The Art of Bet Sizing in Poker: A Comprehensive Study Guide

Quiz

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

1. According to Maron, what is the most common and costly mistake many poker players, including professionals, make regarding bet sizing?
2. When playing on the flop with a hand like pocket 9s on a Jack-9-Deuce board, what bet size does Maron recommend and why?
3. Explain the concept of an "overbet" as discussed in the context of a static, dry Ace-high board. When is it recommended?
4. What does it mean for an opponent to be "capped" on the turn, and what bet size is generally recommended in this situation?
5. When an opponent is **not** capped on the turn, and you have a bluff (e.g., 7-6 of diamonds on a Jack-9-Deuce-4 spades board), what bet size is advised and why?
6. Describe Maron's preferred river bluffing strategy when opponents check-call a small bet on a turn where a flush draw came in.
7. In the scenario where you hold Ace-6 of Spades and an Ace hits the river, how does Maron suggest adjusting your bet size compared to a bluff in a similar situation?
8. When holding a set of Kings on an Ace-9-4-Deuce board that turns an Ace on the river, what bet size is recommended for value, and what is the reasoning?
9. Identify the first exception where a medium bet size can be strategically beneficial. Provide an example.
10. Identify the second exception where a medium bet size can be strategically beneficial. Provide an example.

Quiz Answer Key

1. The most common and costly mistake is using a medium bet size, typically between half pot and pot, over 80% of the time in live poker. Maron argues that the most profitable sizes are generally either very large or very small, and the middling size should mostly be eliminated.
2. Maron recommends a very small bet size (30-40% pot) on the flop with pocket 9s on a Jack-9-Deuce board. This size is chosen to entice opponents to both raise off their strong hands and still call with their weaker holdings, maximizing value from their entire range.
3. An overbet is a bet larger than the pot size. On a static and dry Ace-high board, Maron suggests an overbet (e.g., 1.5x pot) or a check-back, especially when targeting ace-x hands that are unlikely to fold to any size of bet on that board.
4. An opponent is "capped" on the turn when they are unlikely to hold very strong hands (like two pair or sets) because they would have likely raised those hands on the flop. When an opponent is capped, Maron generally recommends a very large bet size, both for value and bluffs, to extract maximum value since they are unlikely to fold.
5. When an opponent is not capped on the turn (e.g., due to flush possibilities), a small bet size is advised for bluffs. This encourages them to raise off their strong hands (like flushes) and continue with weaker hands, maximizing the potential for future bluffs or value.
6. Maron's favorite river bluffing line is to use a "big boy overbet" (e.g., 2x pot or $300-$350) when opponents check-called a small bet on the turn where a flush came in. This is effective because opponents would have likely raised off their strong hands (sets, two pair, flushes) on earlier streets, leaving them with weaker holdings that are ripe for folding.
7. If holding Ace-6 of Spades (value) on a river where a similar bluff might go 2x pot, Maron suggests a smaller but still significant size, perhaps near pot (e.g., $120-$150). The goal is to get "sticky" opponents with hands like Ace-Jack to call, rather than going for a fold like with a bluff.
8. When holding a set of Kings on an Ace-9-4-Deuce board that turns an Ace on the river, Maron recommends a very large bet size, potentially 2x pot or all-in. This targets opponent's two-pair hands (e.g., Ace-9 suited, Ace-King) which are unlikely to fold to a large bet in this scenario, maximizing value.
9. The first exception for a medium bet size is when your value bets want to go either very huge (all-in) or very small, your bluffs can go medium. For example, if pocket 9s would jam for value on a river where an Ace hit and created many two-pair combos, a bluff like 7-6 of diamonds could go medium (e.g., $250-$300) to fold hands like Queen-Jack or King-Jack.
10. The second exception is when your bluffs want to go either very large (overbet bazooka) or very small (quarter pot), your value bets can go medium. For instance, with pocket Kings on a river where an Ace hit and opponents have mostly Ace-Jack/King-Jack/Queen-Jack, a medium bet (which could still be an overbet in absolute terms but "medium" relative to bluff sizes) would be chosen to get those hands to call.

Essay Format Questions (No Answers)

1. Discuss Maron's core philosophy on bet sizing, explaining why he advocates for extremes (very large or very small) and generally discourages medium bet sizes. Provide specific examples from the text to support your points.
2. Analyze the role of "opponent range" and "board texture" in Maron's bet sizing decisions. How do these factors influence whether he recommends a small, large, or medium bet, and why?
3. Compare and contrast Maron's recommended bet sizing strategies for the flop, turn, and river. Are there overarching principles that apply across all streets, or does the optimal approach change significantly as the hand progresses?
4. Maron presents two specific exceptions where a medium bet size can be beneficial. Describe these exceptions in detail, explaining the strategic rationale behind using a medium size in these particular scenarios, contrasting them with situations where medium bets are considered a mistake.
5. Evaluate Maron's approach to balancing bluffs and value bets, particularly on the river. He states, "there's no reason to be balanced against people who can't even spell balanced." Discuss the implications of this statement for a player's overall strategy and how it relates to his bet sizing recommendations for bluffs versus value.

