos in Macau, which is fast becoming the eastern Las Vegas. It helps to know the right people if you want to play the biggest games there, and quiet discretion is required by those involved. People who mention names or numbers linked to Macau games will often not be invited back. To demonstrate the size of this gambling world shift, we should point out that the gambling industry in Macau is now estimated at seven times larger than that of Vegas. The average size of minimum bet in Macau is also now reaching close to \$300 at non-VIP table, meaning that this part of the world is catering especially to big money players.

Every whale that arrives in a casino for the first time arrives with a dream which often goes unfulfilled. To go on a winning streak that empties the casino vaults and walk out the door having won it all. The only man who has ever really come close to doing that is Archie Karas. He is the man who once spun \$50 up to a reported \$40 million during 3 years playing at a Las Vegas casino. But even Karas couldn't defy the house edge and win forever, and in



Police seized \$207 million in cash Ye Gon's home

PROSTITUTION SCANDALS IN MACAU

Japanese porn stars on demand

This week, Macau has been back in the headlines for an unexpected reason, having got creative in their attempts to keep luring rich businessmen over from China. Given the popularity of Japanese pornography, it was only a matter of time before someone had the great idea of bringing the porn stars to Macau, so that customers could get action at the tables, and in the hotel rooms.

A Japanese newspaper, The Shukan Taishu reported that many Japanese adult video stars are making regular trips to Macau to spend time with Chinese gamblers in the best hotel rooms. Much of this has to do with the huge popularity adult video actresses currently enjoy in China. According to the newspaper source. "Rich Chinese men come (to Macau) with the one intention of sleeping with these famous girls".

Prostitution schemes are not new in Macau. Ever since casinos first opened in Vegas, it has been well known that it was important keeping the men with the deepest pockets, happy. Only one thing matter for the industry at the end: how much time and money will a player end up spending at the tables?

Fifty million dollars prostitution ring busted

Alan Ho, nephew of Stanley Ho was recently arrested in Macau as part of a large operation to crack down on a prostitution enterprise being undertaken, primarily at the Hotel Lisboa. Having been involved at the very highest levels of casino management and development in Macau, Alan Ho is a very high profile individual. Formerly one of the managers of SJM Holdings, he has also been a president of the Macau Travel Association too. Reports stated= that almost 100 prostitutes were arrested, all operating out of dozens of hotel rooms, with a list of 2,400 prostitute names and contact details also found. Hotel staff were allegedly involved in arranging the proceedings, but there were several men in charge of the operation who paid protection money to the man at the top, apparently, Alan Ho. The operation had been running since 2013, with somewhere in the region of \$50 million US dollars having been made by those in charge.

Back in 2010, police arrested more than 100 women who were allegedly part of a prostitution ring, at the Las Vegas Sands owned Venetian Macao casino. The Las Vegas Sands company is owned by Sheldon Adelson, whose attempts to get online poker permanently outlawed in the USA, have recently been under the spotlight in poker news.

many Japanese adult video stars are making regular trips to Macau to spend time with Chinese gamblers in the best hotel rooms.

A Japanese newspaper, The Shukan Taishu



EIGHT PHIL IVEY STORIES

Phil Ivey is undoubtedly one of the most talented, and enigmatic poker players ever to have played the game. The fact that he only gives interviews on rare occasions has only fuelled the interest in who Phil Ivey truly is. The following stories should help to shed some light on the subject.

1- Phil Ivey managed to beat casinos for millions playing Punto Banco

Phil Ivey is not only famous for his incredible poker talent, but also has a thirst for more degenerate forms of gambling. He frequently bets huge amounts of money on house games, and also sports betting.

One of the more recent stories relating to his gambling "abilities" involved Mayfair club, Crockfords Casino, the oldest private gaming club in London. After playing Punto Banco over two nights, Ivey admitted that he was able to win by exploiting tiny asymmetrical pattern differences on the cards by asking the dealer to rotate somebody them 180 degrees. This, coupled with the design flaw, then allowed the strongest cards to be visible when they were the next card to be dealt. This allowed Ivey to create an advantage for himself by adjusting his bet sizes accordingly. Crockfords claimed that this was a trick that essentially added up to cheating, and refused to pay Ivey his winnings (\$12 million). Phil Ivey then sued the casino, on the grounds that they only had themselves to blame for using flawed cards, and rotating them as he asked. He went on to lose the case however. Few month later he was then sued for \$9.6 million by Borgata Casino in the U.S, who claimed that they had also been victims of Ivey's "edge sorting" technique.

game between the Saints and Colts. He apparently chose the wrong side however, and lost the bet.

5- Phil Ivey once had a U.S Senator's son caddying for him when he went golfing.

This small anecdote is reported by Nolan Dalla on his blog. After noticing during a round of golf that Ivey's clubs were being carried by none other than Senator John Ensign's son, Dalla remarked "Wow, Phil – now that's' success. Having a U.S Senator's son to caddy for you." To which Ivey replied "No, Nolan – that's not success. Having THE SENATOR caddy for you, that would be success."

6- Phil Ivey and the inglorious early days.

People sometimes forget that Phil Ivey's beginnings in the poker world weren't easy. He once worked as a telemarketer to make ends meet, when he couldn't entirely support himself through poker. According to Daniel Negreanu, he used to be a terrible player who would play 80 hours straight, with hardly any breaks. He used to endure a 2 hour bus journey twice each day, in order to reach Atlantic City, and would sleep outside when he missed the last bus.

7- The Cristal Balla

This story reported by Pokerlistings, took place at the Wynn in Las Vegas. On the adjacent table to Phil Ivey, a group of businessmen were enjoying a meal. Being fans of Ivey, they asked the waiter to send a bottle of Cristal to his table, worth around \$500. Just a few minutes later, Ivey called the waiter over and sent 5 bottles of Cristal to the businessmen's table as a thank you gesture. Impressed by his generosity, they decided to have some fun with the situation, and delivered 20 bottles of Cristal to Ivey's table. Just a few minutes later, and there were 200 bottles of Cristal stacked up high at the businessmen's table. \$100,000 worth of vintage champagne! As the waiter walked away, he simply said "This is from Mr Ivey sirs.....He won't stop."

8- How Phil Ivey feels about money?

Sometimes a picture is worth more than 10,000 words... His comment: "This picture has been around for a while. Truth is, I don't think I knew the money was there"



2- A man called Jerome Graham

Phil Ivey's name used to be Jerome Graham, as that was the name on the fake I.D card that he used. After his grandfather taught him how to play poker, Phil Ivey started to sneak into Atlantic City card rooms aged 17. He used his fake I.D card and the name on it, which led to the nickname "No Home Jerome."

3- Phil Ivey paid \$150,000 to eat a piece of chicken

Phil Ivey always enjoys making bets with fellow poker pros, with one such "prop bet" arising between him and Tom Dwan on High Stakes Poker. Dwan bet Ivey that he couldn't go an entire year without meat for \$1 million. Ivey quickly accepted, but grew to regret his decision, later negotiating to opt out of the bet very early, for \$150,000.

