

INBOX

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WIN! Send us your thoughts, views and opinions, and if you're chosen as our Star Letter you'll win a stunning chipset!



HOWARD'S WAY

How refreshing to hear some common sense at last. I'm talking, of course, about last month's Big Debate topic 'Is poker a sport?' and the response from Howard Lederer. Of course poker isn't a sport – it's just a bloody good game. Whatever next?! Are we going to switch on our TV sets in 2012 to see 'athletes' receiving Olympic gold medals for shopping?! Well done, Howard, for having the guts to knock this silly idea on the head before it takes hold.

Mike Bennett

We couldn't agree more Mike, but this notion of poker as a sport seems to be creeping in more and more.

QUIZ MASTER

I wanted to say how much I enjoy the quizzes on different aspects of the game. These help me see where my weaknesses and strengths are and give me areas to improve on. I wondered though, are there any plans to have quizzes on other games apart from no-limit Hold'em?

I play a bit of limit Hold'em and I'm also considering dipping my toe into the world of pot-limit Omaha.



Poker and fun in the sun? Costa Rica may be the hot spot in 2010

Some quizzes on these variants – to see how good I am (or not!) – would be great.

Luke Middleham

Word on the strategy section grapevine says that we will have a pot-limit Omaha quiz very soon. To whet your appetite for PLO turn to p46 for Nick Wealthall's comprehensive guide on how to crush the lower limits.

GRAVY TRAIN

Long-time subscriber here and I would like to say that *PokerPlayer* mag is the best magazine in the UK hands down. I'm just giving you a heads-up on a new poker training camp based out of Costa Rica called www.spacegravypoker.com. I'm proud to announce that I'm one of the first (paying) students to visit the recently opened camp and have learned a lot. As I've just recently got back to

England I thought it would be a great idea to inform you guys of the set-up. Hopefully, you might consider doing an article, which I'm sure fellow UK and European readers would enjoy.

Gareth aka Leedslad



Is Viktor Blom Isildur1? And is he more interesting than X-Factor?

Are we going to see 'athletes' receiving Olympic gold medals for shopping? //

On paper we're definitely big fans of this bootcamp. Most training schools are very live-game oriented but this camp – run by some online prodigies – seems to focus on sit-and-go and tournament strategy for the internet game. We also like the fact that it's a world away from the usual Vegas conference rooms.

SWING TIME

I want my life back! All I've done every day is log on to Full Tilt and watch some kid called *Isildur1* win and lose millions of dollars. It's even overtaken *X-Factor* as my reality TV guilty pleasure. What I want to know is, who is this character?

It seems really weird that he should just come out of nowhere to challenge Ivey, Antonius and all the other big dogs on Full Tilt. I heard rumours that it's a 19-year-old called Viktor Blom, but can you confirm this and, more importantly, what's he doing gambling for millions and millions at such a young age? I wonder if there are tons of other players we've never heard of who are just as good as all the household names. Do you think Isildur's massive impact will see tons more fresh faces start playing in the big games or is this guy just a one-off freak?

We're hooked on the action too. Never have there been so many railbirds on the nosebleed tables. As for Isildur1 copycats, there can't be that many teenage millionaires out there ready to gamble it all away, can there? Then again, who knows? The identity search is a story in itself. First Tony G said that Viktor Blom is Isildur and then Blom retorted cryptically that he is 'not the one you are looking for. Keep searching.' It's one of those situations where we sort of don't want to know who it is in case it shatters the mystique. Fascinating stuff. We're just hoping that it gets even bigger in 2010. That \$2m pot must be just around the corner...

PPOC GLORY

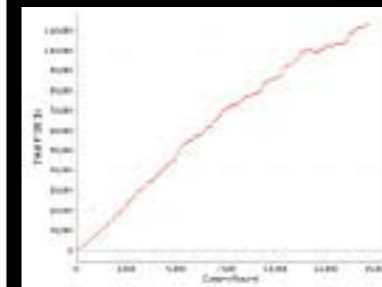
The PokerPlayer Online Championships 2009 is turning out to be a brilliant series. I've cashed in one tourney but am aiming for main event glory.

James Attwell

Turn to p66 for the final four events.

SHARKSCOPE OF THE MONTH

Name: PezRez
Plays on: PokerStars Games played: 14,835
Av. ROI: 18% Total profit: \$114,656



PezRez's 45-degree line – sent in by his brother Sebastian Perez – is a great example of the vast sums of money you can make playing fairly low stakes SNGs. Only two years after leaving university, *PezRez* has made over \$110,000, primarily playing \$16-\$35 six-max SNGs on Stars with very few downswings at all. The \$64,321 he's won in 2009 has him currently in first place across all stakes for six-max SNGs – a great achievement given the number of full-time grinders out there.

This will be the last in our Sharkscope Of The Month series. Watch out for an exciting new feature in the New Year!

★ STAR LETTER

CHECKMATE?

I used to be a regular chess player, and the 'is it a sport?' debate has been doing the rounds in chess for a long time. The answer we came up with is that it's a hybrid.

There are a lot of parallels between the way poker and chess are played: both are intellectually rigorous; both are physically demanding (a study of the physical tolls on top grandmasters established that a five-hour chess match took more energy than a pro footballer expended in 90 minutes); and both have an artistic quality to them (we can appreciate the beauty of a perfectly constructed move).

I think that poker, like chess, straddles the divide between sport, intellectual gaming and art; it is all of those things and allows anyone with a talent in any one camp to play and enjoy the game. Why pigeonhole poker as either a sport or a game? Poker is a hybrid, which is what makes it so hugely popular.

Graham Williamson

It's a good point you make, Graham. For some reason, people are never happy unless they can fit something into a little box and slap a label on it. But try as they might, poker (and chess) will always defy simple definitions.



Chess and poker combine aspects of sport, intellectual gaming and art



RAISE

Brian Hastings
On December 9 Brian Hastings had the biggest winning day in online history, taking \$4.2m off *Isildur1* in just 2,858 hands. As a result *Isildur1* was left \$1.6m down for the year.



New PKR pro
Following his APPT High Roller victory in August and win over Juha Helppi in the final of the inaugural PKR Heads Up Grand Slam, PKR player Vladimir 'Beyne' Geshkenbein has now been signed up to the Team PKR Pro stable.



UIGEA delayed
Compliance date for the UIGEA has been delayed until June 1, 2010, thanks to Congressman Barney Frank and the Poker Players Alliance, although it is no guarantee of future regulation.



WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT THIS MONTH

Shaun Deeb quits
Online MTT grinder Shaun Deeb has said he is taking a break from tournament poker. 'I'm gonna take rest of year off... Poker was good for a while, but f♣♥♦, I hate what I've become.'



\$127m in the red
Terrance Watanabe is taking Harrah's to court, claiming staff at the Rio and Caesars plied him with alcohol and painkillers as he lost \$127m over the course of 2007. The case continues.



Madsen's new poker rap
The fact that Jeff Madsen isn't setting the poker world alight any more may be because he is intent on being a hip-hop star. Check out his latest rap video 'December Rappin' (if you can bear it) at tinyurl.com/y298byz



FOLD

