The "Fishy" Poker Plays Playbook: A Study Guide

I. Quiz: Short Answer Questions

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. **What is the core philosophy behind adopting "fishy" poker plays, according to the source?**
2. **Explain the primary benefit of "donking" (leading as the pre-flop caller) when a "fish" is positioned between you and the pre-flop raiser.**
3. **In what specific scenario should you generally avoid "trapping pre-flop" with strong hands?**
4. **When should you consider "trapping pre-flop" with a strong hand, and what type of opponents are typically involved in this situation?**
5. **Define "linear range" in the context of an opponent's hand, and explain why it's relevant to the "Min Clicking Value" strategy.**
6. **Under what conditions is "Min Clicking Value" on the river an effective strategy, particularly regarding your opponent's range?**
7. **When an opponent's range is "polar" on the river, why is "Min Clicking Value" generally not recommended if you have a strong hand?**
8. **According to the source, why is the "small bet in position on the river" rarely preferred by poker solvers?**
9. **Describe one scenario where using a "small bet in position on the river" is recommended when you have thin value.**
10. **When should you avoid using a "small bet in position on the river" if you have a bluff?**

II. Answer Key

1. The core philosophy is to prioritize making the most money over being perceived as playing "good" or conventional poker. It involves intentionally using plays that might appear "fishy" but are strategically the highest Expected Value (EV) options in specific contexts, especially against weaker players.
2. The primary benefit of donking in this scenario is to keep the "fish" in the pot and allow them to make mistakes. If you check, the pre-flop raiser might check as well, or a check-raise would shut out the fish, preventing them from calling with weaker hands or draws.
3. You should generally avoid trapping pre-flop when a "fish" opens the pot. In this situation, the optimal strategy is to three-bet and isolate the weaker player, gaining a massive skill advantage in a heads-up pot.
4. You should consider trapping pre-flop when a strong "rag" (regular player) opens, and there are "fish" positioned behind you. This allows you to bring in the weaker players, maximizing the potential to extract value from their mistakes.
5. A "linear range" means an opponent's hands are good, better, best, indicating they are likely not bluffing and have a decent, but not necessarily very strong, hand. It's relevant to "Min Clicking Value" because it suggests an opponent is more likely to call a small raise with their mid-strength hands.
6. "Min Clicking Value" on the river is effective when your opponent has a linear range, meaning they like their hand but don't love it, and are not bluffing. They are more likely to call a small raise with hands like top pair, allowing you to extract thin value.
7. When an opponent's range is "polar," it means they either have a very strong hand or a bluff. If you have a strong hand, Min Clicking Value is not recommended because an opponent with a bluff will fold, and an opponent with a very strong hand will likely call any size, so a larger bet would extract more value.
8. Poker solvers rarely prefer the "small bet in position on the river" because it thinly reopens the action, allowing the opponent to check-raise and potentially force you off your equity. Solvers generally favor medium to large bets in equilibrium land.
9. One scenario for using a "small bet in position on the river" with thin value is when you have top pair and your opponent's range is weak. For example, if an Ace hits the river and you have A5, you might bet small to target hands like King-Jack or Queen-Jack that would only call a small bet.
10. You should avoid using a "small bet in position on the river" with a bluff when you are targeting a weak range. In such cases, a larger bet is often preferred because you might be able to get a "range fold" (opponent folds their entire range of weaker hands), and a small bet might not be enough to achieve that.

III. Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the strategic rationale behind "donking" (leading as the pre-flop caller) in the two scenarios presented: when a fish is between you and the pre-flop raiser, and when a fish is behind the pre-flop raiser. Discuss why the approach differs so significantly.
2. Analyze the concept of "trapping pre-flop" as a "fishy" play. Explain when and why it is considered an effective strategy, contrasting it with situations where conventional poker wisdom suggests three-betting. Use examples from the text to support your points regarding range construction.
3. Discuss the importance of understanding an opponent's range ("linear" vs. "polar") when deciding whether to apply the "Min Clicking Value" strategy on the river. Provide specific examples of hands and board states from the text where this distinction is crucial.
4. Elaborate on the "small bet in position on the river" as a "fishy" play. Explain the two primary situations where the source recommends its use (thin value vs. bluffs) and contrast these with the reasons why solvers generally avoid this bet size.
5. The source emphasizes prioritizing winning money over being perceived as playing "good" poker. Discuss how the four "fishy" plays (Donking, Trapping Pre-flop, Min Clicking Value, Small Bet in Position on the River) exemplify this philosophy by exploiting common tendencies or weaknesses of recreational players.