4- Phil Ivey once risked \$2 million on a single sports bet.

In February 2010, the Las Vegas Review Journal reported that Phil Ivey placed a \$2 million bet on a Superbowl

POKER KING CLUB MACAU MAKES A BIG MOVE IN MANILA

It appears that the poker skyline in Asia is about to undergo a change. Poker King Club (PKC), which has been famous for hosting some of the biggest games in Macau, will take over the poker operations at Solaire casino, Manila. While confirmation has been given to Somuchpoker of this upcoming event, the details should be fully revealed by Poker King Club by the end of the month.

This move from Poker King Club Macau to Manila is part of a larger process. China's crackdown on corruption has been severely hurting the whole gaming industry in Macau and junkets are looking for a "friendlier" venue for their Chinese customer. Notably, that PKC is currently owned by one of the most successful and prominent Asian junket operations, Suncity Group, to which Paul Phua and Richard Yong have close ties. The junket operator will open four more VIP rooms, according to Morgan Stanley in Manila casinos. In this context, it is not a surprise to see the Poker King Club expanding their activities in Manila

Is the "Big Game" about to move from Macau to Manila?

Recently the biggest game in Macau has apparently been a shadow of its former self. Wealthy Chinese high rollers have been finding it difficult to travel back and forth to Macau, and key participants Paul Phua and Richard Yong are facing troubles with Macau local authorities. With this in mind, it would make a lot of sense for the Big Game to relocate. Poker King Club has been home of world's biggest cash game. If they are expanding their operations to Manila it is not to run small games. The Solaire Poker Room is already currently hosting the highest games in Manila. The fact that both Phil Ivey and Tom Dwan visited Solaire Poker Room this year could also be an indication. Maybe they were just getting a close look at the Manila location before PKC came to town. After all, they did not sit to play poker while there.

What about the WPT National Philippines 2015?

This arrival of Poker King Club in Manila involves that current manager at Solaire, Mike Kim, has to step aside. This change of management could impact the WPT event that was initially scheduled for this summer, even if there does not appear to be any downside for the Poker King Club to host a prestigious poker tournament.

Manila the new Asian capital for poker

This could start to bring Manila to the foreground in terms of being the most important poker location in Asia. Both PokerStars and the Asian Poker Tour opened their poker rooms few month ago. After all, in Macau it's well known that table games are more popular than poker and Manila was already offering a much larger choice in terms of small stakes Cash Games and regulars tournaments.



Winfred Yu
Poker King CEO

LESS GAMBLING MORE ENTERTAINEMENT, IS 2015 A TURNING POINT FOR MACAU?

In 2013 Macau's gambling revenue reached \$45.2 Billion. It was taking Macau's gamblers just one day to wager the amount bet in an entire week on the Las Vegas Strip. Business was booming. Analysts were predicting \$70 billion revenue for 2017. During this period, designs for new casinos were unveiled and developments began, with 8 new casino resorts due to be constructed in the so called Cotai 2.0 area.

Two years later things have completely changed. Macau casinos have experienced 10 straight months of declining gaming revenue. Projects which at first seemed an easy golden ticket to huge profits once they opened, now risk become an investors nightmare. Demand is not currently outweighing supply, and so 8 new casinos in the market could be no longer suggestive of a good plan.

Macau under Beijing pressure

The main reason of this downturn can be found in mainland China. It has been well documented that over the past year or two, Chinese government leaders have been keeping a very close eye on Macau. They have imposed control over the movement of money and general junket operations. The anti corruption initiative which is targeting "corrupt" officials has also scared Chinese VIP customers who no longer feel safe gambling in Macau. The city is too close

to the watching eyes of Beijing for them to feel comfortable.

Table Cap and Labour Shortage

The fall in gaming revenue is not the only challenge threatening Cotai 2.0. The cap on new gaming tables that has been implemented has also led to problems arising in Macau. There is an allocation based on a maximum 3% annual growth rate, meaning that a mere 171 new tables will be allowed this year based on the 5,711 in existence. With three new casinos due to open in 2015, Galaxy 2, Broadway, and Melco Crown's Studio City, this isn't even close to the 900 tables that those new developments hoped to bring to Macau. Next year, 4 more casinos will open, with hopes for 1,500 more tables. This is almost ten times higher than the projected allowance.

Other laws in Macau create a situation where foreign workers cannot be employed at gaming tables, which will undoubtedly lead to a staff shortage when these new casinos open for business. 50,000 staff will be required in the next two years, but reports suggest that only 6,700 people are unemployed in the area.



The MGM Cotai stands out architecturally as much as anything else, with a very unique building design. 1,600 new hotel rooms will be incorporated, along with a five storey luxury mansion within the premises.

The Parisian will feature a 165 meter replica of the Eiffel Tower



Non-Gaming revenue

Both Chinese Macanese and Chinese authorities made it clear that their ultimate goal is to help Macau rely on non-gaming revenue alongside gaming income, and so turn it into a tourist attraction rather than a simple gamblers paradise. Chief executive of Macau Fernando Chui Sai On has mentioned that growing the non-gaming offerings in Macau will be an important issue when discussing license renewal.

Goal is to follow the model of Las Vegas who have moved from a gaming centric business model in the 90's to a place where 64% of income of the Strip is non-gaming related in 2013. In Macau, the best performer in terms of non-gaming revenue is the Sands China, running at 10%. SJM non-gaming revenue is under 1%. With the initial growth in Macau several years ago being fuelled by gambling, there was no need to invest in non-gaming of-

ferings. But with changing times, has come a changing Macau, with 2015 as a turning point.

Cotai 2.0: More entertainment less gaming

In this context, Tourism and leisure will be the key focus for new Cotai developments. New casinos will include private gardens, luxury mansions hidden within the hotel itself, and many entertainment outlets for a family friendly environment. MGM China which is due to open in early 2016 has allocated 85% of it's floor space to non gaming offerings. Wynn Palace is another which will offer many things besides gambling. Meeting spaces, a spa, and performance lake among others.

Galaxy II

Phase two of expansion will see the size of this property double, with a great deal of retail space, and 45 new food and beverage outlets. They will

grow to accommodate 3,600 rooms in 5 hotel buildings. There will effectively be an en suite Ritz Carlton within it's borders, with fine dining michelin star establishments on site. The skytop wave pool and adventure rapids will remain one of the biggest attractions for customers, boasting the world's longest skytop river adventure at 575 metres long.

Broadway Macau

The 3,000 seat auditorium with a vast range of productions ensures that Broadway Macau maintains it's appeal to non VIP players and people looking for a fun day out. Having it's very own street market with dozens of food stalls also adds to the list of things to do which aren't gambling based. Street performers will also be everywhere, and Broadway will be linked to Galaxy II by air conditioned sky bridge.

