Bluff Busting: A Comprehensive Study Guide

I. Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to the source, what is a common misconception about live poker players and bluffing?
2. List three common scenarios where live poker players are more likely to bluff.
3. Explain the importance of "Did we give them rope?" in the bluff catching checklist.
4. Why is the "size significant for the game" question crucial when evaluating a potential bluff?
5. What does it mean for an opponent to have "non-Showdown value hands," and why is this relevant for bluff catching?
6. Describe the "repeatable thought process" recommended by Hungry Horse Poker for bluff catching.
7. In the first example hand, despite having bottom pair, why was the call considered a "pretty easy Bluff catch spot"?
8. In the second example hand (Ace 8 of clubs), why was Bluff raising *not* considered more profitable?
9. In the third example hand (King Queen of Diamonds, deep stack), why was folding two pair considered more profitable than calling?
10. What is the significance of the "bonus question" regarding bluff raising, particularly in the final example hand with pocket Aces?

II. Quiz Answer Key

1. A common misconception is that live poker players do not bluff, especially for large sizes or when they appear strong. The reality, as stated in the source, is that they bluff a lot, just typically for smaller sizes and when they don't appear overtly strong.
2. Live poker players are more likely to bluff when they look really weak (e.g., checking back a street), in heads-up pots, and in smaller pots where the absolute bluff size is low. They also bluff more with wide ranges and when they are losing, stuck, or tilting.
3. "Did we give them rope?" refers to whether the player's actions made it easier for the opponent to bluff. This includes actions like checking back a street, check-calling repeatedly, or using very small bet sizes, which can induce bluffs by signaling weakness.
4. The "size significant for the game" question is crucial because live players are much less likely to bluff for very large sizes (e.g., an overbet or a 200 big blind bluff) on later streets like the river. Smaller bet sizes are more indicative of bluffs on earlier streets.
5. Non-Showdown value hands are those that have no chance of winning at Showdown without improvement, such as busted straight or flush draws. Their presence in an opponent's range indicates a higher likelihood that they might turn these hands into bluffs.
6. The "repeatable thought process" is a systematic way of asking five specific questions when considering bluff catching on the river. This structured approach guides the player to determine whether to call a bluff or fold their hand.
7. In the first example, despite having bottom pair and not beating value, four out of five checklist questions (opponent capable, gave rope, size not significant, non-Showdown value) leaned towards bluff catching. This made it a clear bluff-catching opportunity.
8. In the second example, bluff raising was not considered more profitable because the player already had a profitable call. When simply calling is very profitable because you beat many of their bluffs, the bluff raise needs to be "insanely profitable" to be a better option.
9. In the third example, folding two pair was more profitable because the player deduced that the opponent was "under bluffing" based on the checklist, and their two pair did not beat any of the opponent's likely value hands. In an under-bluffed spot, even a strong bluff catcher should be folded.
10. The bonus question, "Is Bluff raising more profitable?", forces a player to consider all available options beyond just calling or folding. In the final example, even though bluff catching with pocket Aces was not profitable, considering a bluff raise highlighted that one should either jam with value (thinking sets will call) or turn overpairs into bluffs (thinking sets will fold).

III. Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the interplay between "Did we give them rope?" and "Do they have non-Showdown value hands?" within the context of the bluff catching checklist. How do these two questions, when answered affirmatively, significantly increase the likelihood of a successful bluff catch?
2. Analyze the myth that "live poker players do not bluff for large sizes or when we appear very strong." Using examples from the source, explain why this myth is perpetuated and how understanding the actual bluffing tendencies of live players can be exploited.
3. Compare and contrast the first two example hands provided in the source regarding their suitability for a bluff catch. Identify the key similarities and differences in the application of the five-question checklist that led to the recommended "call" in both scenarios.
4. The third and fourth example hands illustrate situations where a seemingly strong hand (King Queen two pair, Pocket Aces) is recommended as a fold or even a bluff raise rather than a call. Explain the reasoning behind these counter-intuitive decisions, focusing on how the bluff catching checklist guided the player away from a standard call.
5. Beyond the explicit points in the checklist, what implicit factors or overarching principles about live poker player psychology does the source emphasize as crucial for successful bluff busting? How do concepts like "greed" and "tilting" influence bluffing patterns and the application of the checklist?

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

* **Bluff:** A bet or raise made with a hand that is unlikely to be the best hand, intended to make an opponent fold a stronger hand.
* **Bluff Catching:** The act of calling an opponent's bet on the river with a hand that is only strong enough to beat a bluff, not a value hand.
* **Hero Call:** A brave call on the river with a weak hand, often a bluff catcher, typically made when there's a strong suspicion that the opponent is bluffing.
* **Heads-up Pot:** A pot contested by only two players.
* **Multi-way Pot:** A pot contested by three or more players.
* **Showdown Value:** The likelihood that a hand will win at showdown if no more bets are made, based on its absolute strength.
* **Non-Showdown Value Hands:** Hands that have no equity at showdown (e.g., busted draws, high cards) and can only win by forcing opponents to fold.
* **Limp Pot:** A pot where the first player to enter the pot only calls the big blind (limps) rather than raising.
* **Single Raised Pot:** A pot where there was only one raise pre-flop.
* **Three-bet Pot:** A pot where there was a re-raise (the third bet in a sequence of bet-raise-re-raise) pre-flop.
* **Four-bet Pot:** A pot where there was a fourth bet in a sequence of pre-flop betting (bet-raise-re-raise-re-re-raise).
* **Late vs. Late Spot:** A hand played between players in late positions (e.g., Cut-off vs. Button), where ranges are generally wider.
* **Early vs. Early Spot:** A hand played between players in early positions (e.g., Under the Gun vs. Lojack), where ranges are generally tighter.
* **Stuck/Tilting:** Psychological states in poker where a player is losing money and/or emotionally frustrated, often leading to more aggressive or irrational play, including more bluffs.
* **Repeatable Thought Process:** A systematic, step-by-step method for analyzing a poker situation, particularly for bluff catching.
* **Under-bluffing:** A tendency for an opponent to bluff less often than they should in a given spot, making their bets more indicative of value hands.
* **Overvaluing a Hand:** Betting a hand as if it's stronger than it actually is, often not recognizing potential dangers on the board (e.g., overvaluing a straight when a flush comes).
* **Give them Rope (Induce):** To take actions that signal weakness or open opportunities, encouraging an opponent to bluff.
* **Check Back:** To check when it's your turn to act, often when in position and the previous player has checked.
* **Check-Call:** To check when it's your turn, then call an opponent's subsequent bet.
* **Spaz:** To make an erratic or overly aggressive play, often a bluff, particularly when induced.
* **Overbet Bluff:** A bluff where the bet size is larger than the pot.
* **Range Bet:** To bet with a wide variety of hands in a player's range, rather than only strong value hands.
* **Floats:** To call a bet on an earlier street (e.g., the flop) with a weak hand, hoping to win the pot on a later street if the opponent checks or bluffs.
* **Check-Raise:** To check when it's your turn, then raise an opponent's subsequent bet.
* **Pre-flop Caller:** The player who calls an open-raise before the flop, rather than raising or folding.
* **Old Man Coffee:** A stereotypical passive and tight poker player who rarely bluffs.
* **Busted Flush Draws:** Hands that started with four cards to a flush but did not complete the flush on later streets.
* **Bink the Flush:** To hit the final card needed to complete a flush.
* **Overpairs:** A pair in your hand that is higher than any card on the board.