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

* **Amorphous (Poker Style):** A poker style that is shapeless, fluid, and constantly adapting and adjusting to the specific opponents at the table, rather than a fixed or predetermined approach (e.g., tight aggressive).
* **Big Blind (BB):** A mandatory bet made by the player two positions to the left of the dealer button before any cards are dealt. It defines the stakes of the game.
* **Bluff:** A bet made with a weak hand or no hand, intended to deceive opponents into folding stronger hands.
* **Bluff Catcher:** A hand that is not strong enough to bet for value against strong hands but is strong enough to call a bet if the opponent is bluffing.
* **Capped Range:** An opponent's range of hands that is limited or "capped" at a certain strength, meaning they are unlikely to hold very strong hands (e.g., they would have raised earlier if they had a monster).
* **Cash Game:** A poker game played for real money, where chips represent their actual monetary value, and players can buy in or leave at any time.
* **Check-Back:** When a player has the option to bet but chooses to check, and then the action returns to them later in the betting round or on a subsequent street, often indicating a lack of strong hand or a desire to control the pot size.
* **Check-Raise:** To check when it's your turn to act, and then raise after an opponent makes a bet. It's a strong move that indicates a strong hand or a bluff.
* **Cut-off (CO):** The position directly to the right of the dealer button. It's considered a late position.
* **Donking/Leading:** To be the first player to bet on a street (usually the flop, turn, or river) when you were the pre-flop caller. This is often considered an unconventional or "fishy" play.
* **EV (Expected Value):** A long-term mathematical concept representing the average outcome of a decision or action. A "highest EV option" is the play that is expected to yield the most profit in the long run.
* **Fish (Poker Term):** A recreational or inexperienced poker player who tends to make many mistakes, providing easy money for more skilled players.
* **Flatting:** To call a bet or raise, rather than re-raising or folding.
* **Flop:** The first three community cards dealt face-up on the board in Hold'em and Omaha.
* **Flush Draw:** A hand that needs one more card of the same suit to complete a flush (five cards of the same suit).
* **Heads-up:** A situation in poker where only two players are remaining in the hand.
* **In Position (IP):** A player who acts last on a given betting round. Being in position provides a significant strategic advantage.
* **Isolating (ISO):** To bet or raise with the intention of getting rid of other players in the hand and playing heads-up against a specific opponent, often a weaker one.
* **Linear Range:** An opponent's range of hands that are generally ranked from good to best, implying they are unlikely to be bluffing and have some hand strength (e.g., a small bet often represents a linear range).
* **Min Click/Min Raise:** To make the smallest possible legal raise (typically 2x the previous bet or a small fixed amount).
* **Mo (Modus Operandi):** A characteristic way of doing something; a habitual pattern. In poker, it refers to a player's typical strategy or approach in certain situations.
* **Monkey Stabbing/Monkey Betting:** To bet indiscriminately or without much thought, often in a predictable or weak manner.
* **Muck (Cards):** To discard one's hand without showing it, usually when folding.
* **Open-ended Straight Draw (OESD):** A hand that needs one card from either end of a sequence to complete a straight.
* **Out of Position (OOP):** A player who acts first on a given betting round. This puts them at a strategic disadvantage.
* **Polar Range:** An opponent's range of hands that consists of either very strong hands or complete bluffs, with very few mid-strength hands in between.
* **Pre-flop:** The betting round that occurs before any community cards are dealt.
* **Pre-flop Caller:** The player who called a raise pre-flop.
* **Pre-flop Raiser:** The player who initiated the first raise before the flop.
* **Print (Money):** To make a significant profit or win a lot of money.
* **Rag (Poker Term):** Short for "regular," referring to a solid, competent poker player who plays frequently and understands strategy. Less skilled than a "pro," but much better than a "fish."
* **Range (of Hands):** The spectrum of possible hands an opponent could hold in a given situation, based on their actions and betting patterns.
* **Range Betting:** Betting with almost every hand in your range, regardless of its specific strength, often with a small size.
* **Recreational Player:** A casual poker player who plays for fun rather than profit, often exhibiting predictable or exploitable tendencies. Similar to a "fish."
* **River:** The fifth and final community card dealt face-up in Hold'em and Omaha.
* **Set:** Three of a kind, formed by having a pocket pair and hitting one of those cards on the board (e.g., Pocket Fours on a Queen-Nine-Four board).
* **Showdown Value:** The likelihood that a hand will be the best hand at showdown if no more betting occurs.
* **Solver:** A poker software program that uses complex algorithms to calculate theoretically optimal strategies (Game Theory Optimal or GTO) in various poker scenarios.
* **SPR (Stack-to-Pot Ratio):** The ratio of the effective stack size to the current pot size. A low SPR means less money behind relative to the pot.
* **Stabbing:** Making a bet, often a small or probing one, to gain information or try to win the pot.
* **Street:** Refers to a betting round in poker (e.g., pre-flop, flop, turn, river).
* **Suited Connectors:** Two cards of the same suit that are close in rank (e.g., 7h 8h).
* **Telephoning/Telegraphing:** To unintentionally give away information about the strength of one's hand through betting patterns, timing tells, or other actions.
* **Thin Value:** Betting with a hand that is only slightly better than what you expect your opponent to call with, aiming to extract the maximum possible value from their weaker hands.
* **Three-bet (3-bet):** The first re-raise in a betting round. If a player opens with a bet, a three-bet is the next raise on top of that.
* **Trapping:** Playing a strong hand passively (e.g., just calling) to induce opponents to put more money into the pot, hoping they will overvalue their own hands.
* **Turn:** The fourth community card dealt face-up in Hold'em and Omaha.
* **Under the Gun (UTG):** The player who acts first in the pre-flop betting round.
* **Value Bet:** A bet made with a strong hand, intended to get opponents to call with weaker hands.
* **Villain (Poker Term):** Refers to any opponent at the poker table.