Studio City

Taking the best that Hollywood has to offer and bringing it to Macau isn't easy, but Studio City aims to do precisely that, magic shows, film viewings, in a huge cinematically themed complex are everything that non gaming customers looks for. Night clubs and theme parks are an additional attraction, as is Asia's highest ferris wheel, Golden Eye. Built between the two main towers of the building, This ferris wheel will be one of the must see attractions of Macau.

The Parisian

With a scale replica of the Eiffel Tower, the Parisian has much to offer in terms of landmarks. It's opening has been delayed, but there are rumours that opening dates for major constructions are being staggered to allow each of them to get a lot of attention for their grand openings. With 150 shops and 15 restaurants, The Parisian will be larger than most of the ongoing developments, and will add another 3,000 hotel rooms too.

LOOKING BACK AT APPT NANJING MILLIONS SHUT DOWN



On April 17, 2015 the APPT Nanjing Millions held at Wutaishan Sports Centre in Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province, China, was prematurely closed down by the Chinese National Police citing suspicion of illegal gambling, leaving the high number of attendees dumbfounded and confused right at the front steps. The poker festival had already surpassed its halfway point with Day 2 of the Main Event scheduled to begin that day.

The lawful definition of gambling in China remains and it does not distinguish when it comes to poker or any game for that matter that violates those laws.

Two representatives of Star Poker Club arrested

Two months have since passed and so far not much information has been disclosed to the public however in an update by World Gaming Magazine, it is learned that two representatives of the local organizing body, Star Poker Club, Jian Yang and Li Su, have been formally arrested. Players in the Asian Circuit may know Yang very well as he was named PokerStars Asia Player of the Year in 2013 after winning a series of events, most notably, the ACOP Platinum Series Main Event and the ACOP HK\$25,000 Warm-Up. If found guilty, Yang could face up to 10 years in jail for opening a gambling house (which is a criminal offense in China) and for falsifying documents to obtain approval from the Jiangsu Provincial Chess Sports Association to run such an event.

The legal status of poker in China in question

While this is still under investigation, one thing has been made very clear, China stands firm on its plight against global gambling as stressed by President Xi Jinpingy late last year. And China's definition of gambling is certainly not up for debate. According to WGM, The CCTV "Focus Report" explained that for activity to be considered gambling, just ONE of the following three criteria must be satisfied:

- The activity is for the purpose of profit, and that is at least RMB 5,000,
- The total amount gambled was at least RMB 50,000
- The number of people involved was more than 20

The laws are etched in black and white, and despite arguments of poker tournaments being a game of skill, and that laws are different in the provinces, the lawful definition of gambling in China remains and it does not distinguish when it comes to poker or any game for that matter that violates those laws. Clearly this is a big shake-up for poker organizers especially that poker tournaments are still at its infancy stages in mainland China but it would definitely be a big surprise if it is drastically put to a big halt because of this. The APPT Beijing Millions last year proved to be a big success, hopefully this recent incident will be viewed by the Chinese government as just an isolated situation. In the unfortunate event that the industry will suffer a setback in China, then it begs the question of whether poker organizers are still willing to continue in China or give up on that market altogether? This of course is a wait-and-see. With many people upset and confused as to what happened, and with President Xi Jinpingy declaring war on global gambling, first thing's first, to get to the bottom of what really went wrong at the APPT Nanjing Millions in order to avoid these problems in the future. As it is, poker organizers are well aware that this is not an easy game to promote, there will always be unforeseen difficulties and challenges that will arise, so when something rocks the boat pretty hard such as this incident, everyone's hard work could be in jeopardy. How critical though is the big question mark. Within the past few years, poker organizers have been well at work, and visibly, the game has slowly been gaining ground in the region. Doors are slowly opening with poker festivals sprouting in different parts of Asia, China included. This is a great sign of development and growth. Evidence has shown there is a lot of interest in China that even if just a small fraction of the population engaged in poker, it would already be an astounding achievement for the game.

WPT Sanya

The next scheduled tournament in China is slated for late-October, the WPT Sanya. At this time, there are no reports of whether it has been affected, but with Ourgame International Holdings Ltd. recent acquisition of WPT, and being that Ourgame is a Hong Kong based company, this certainly gives a positive boost in the continued pursuit for poker in China. On June 21, WPT President & CEO Adam Pliska told PokerNews "We'll continue our events in Sanya"

Ultimately, poker tournaments/festivals are a business and if given the platform, and done in accordance with the law, it will be successful in China. For now, only time and the truth of what occurred at the APPT Nanjing Millions will give a clearer picture of poker's status in China.

TERRY FAN

1. When and why did you start playing poker? When did you decide to play poker for a living?

I first learned about poker in 2005 during my student exchange year in the US. The next year I deposited \$100 with my mom's credit card (Later, I told her it was for an Amazon.com book purchase—lol, please don't do this at home.) and played Party poker's Sunday 200k GTD and finished 4th for \$14k USD. That's when I learned that if you're good at poker, you can really make some serious money. I didn't just jump into professional poker right away, though. I used that money, along with my WSOP 2006 ME min cash money, to pay for my tuition for a Master's degree at Northwestern University. After I graduated, I actually got a job as a business consultant and worked for about 4 months while just playing poker on the side. During the corporate job period, I was making twice as much from poker as I was from my normal job, so I decided to quit and pursue my freedom and greater financial opportunity. That's why I turned pro in 2009.

2. What is your favorite playground? Online Poker? Live Poker? Tournaments? Cash Games?

At first I liked live poker, but then I started to like online poker more. Nowadays, I like a mix of both. When I first started, I was playing MTT and SNGs, but I switched to the online 6max cash game. It wasn't until late 2012 that I switched back to MTT (thus all the scores on hendonmob.com after 2013). These days I definitely prefer to play both online and live MTT with very occasional cash games just to kill time.

3. You took part in the WSOP this year. Can you tell us a bit more about your experience?

It was the most unexpected and amazing WSOP grind in my entire poker career. I came to the series without expecting anything at all. Seriously, it's WSOP, where the best of the world gathers to compete for the bracelet and the grand prize, and a bunch of amateurs and recreational players come in and have fun. I know I'm not the best player in the world, and I still make a lot of mistakes here and there. All I was doing during the whole series was trying to make the best possible decision on the table and let the variance ride itself. I did alter my strategy a bit for the series, and it worked perfectly. On top of that, I was fortunate enough to

meet some of the top players in the world and play with them, and I definitely learned a few things. Overall, I definitely improved as a player this summer, and the great run has given me a confidence boost.

4. You are currently the WSOP Asian Player of the Year according to the GPI. How do you feel about it? Will you take part in the WSOPE in Germany?

I feel amazing! Never did I really expect that, to be very honest with you. It's literally the best accomplishment ever in my career so far, and I hope this can inspire more Asian players to join the great game of poker down the road. Poker has definitely changed my life and made me a better person. I will participate the WSOPE because I've never been to Germany, and I think it's a great opportunity to add one more stop to my life resume.