Glossary of Key Terms

* **Win Rate:** A measure of how much profit a poker player makes over a given period, often expressed in big blinds per 100 hands (BB/100) or per hour.
* **Leak:** A specific mistake or weakness in a poker player's strategy that costs them money in the long run.
* **Cash Game Poker Pros:** Professional poker players who specialize in cash games, where chips represent real money and can be cashed out at any time.
* **Low Stakes/Mid to High Stakes:** Classifications of poker games based on the size of the blinds, indicating the level of financial risk and skill typically involved.
* **Half Pot to Pot (Bet Size):** A bet size that is between 50% and 100% of the current size of the pot. Maron generally considers this a "medium" size.
* **Live Poker:** Poker played in a physical casino or cardroom, as opposed to online.
* **2/5 (Game):** Refers to a No-Limit Hold'em cash game with blinds of $2 (small blind) and $5 (big blind).
* **Bulbas Boys:** Likely a casual term used by Maron to refer to the players in the game.
* **Villain:** The opponent in a poker hand, typically from the perspective of the player discussing the hand.
* **Cut-off (CO):** A poker position at the table, one seat to the right of the button.
* **Button (BTN):** The most advantageous position in poker, as the player acts last on all post-flop streets.
* **Pocket 9s:** A starting hand in Hold'em consisting of two nines (9-9).
* **Three-bet (3bet):** The third bet in a betting round. If a player opens with a bet, and another player raises, that raise is a 3-bet.
* **MO:** Modus Operandi; a characteristic way of doing something. In this context, Maron's usual strategy.
* **Three-bet or Fold:** A strategy where a player either re-raises (3-bets) or folds their hand pre-flop, avoiding calls.
* **Recreational Players:** Casual poker players who play for enjoyment rather than as a primary source of income.
* **Isolate:** To make a bet or raise with the goal of playing heads-up (against one opponent) rather than in a multi-way pot.
* **In Position:** Having the advantage of acting last on a betting round.
* **Heads-up:** A poker situation where only two players are involved in the pot.
* **Flop:** The second betting round in Hold'em, where three community cards are dealt face-up.
* **Jack-9-Deuce (J92):** Refers to the three community cards dealt on the flop.
* **Check Over:** When all players before you in a betting round choose not to bet, passing the action to you.
* **C-bet (Continuation Bet):** A bet made on the flop by the player who made the last pre-flop raise.
* **Entice:** To encourage or persuade an opponent to take a specific action (e.g., raise or call).
* **Raise Off:** To cause an opponent to raise their hand, often with strong holdings.
* **Call With Their Weak Stuff:** To get an opponent to call with marginal or weak hands that they might otherwise fold.
* **Float:** To call a bet with a weak hand, often with the intention of bluffing on a later street.
* **Pocket Eights with a Spade (88s):** A pair of eights, one of which is a spade.
* **Jack Nine of Hearts (J9hh):** A hand consisting of a Jack and a Nine of hearts (suited).
* **Pocket Deuces (22):** A starting hand in Hold'em consisting of two deuces (2-2).
* **Flatting:** To just call a bet, rather than raising.
* **Drawing Dead:** A situation where a player's hand has no chance of winning, regardless of what cards come.
* **Value:** Money extracted from opponents when you have the best hand.
* **Range:** The set of all possible hands an opponent might hold in a given situation.
* **30% to 40% Pot:** A recommended "small" bet size on the flop.
* **Ace-Due Suited (A2s):** A hand consisting of an Ace and a Deuce of the same suit.
* **Ace-High Board:** A flop or community card set where the highest card is an Ace.
* **Static/Dry Board:** A board texture with few or no possible draws (straight draws, flush draws), making it unlikely for hands to improve significantly.
* **Ace-X (Ax):** Any hand containing an Ace and another card (X).
* **Overbet:** A bet that is larger than the current pot size (e.g., 1.5x pot, 2x pot).
* **Check Back:** To check when you have the option to bet, passing the action to the next player or ending the betting round.
* **Middle Set:** Holding a set (three of a kind) where the rank of your set is between the highest and lowest card on the board (e.g., pocket 9s on a J92 board).
