

formation presented is relevant to the other flop games (and poker in general), the correct strategy and tactics for a game such as Omaha are different from Texas Hold'em, even though on the surface the games look remarkably similar.

Opportunities to play Texas Hold'em are more widespread than most people realize. Aside from the obvious locations (Atlantic City and Las Vegas), there are public cardrooms throughout California and the Northwest, on Native American reservations throughout the United States, and on riverboats up and down the Mississippi River system in the country's heartland. Chapter 2 describes what to expect in a public cardroom and how to conduct yourself. To locate a public cardroom near you—or near a place you plan to visit—check the listings in Chapter 10 for public cardrooms in the United States and Canada. The listings are sorted geographically and contain locations and contact information for 220 cardrooms.

The Internet has actually provided unlimited opportunity to play Texas Hold'em because of the growth of online poker games. Chapter 10 also profiles 15 online cardrooms where you can compete for real money. Chapter 3 discusses play in online cardrooms and the differences between playing poker “in person” and over the Internet against remote opponents.

Be aware that the legal issues surrounding online gambling are murky. **Discussion of online poker is for informational purposes only. In no way should anything in this book be construed as legal advice or an endorsement or guarantee of online services.** It is the reader's responsibility to know the appropriate laws governing any activity undertaken and to consult with a lawyer when unsure. Online poker play is covered in this book because the Internet—and the opportunities and risks brought by the Internet—are here to stay. It will become increasing difficult for the government to regulate online activities. Therefore, it is more important than ever to be informed and responsible when online.

## 1. Rules

The object of Hold'em is to accumulate money. As in any variation of poker, money is obtained by winning the *pot*—all the bets made during the course of a hand. There are two ways to win the pot:

- *Be the last remaining player.* During the play of a hand, players will fold and forfeit their interest in the pot. You win if you are the last remaining player.
- *Have the highest ranking hand.* If more than one player remains after the last round of betting, there is a *showdown*. All remaining players show the contents of their hands. If you have the highest-ranking hand, you win the pot.

### A Hand in Hold'em

At the beginning of a hand, each player is dealt two cards face down—their *pocket cards*. During play of the hand, a total of five additional cards are exposed in the center of the table in three stages, creating the *board*. Each stage of dealing has a different name, and before each stage is a round of betting. There is a fourth and final round of betting after the last card.

The *flop*—the first three exposed cards.

The *turn*—the fourth card.

The *river*—the fifth and last card.