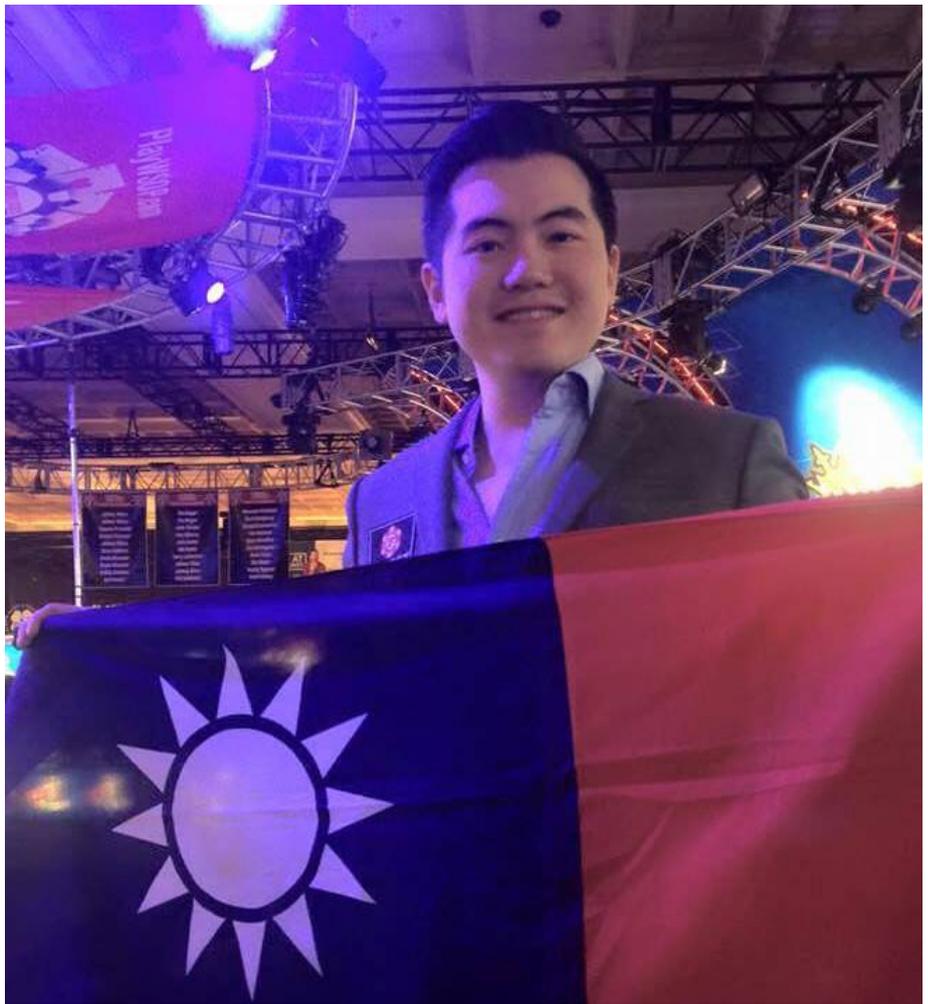
5. What are your goals as poker player for the next few years?

My goal as poker player for the next few years is to improve to my ability and promote the game to the world. I would love some opportunities to share with the world how poker can change one's life in a good way. It's a great way to change your life if you are not satisfied with whatever you are doing now. It's a great way to meet tons of awesome people from all walks of life. It's a great way to be your own boss while maintaining the freedom to focus on what actually matters to you (for example, family, important events, charity, your own passion, etc.). I know this because it has improved my life and made me a better person (yup, I was sort of a snob before, and poker has taught me a lot of life lessons.). One day I want to be able to use poker to give back to society and help those who are in need by contributing to the greater good.

6. Can you tell us a bit more about the Poker Scene in Taiwan?

I feel like the poker scene in Taiwan is improving slowly. There are no legalized casinos, but there are a bunch of home games running among friends, which is a good thing. Also, there are more and more people playing on Fulpot poker, which I represent, so that's great. I hope to see a poker boom in Asia in the next few years, and if I can help that along in any way, I'd be more than happy to do so.





My mentor/role model in poker is the long-established pro, Nam Le, and his brother, Tommy Le. The Le family changed my life, and I owe them my life for what they have done for me, period.

7. As poker player, what are your strengths/weaknesses?

To be quite honest, I think my strength is my ability to adapt and customize my strategy to each different opponent while keeping my basic strategy in check. I believe that my weakness is the math aspect of the game. There are players out there who know most of the math down to the decimals, but I rely mostly on observing my opponents at the table, getting into their heads, knowing what they are thinking and their strategy. I believe if I work harder on my weakness, my game will be more fine tuned than before.

8. Do you have any role models/mentors?

My mentor/role model in poker is the long-

established pro, Nam Le, and his brother, Tommy Le. The Le family changed my life, and I owe them my life for what they have done for me, period. They helped me greatly when I was at my lowest. They believed in me, taught me many things about life, poker, and diet that made me the Terry Fan everyone sees now. To this date, I can't be more grateful for having them in my life. They are literally the best thing that has ever happened in my life thus far. To have someone willing to give you a hand when you need it the most is amazing. I wasn't the most likable guy before, and I was out of shape, fat, overweight, whatever you call it. Then, they flew me over to their house in LA to stay with them for two months to work on a poker project. During those 2 months, I picked up the Bulletproof diet (thanks Nam!), which changed my

lifestyle and helped me lose 66 lbs in 11 months, and I learned a lot about how Nam and Tommy are so successful in life and poker. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't have changed and had the results that I've had. I credit all of my success to their selfless help. They are also the reason why I keep telling myself that one day I want to be able to help people change their lives, as they helped me change mine before.

9. Money talk: What is your biggest score in a tournament?

What is your biggest pot won in Cash Games? My biggest score was the 2013 Macau Poker Cup win for about \$228k USD (biggest Asia event ever held back then). My biggest pot won in a cash game was just about \$20k USD on a 50/100 game on Fulpot poker.

WALLY “THE DREAM” SOMBERO

FROM ASIAN POKER PIONEER TO GAME-CHANGER

In the early days, poker felt “illegal” in Philippines. The thrills were multi-faceted, as every poker game had all the elements of a big screen thriller, but with very real repercussions. The games were held in the confines of homes belonging to the bolder aficionados. These underground sorties were played under the shadows of potential riches or ruin, where the next moment could bring the nuts, or the cops. Players could turn into millionaires overnight... or suspected felons.

From Vegas to the Philippines

It was 2005 when The Cop finally came to bust the game wide open. In the best of possible ways. The Cop was a retired police general, armed not with a service revolver, but with two of the most iconic names in the game. He campaigned to thrust poker into the mainstream with a pageantry befitting the true majesty of the game. He became known worldwide as the man who ushered the era of modern poker in Asia. He is “The Godfather of Philippine Poker,” and possibly one of the most iconic poker figures in the continent: Wenceslao “Wally” Sombero. Sombero dedicated a better portion of his life as a law enforcer in the Philippines. At the turn of the millennium, he hung up his badge and pursued “The Dream.” “I went to Las Vegas to play poker,” the 59-year-old high roller recalls. “I had a dream of bringing this wonderful game to my country and went about getting it done.” He quickly became a stalwart in the Vegas scene, earning him the moniker “The Bandit”. “I looked like a bandit and got their money like a bandit,” Sombero playfully looks back. Sombero went on to join, cash and win a variety of tournaments. But this was at a time when few people paid attention. “The Dream” persisted: “I made many friends in the poker scene there,” he said. “It became time to make ‘The Dream’ a reality.”