* **7-6 of Diamonds (76dd):** A starting hand consisting of a 7 and a 6 of diamonds (suited).
* **Single Raised Pots:** A pot where there was only one raise pre-flop (e.g., an open raise and then a call).
* **Relative Size:** The size of a bet in relation to the pot size (e.g., half pot, full pot).
* **Absolute Size:** The exact monetary amount of a bet (e.g., $20, $100).
* **Blank (Turn/River):** A card dealt on the turn or river that does not significantly change the board texture or improve many hands.
* **Capped (Opponent):** An opponent whose range of hands is limited to weaker holdings because they would have likely raised with stronger hands on previous streets.
* **Ace Jack (AJ):** A hand consisting of an Ace and a Jack.
* **Ace 5 of Spades (A5s):** A hand consisting of an Ace and a 5 of spades (suited).
* **Quandary:** A state of perplexity or uncertainty over what to do in a difficult situation.
* **Big Boy Overbet:** Maron's informal term for a very large bet size, often on the turn or river.
* **Bluffs:** Bets made with a weak hand that is unlikely to be the best, hoping to get opponents with stronger hands to fold.
* **Value (Bet):** A bet made with a strong hand, hoping to get opponents with weaker hands to call.
* **Ace 3 of Spades (A3s):** A hand consisting of an Ace and a 3 of spades (suited).
* **Queen Jack (QJ):** A hand consisting of a Queen and a Jack.
* **Pile In (Money):** To bet a large amount of money into the pot.
* **Boot Camp:** An intensive training program offered by Hungry Horse Poker.
* **6 of Spades (6s):** A starting hand with a 6 of spades.
* **Big Blind:** The largest forced bet in a poker round.
* **Queen 10 of Clubs (QTcc):** A hand consisting of a Queen and a 10 of clubs (suited).
* **Queen 8 of Spades (Q8s):** A hand consisting of a Queen and an 8 of spades (suited).
* **Cooled:** Being in a favorable situation, often implying having a strong hand against an opponent's weaker hand or drawing dead.
* **Big Boy Hammer:** Maron's informal term for a very large bet, often referring to an overbet on the river.
* **Ace-Jack/King-Jack/Queen-Jack (AJ/KJ/QJ):** Examples of hands an opponent might hold on the river after certain betting lines.
* **Bluffing Line:** A sequence of bets and actions designed to represent a strong hand and induce a fold from an opponent.
* **Check-Call:** To check initially and then call an opponent's bet.
* **Ripe for Bluffing:** An opponent whose range is weak enough that they are susceptible to being bluffed.
* **Balanced:** In poker, refers to a strategy that mixes different types of hands (value and bluffs) with various bet sizes and actions to make it difficult for opponents to exploit. Maron notes he doesn't always play "balanced" against certain opponents.
* **Greeder:** More aggressive in trying to extract value.
* **Sticky (Opponent):** An opponent who is prone to calling bets with a wide range of hands, often including marginal ones.
* **Pocket Kings (KK):** A starting hand in Hold'em consisting of two kings.
* **9-4-Deuce (942):** Refers to the three community cards dealt on the flop.
* **Wheel Draws (e.g., 5-6 suited):** Straight draws that involve Ace-2-3-4-5.
* **9x:** Any hand containing a 9 (e.g., 9-T, 9-Q).
* **Pocket 10s/Jacks/Queens (TT/JJ/QQ):** Examples of pocket pairs.
* **Blasting:** Betting very large amounts.
* **Ace (River):** An Ace hitting on the river.
* **Ace 9 Suited (A9s):** A hand consisting of an Ace and a 9 of the same suit.
* **Ace King (AK):** A hand consisting of an Ace and a King.
* **Two Pair:** A hand consisting of two different pairs.
* **Brick (River):** When the river card does not improve a drawing hand.
* **Snap Off:** To quickly call a bet, often with a hand that is clearly strong enough.
* **Lose the Minimum:** To fold or make a small bet to minimize losses when you believe you are behind.
* **Gut Shot:** A straight draw where only one specific card can complete the straight (e.g., needing a 5 for a 3-4-6-7 straight).
* **Jam:** To go all-in, betting all remaining chips.
* **Combos:** Different possible combinations of cards that make up a particular hand (e.g., Ace-Jack has multiple combos like Ace of Spades-Jack of Clubs, Ace of Hearts-Jack of Diamonds, etc.).
* **Binked:** An informal term for hitting a favorable card, often one that completes a draw or significantly improves a hand.
* **Bazooka Overbet:** Maron's informal term for a massive overbet.
* **Mr. Sticky Iky Iky:** Maron's informal term for an extremely sticky opponent.