At that time, the Philippines—the only Catholic-majority country in Asia—was hell bent on pruning gambling. Stiff regulations were enforced and only selected hotels were given gaming licenses. Poker was not among the most popular attractions, hence its absence on all casino floors. Poker, however, was on a steep rise after a Tennessee accountant by the name of Chris MoneyMaker had a historic televised

triumph at the 2003 World Series of Poker. He made the catchphrase “Anyone Can Win” a stunning reality. Home games and unsupervised tilts sprouted underground. Poker players created a quiet buzz that grew steadily along with its community. “The Dream” took a megaphone to that buzz. “PAGCOR (The Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation) didn’t even have a department for poker,” Sombero continued. “It was up to me to educate them on what poker really is.”

The first ever poker tournament in Asia

Then in 2006, it happened. “I organized the first ever poker tournament in Asia (held at the PAGCOR Casino Filipino Auditorium) and helping me bring that together was no less than Jack Binion and Doyle Brunson,” he recounts. “The Dream” saw to it that two of the biggest names in all of poker came to the Philippines in 2006. Sombero even recalled Brunson’s solitary request before accepting his invitation. “Doyle whispered to me, ‘I want a gun,’” Sombero shared with his trademark big laugh. “He thought there might be hooligans walking the streets and it made him feel more secure, so I arranged for him to have a piece. He even brought it with him onto the casino floor. He was in a wheelchair so went past all the x-ray machines with no problem.”

After 2006, the buzz became an eruption. The first PAGCOR recognized card room outside of a casino was established. The Metro Card Club in Pasig City was the first, and, for the longest time, also the biggest card club in Asia. “The Metro” acknowledged Sombero’s contributions to the game by christening their high-roller room as “Wally’s Room.”. The Metro was the first result of PAGCOR’s newly created poker department. Sombero was offered the leadership, but he declined.



Wally "The Dream" Sombero
(Photo : DeeJay Ruperto)

Sombero was also offered shares at The Metro, which he also turned down. "I told them that I only want to help," he said. "There's still so much to be done for the game."

Advocating for poker as a mind sport

One of the steps Sombero has taken is to bring poker to the International Mind Sports Association (IMSA) and has been one of the most vocal lobbyists for it to be recognized as a mind sport. "Poker is a true mind

sport," he said. "If chess and bridge are in their list of recognized mind sports, poker is just as mentally demanding and maybe even more challenging." Sombero also envisions poker becoming a medal sport in the upcoming 2019 South East Asian (SEA) Games, wherein the Philippines will be the host nation. "In 2011, bridge got recognized in the SEA Games (in Indonesia) where a Filipino (Francisco Alquiros) won the gold medal," Sombero emphasizes. "Once we get a national sports federation in place, it can happen." Some of the world's best players hail from this ASEAN region such as Vietnam's Nam Le, Indonesia's John Juanda and Thailand's Pakinai "Tua" Lisawad. The Philippines also has a number of incredible players in Neil Arce, John

Tech, Lester Edoc, Andrew Gaw, and Flo Campomanes. "Poker is a sport," Sombero reiterates. "My dream is to see it in the Olympics, really."

Winning the PokerStars Live Manila PhP 1M guaranteed

With all he has done for poker in Asia, "The Dream" aka "Big Wally" might just be able to pull that one out of his bag of tricks—the same way he bested the youngsters and online phenoms en route to his victory in the PokerStars Live Manila PhP1M guaranteed event; his first title in half a decade.

In this renaissance performance, it was his final hand that typified who Wally Sombero truly is. "I had a dream," he recounts, ala Martin Luther King. "My dream was that I would get seven-five (7-5) and hit quads to win the tournament against queens. I even saw the flop in my dream. It was 7-7-9, turn was a queen and then I would hit the seven on the

river. That's why when I saw I had 7-5 in heads-up, I knew it was time." Amazingly, his heads-up opponent Jessie Leonarez actually had queens. The flop was indeed 7-7-9, but the turn card was a jack, and a seven did come on the river to seal the victory. "Maybe I'm just old and mistook the jack for a queen (in my dream)," Sombero laughed. "The Godfather" will be more events in Asia. Whether he wins, cashes or not will not be the true story.

The true story will be how he can continue to reshape the game as we know it. "The Dream" is one of the authors of Asia's love affair with poker, and it is a story that the rest of us will keep telling.

ARE INTERNATIONAL POKER PLAYERS CHANGING THE FACE OF THE ASIAN POKER SCENE?

Games have always been interesting in the way that they travel to distant places, and take root there, like a seed that has been stuck to the clothing of a traveller, hitching a ride to an unusual destination. They are ideas held within the human mind that can be shown and taught to others, and as such, they migrate with us. Earliest indications suggest that card games similar to poker sprung up in France hundreds of years ago, and reached the American continent through French Canadian settlers.

In the modern day, slowly but surely, a similar migration has been happening with poker in Asia. The ease with which information can be transmitted across the world has certainly played a part in poker taking root and flourishing in new places. The internet and television have played a central role, but we shouldn't underestimate the simplest and oldest form of information movement: Human travelling. Many people have a sense of adventure and hope to see other parts of the world, and there is no doubt that students and other travellers from Asia will have visited Europe and America, picked up this card game, and then brought it home with them. In a symmetrical way, when the game started to spread over the Asian continent, International players came from across the World and started to bring their own contribution to the Asian Poker Scene. We are looking today at this contribution.

Macau: The Macau Big Game

It took a long time to international media to acknowledge the existence of a dynamic poker scene in Asia. If we have to name a turning point, it would be without a doubt "the Macau Big Game". The 2+2 forums gave the first insight into poker celebrities travelling to Macau to play high stakes poker at Starworld Casino, in the form of Matt Savage who posted "the cash games are some of the biggest in history as Tom Dwan, Phil Ivey, Chau Giang, and John Juanda are playing HK\$5,000-10,000 with some Chinese businessmen" This was back in 2010, and over the next 4 years or so, more international poker players with big reputations made the journey (Gus Hansen, Patrick Antonius, Sam Trickett...)

Poker Media reported that games got so big that the casino was once in danger of running out of chips. It was difficult to get accurate numbers, but stakes of USD\$12.5K/\$25K were mentioned, along with the suggestion that USD\$1 million would be considered a short stack at the table. Details of these semi private games were hard to obtain and fuelled the myth around them. The presence of international stars raised a worldwide interest on the Macanese poker scene and made the prospect of a fabled journey to Macau seem more exciting for western players. Asia was on the poker map!

Philippines: Doyle Brunson and Jack Binion

It's not well known that Doyle Brunson and Jack Binion made a brief appearance in Philippines in order to push local authorities to legalize the game in the country. With this new poker interest across Asia, there were always likely to be legal issues in certain countries, and nobody has worked harder than Wenceslau 'Wally' Sombero to change acceptance of poker in his country. As a retired police general in the Philippines, he could have easily been working against poker, but he saw the beauty in the game and gave a great deal of time to publicizing and legalising it in his home country.

In 2006 he was instrumental in arranging the first ever poker tournament in Asia, with the help of Jack Binion and Doyle Brunson, who travelled to the Philippines. In true Texan style, Brunson would only agree to the trip if he could be equipped with a gun in order to protect himself in this unfamiliar part of the world. Sombero happily arranged this for him, remarking "He thought there might be hooligans walking the streets and it made him feel more secure, so I arranged for him to have a piece. He even brought it with him onto the casino floor. He was in a wheelchair so went past all the x-ray machines with no problem." Read more about Wally Sombero in our portrait.



Casino Lights In Macau Author Brenden Brain

Men Nguyen during the first edition of the Vietnam Poker Cup



In 2014 and 2015, the country saw a second Poker boom with PokerStars Live Manila, Poker King Club opening, the WPT arriving, and Macau cash games slowly moving to this new exotic location. World renowned players Phil Ivey, Daniel Cates, and Tom Dwan all made an appearance there. This summer, Daniel Cates made a public announcement on Twitter that he had been on a bad run, losing USD\$5 million, which strongly suggests that the stakes being played in Manila were still as eye watering as they had ever been in Macau.

More recently, Michael 'The Grinder' Mizrachi was seen playing OFC Pineapple with David 'Chino' Rheem at Metro CArD Club. Thanks to this new visibility, Manila is now more and more considered as an international poker hub able to compete with Macau.

Vietnam: Vietnamese born American pro players promoting poker in their home country

Vietnam has seen the beginning of its own poker growth alongside the rest of Asia, with the APT holding the first international event there this year, which attracted some famous Vietnamese/American players, including Nam Le. After the event, he spoke to the APT team about his joy at being able to play the game he loves, in the home country that he loves. Men 'The Master' Nguyen also participated in the first ever Vietnam Poker Cup earlier this year. These two players are not the only ones who have returned from the US and brought new life to the Vietnamese poker scene in the process. Home games and live events are filled

with a growing numbers of American – Vietnamese players.

Thailand: Online grinders seeking a new home

There are a number of factors that fuel poker migration, with 'Black Friday' being a very important change in poker acceptance within the USA. This resulted in many online pros from US shores seeking relocation, with Asian countries with great night life and warm weather, such as Thailand, becoming a popular choice. It is difficult to put an exact number on how many online poker migrants have travelled from the US to Thailand since 'Black Friday' but the thread about Thailand on 2+2 Forum has 3,600 pages, which tells a very clear story. Thailand hasn't only attracted American grinders banned from PokerStars and Full Tilt. The lifestyle that American players enjoyed in Thailand has been advertised on poker forums and attracted several grinders from western countries. Fedor Holz, the 2014 WCOOP Main Event champion is one big name player who has relocated during period of time to Thailand, and there are certainly many others. Most of these players are not looking for the spotlight and are rarely advertising themselves locally as Online Poker pros. Despite this discretion, a growing number of these online grinders have been seen on the Asian Live Circuit which can only fuel the growth of poker in the area.

If legal restrictions regarding poker in Asia (especially China) are removed in the coming years, we can hope to see the Asian continent become more and more attractive as a poker destination to both professional and casual players.

THE LEGEND OF ISILDUR1 IN 7 DATES

2005: The Young Swedish Prodigy

Like most people who become great at their craft, Blom started his training a little earlier than most. At only 14 years old the youngster had regular live games going with his friends, having been taught the basics by his older brother. In breaks between lessons at school, he and his friends played games with a \$3-\$7 buy in, and the young Viktor Blom soon began to outshine his classmates. Upon turning 15, the two Blom brothers decided to deposit some money into an online account, and sitting down at their first MTT, they immediately caught a break, finishing 5th place for \$300. After discovering the game together, the Blom brothers then created separate accounts and took different paths, with Viktor choosing his first screen name of 'blom90.'

September 16, 2009: The Emergence of 'Isildur1' on Full Tilt Poker

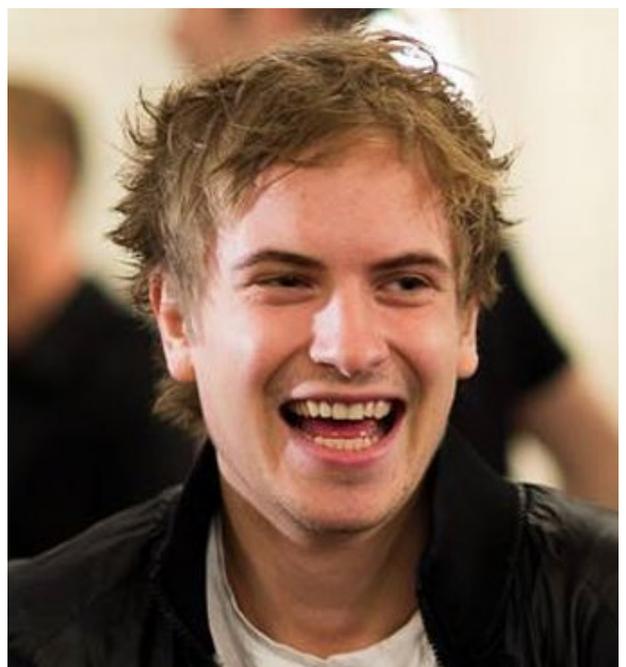
When the unknown screen name 'Isildur1' appeared at the high stakes tables, there must have been many top pros licking their lips in the hope that this would be a rich amateur ready to throw some cash around, but they were about to find out the hard way that this was something quite different. Having first been sighted on FullTilt Poker in September 2009, the young Swede only truly arrived in November, when he sat at half a dozen \$300/\$600 NLH tables and waited for action. That action quickly arrived in the form of online sensation, Tom 'Durrrr' Dwan. The two incredibly talented young men traded huge pots back and forth over lengthy sessions, and after 4 days, Isildur1 had made a serious statement to the online poker world, having inflicted a heavy \$3 million loss on Dwan. By the middle of November, he had racked up \$6 million profits in online cash games, facing off against players like Phil Ivey, Patrick Antonius, Cole South, and Brian Townsend, at stakes as high as \$500/\$1000.

November 21, 2009: The Biggest Pot in Online Poker History

By the time late November arrived, the entire poker world had sat up and taken notice of an anonymous new hero called Isildur1 and marvelled at his ruthless dismantling of top pros. On November 21st while playing a PLO session against Patrick Antonius, the fearless Isildur1 got his stack in on the flop with a wrap around straight draw, creating the largest pot in online poker history. One hand of poker with \$1,356,947 in the middle, and fortunately for Antonius, his flopped Straight held up.

December 8, 2009: The Assassination of 'Isildur1'

On December 8th, three established pros, clearly tired of being elbowed aside by the rising star of Isildur1, took a decision which changed everything. They decided to conspire with each other, in order to take him down. With none of them





He never slowed up, destroying the final table and taking home \$1,096,200 for 1st place. That player was none other than **Viktor Blom.**

seemingly able to fight him head to head and win, they all brought their carefully collected hand history data together to form a much larger pool of data, and dedicated their time to dissecting everything he did. By the time Brian Hastings sat down to play a session against Isildur1, he and his team had come up with a detailed plan to combat the aggressive Swede. This was not the man to man sword fighting duel that heads up poker had always been, this was the ugly face of envy, a mob without honour, dragging a gifted man to the floor and knifing him to death. Julius Caesar once spoke of the dice already being in the air, shortly before walking into the ambush that killed him. This time the cards were in the air, and Isildur1's number was up. Brian Hastings later wrote a blog post boasting of winning over \$4 million on that day, and while FullTilt stripped Hastings of his red pro status for actions which most considered deeply immoral, he hadn't crossed into the illegal, and so no further action was taken. Sightings of Isildur1 were rare over the next year.

December 10, 2010 – The Return and Unmasking of 'Isildur1'

While a few rumours of his identity had begun to circulate, it wasn't until he joined team Pokerstars in December that his identity was officially revealed, during the PCA series in January. During dinner break, Bertrand 'Elky' Grospellier took a seat at a heads up table while a large crowd gathered. He was of course scheduled to play Isildur1 in a live match, and as the youthful looking 20 year old stepped out from behind a curtain, the crowd applauded the unveiling of Viktor Blom, the man behind the feared name of Isildur1. After changing the face of online poker in 2009, Blom finally accepted the

adulation that came with it.

May 28, 2013 – SCOOP Main Event High

Once he had resurfaced, it always seemed likely that Blom would either be back beating the cash games or win something remarkable sooner or later. In the end, it was the SCOOP series of 2013 that provided the moment of magic. The high buy in Main Event attracted 580 runners, including some of the greatest online players ever to have clicked a mouse. With a \$10,300 buy in, a \$5.8 million prize pool was created, and as it got down to the final table, one player was stealing the show and amassing chips quickly. He never slowed up, destroying the final table and taking home \$1,096,200 for 1st place. That player was none other than Viktor Blom.

August 2015 – Crushing Cash Once More

After disappearing for a time, Blom had returned, rebuilt, completed a headline grabbing SCOOP Main Event win, and was back at the cash tables. If August 25th 2015 showed us anything, it is that you can take \$4 million from someone's bankroll, but you can never take away the qualities that led to them having a bankroll that size in the first place. Some things are temporary, skill is not. On August 25th Blom enjoyed a huge winning day at the tables, banking \$1 million. He is currently one of the biggest online winners of 2015. It's difficult to know whether his bankroll has recovered to what it was in 2009 but one thing is for sure – Isildur1 is back at the top where he belongs, and the poker world is a better place for his being there.

Article by Craig B.

THE BIGGEST LOSING PLAYERS IN ONLINE HISTORY

It's important to begin this article by pointing out that this is by no means an exhaustive and comprehensive collection of people who are factually known to be the biggest losing players online, as that would be almost impossible. Players switch between different pseudonyms, or alternate between high buy in online tournaments and cash games, and besides, high stakes tracking is not 100% accurate either. Players can also opt out of most tracking statistics, meaning that there may be other players who have huge losses, but are not tracked. This article aims not to point out failings, but to simply take a closer look at the stories surrounding some of the players who have become famous for their online struggles, against the very best players in the world, who lurk at the very highest of stakes.

These losing players deserve our respect and admiration for their sheer perseverance, and above all else, we should remember that they have always been the pillars upon which the world of high stakes poker is balanced.

Guy Laliberté: \$26 million?

As the founder and former CEO of Cirque Du Soleil, Guy Laliberté's wealth is estimated to comfortably exceed \$2 billion. He has helped to set up the "Big One for One Drop" tournament at the WSOP, generating huge amounts of money for the One Drop Foundation, which he himself founded, and has been a keen poker player for several years. It is widely believed that Laliberte has had a few different screen names online, including "noataima" and "lady marmelade." The name "patatino" has also been linked to him, along with "Zypherin" too. If all these names are indeed Guy Laliberté, we can estimate that his online losses exceed \$26 million.

He once said that he felt wronged by the Full Tilt policy of loaning vast amounts of money to their sponsored pros, as it meant that they were freerolling in games against him. Whatever his complaints, Guy Laliberté certainly suffered big losses at online poker, and once described the experience as "getting bent over, with me providing the Vaseline."

It's important to bear a few things in mind before mocking, or indeed sympathising, with Guy Laliberté. Firstly, he is a very wealthy man who has been a winner throughout life, and is probably happy to throw that kind of loose change about, because he enjoys the thrill of playing high stakes poker. Secondly, we don't know how much he may have won or lost in live games where he could be up against other rich businessmen who are poker players of very limited ability. Thirdly, as founder of the One Drop Foundation, and his subsequent involvement in the associated WSOP event, he has done great things for the poker world, and also the real world.

Gus Hansen: \$20.7 million?

As a highly respected live player, the anomaly of Hansen's online results has been interpreted in different ways by different people. It's easy for people to say that variance takes a lifetime to balance out live, but in his 1,600,000 or so hands that he has played online, Hansen's true ability has been revealed. In fact, this opinion fails to give consideration to important aspects of this data, such as the fact that Hansen never goes hunting for weak players. He makes a point of sitting against the very best, every time he plays online. By his own admission, he is very stubborn, and refuses to drop down in stakes to make life easier. He also claims that he has failed to work on controlling tilt issues, despite knowing that he could improve his results by doing so.

Gus Hansen has perhaps demonstrated the worst table selection of anyone online, and when you look at his losses of over \$20.7 million, you would be tempted to think that's a huge sum, and that he is a terrible poker player. When you break the numbers down though, for the stakes he is playing, and the number of hands he has played, his

average "winrate", would only be a very small negative number. Nothing to be ashamed of against the toughest opposition on earth. To see the smallest shark in his chosen pond and choose to put your hand into the water because you think he is a toothless fish – is a dangerous and foolish mistake to make.

Paul Phua: \$4.6 million

In recent times, online names which were formerly a mystery have been revealed, shedding greater light on the identities of our online heroes, and villains, depending on your view. "MalACEsia" is an online high stakes player who has been mixing it with the worlds best for years, and has since been revealed as junket operator, key player in Macau's biggest games, and successful businessman, Paul Phua. Under his online alias, he has played just over 49,000 hands. This is around 3% of the total number of hands played by Gus Hansen for example, and is a small sample size. This obviously means that Phua's losses aren't necessarily an accurate reflection of his skill, and as with most rich businessmen, he isn't hunting weaker players, he's sitting with the best. Currently Phua's losses online stand at almost \$4.6 million, but rumours suggest he is a massive winner in Macau's big game, and could easily be seriously in profit when you look at live and online results together.

Chun Lei Zhou: \$10.2 million

After starting out as "patpatpanda" before switching to the screen name "samrostan" Chun Lei Zhou is undoubtedly one of the biggest losing players on FullTilt, and also Pokerstars, where he played under the name "patpatman." His total online losses are estimated to exceed \$10.2 million, but Zhou is not the sort of player you can push around. He once floated Phil Gruissem through two streets with 6 high and no draw, before bluff shoving the river, during an EPT High Roller tournament. The audacity and courage of Zhou in that live hand against a world class pro, does a great deal to encapsulate what these biggest losing players are all about. Utterly fearless, they always want to fight the best players, and when they take a heavy beating, they get back to their feet and try again, endlessly. Too many people laugh at the biggest losing players, while remaining blind to an important fact: You don't end up as one of online poker's biggest losers by being a quitter who throws in the towel when things go badly. These players don't know what the word "defeated" means, and without them, the celebrated online pros who illuminated online poker with the biggest pots in online history, may never have had the bankrolls to do that.

These losing players deserve our respect and admiration for their sheer perseverance, and above all else, we should remember that they have always been the pillars upon which the world of high stakes poker is balanced.

Article By Craig G

5 FISHY WAYS TO THINK ABOUT POKER

Get the right mindset for success at Poker!

1. Allowing previous hands to affect your thinking

Example: "It's so overdue. I'm calling it off without the right odds because I've missed two of these flush draws already."

One important fact to remember about poker is that luck has no memory. Just because two flops in a row have come out all hearts, doesn't mean you should play your 8,4 of hearts because that suit is "hot." The odds of three hearts hitting the flop are quite long, and they certainly haven't got any shorter since three hands ago. Sometimes players can go the opposite way with this thinking and say to themselves "I haven't seen any 8's or 4's hit the flop in a long time. They must be due." Examine that thought closely. The word "due" suggests that something is "owed." Luck has absolutely no concept of who is owed good luck or bad, or what cards will balance out things that have happened in previous hands.

2. Moving up in stakes to find players who will respect your raises

Example: "I need to find thinking players who can read boards and see when I'm representing strength."

If you are the player who fires three barrels at an Ace high board, because your opponent didn't 3 bet you pre, and so isn't likely to have the A,K

or A,Q that could feasibly be in your own range – and then you blow up because your opponent calls you down with A,3...You have a problem. Contrary to what you might think, the problem isn't that your opponents aren't good enough to understand when they should fold; that's a gift. Your problem is that you don't know how to unwrap it. Bad players often have imbalances. They call too much, or they fold too much. As a general rule of thumb, keep bluffing the ones that always fold, and patiently value bet the ones that always call. The last thing you want to do is move up in stakes to find players where you would need to do far more than just these two simple things in order to have an edge over them.

3. Over betting to avoid a bad beat

Example: "I need to get this guy out of the pot right now, before he outdraws me."

It's easy to think that when you're confident that you are ahead, you should bet big to protect your hand against draws, but the truth is, you don't need to overbet in these situations. As long as you are charging your opponent the wrong price, you should be happy if they call and draw to their hand, regardless of what happens in the following moment. Overbetting feels safer, but it's an illusion. Sometimes in poker, the price of getting it right, is to watch it go wrong. Charging a slightly bad price and getting called, is much better than charging a severely bad price and watching your opponent fold every time. When you bet, just think about getting worse hands to call for the wrong price, or getting stronger hands to fold. Value bet or bluff.

4. Playing well except when tired, angry, or wanting to gamble.

Example: "My best game is as good as anyone's. I play no matter how I feel though, which is why I don't make more money."

Ultimately, your results will reflect your decision making in poker. The decisions you make while playing your best game aren't the only ones that count. The human mind will go through different phases of activity and productivity based on tiredness, emotions, alcohol consumption, among other things. If you think you play great when you're on your A game, but then choose to play during your A,B,C, and D game – don't expect your results to reflect your A game standards. They'll reflect your C+ or B- standards.

5. Blaming bad luck for poor results

"Why do these donkeys keep outdrawing me? I'd make so much money if I had their luck."

The number of great poker players who spend their time counting up the number of times their Aces got cracked this week? Zero. If you waste time doing this, and you're serious about being a better player, alter this way of thinking. Fluctuations in variance can elicit an emotional response of course – we're only human. Part of becoming better though, is to train your brain overcome negative feelings and regain your emotional equilibrium quickly. Be sure to spend your time wisely when you aren't playing. Work on playing hands better, while you're running good, and bad.

Article by Craig B.

SOMUCH POKER

THE LIVE POKER SECTION FIND OUT WHERE YOU CAN PLAY POKER IN ASIA

POKER IN PHILIPPINES

The 100% state-owned PAGCOR is responsible for licensing the nation's gambling operations, and it actually runs 13 across the country, with 20% of the revenues going straight to the government budget. Live poker is popular in the country, with over 20 poker rooms offering games. Regarding online gambling, The Philippines is starting to be recognized as having Asia's most favorable jurisdictions for licensing and regulating iGaming. Several poker sites are operating directly from the Philippines.

COUNTRY ID

Capital: Manila
Languages: English, Filipino
Population: 100 million
Currency: Peso
Calling code: +63
Time zone: UTC+08:00
Flag:

POKER LEGISLATION

Live poker: Casinos are open to local and foreigner
Online poker: Unclear legislation, country's population is now technically free to use the services of foreign online casinos

ONLINE POKER

Online rooms: Access to all major poker sites
Internet: Converge ICT Fibre Optic is fast & stable
Recommended providers: PLDT, Smart Communications, Globe Telecom, Sky Cable

LIVE POKER

Casinos with poker:

- APT Poker Room
- PokerStars Live Manila
- Poker King Club Manila
- Resort World Manila
- The Metro Card Club
- ALL In Poker Cebu
- Metro Asia Poker

Other venues with poker: /

Philippines

Map showing the location of the Philippines in Southeast Asia.

LATEST THREADS

- Admin Posted on Pokerstars Live Manila [Official Thread]
- Admin Posted on APT Poker Room Manila [Official Thread]
- Admin Posted on Metro Card Club [Official Thread]
- Admin Posted on Metro Asia Poker [Official Thread]

Poket rooms in Philippines

- The Midas Touch (MANILA)
- Metro Asia Poker (MANILA)
- All In Poker Cebu (CEBU)
- The Metro Card Club (MANILA)
- APT Poker Room (MANILA)
- Pokerstars Live Manila (MANILA)
- Resort World Manila (NEWPORT CITY, MANILA)
- Poker King Club Manila (MANILA)

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