Advanced Live Poker Reads and Exploits: A Comprehensive Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. **Snap Call on the Turn:** Explain the typical hand strength of an opponent who snap calls on the turn and how this read can be exploited.
2. **Check Back Top Pair on Wet Board (Value):** When an opponent checks back a strong hand like top pair on a wet board from out of position, how should you adjust your betting strategy when you hold a strong hand like pocket kings?
3. **Check Back Top Pair on Wet Board (Bluff):** If an opponent checks back top pair on a wet board and then later bets on the turn after you check, what type of range are they representing, and how should you respond with a semi-bluff?
4. **Cold Call a 3-Bet (Four-Betting):** How should your four-betting strategy change when facing an opponent who frequently cold calls 3-bets, depending on whether they are willing to play for all their chips with strong but non-nut hands?
5. **Cold Call a 3-Bet (Folding):** When an opponent who is known to cold call 3-bets with hands like Ace King or Queens then cold four-bets, what is the implied strength of their hand, and what is the optimal response if you hold pocket kings?
6. **Check Out of Position with Top Pair Top Kicker (Value):** When an opponent checks the river from out of position with a strong hand like top pair top kicker, what does this tell you about their willingness to fold, and how should you size your value bet?
7. **Check Out of Position with Top Pair Top Kicker (Bluff):** If an opponent is known to check strong single pairs on the river, and they instead bet the river, what kind of range are they representing, and how can you exploit this with a bluff?
8. **Check Call with a Set on a Wet Board (Value):** When playing against an opponent who is willing to check-call with a set on a wet board, how should you size your turn bet when you hold a strong hand, and why?
9. **Limp-Call Player (Open Raise):** What does it signify when a player who frequently limp-calls then decides to open-raise pre-flop, and how should this affect your decision to 3-bet them?
10. **Varying Open Sizing (Exploit):** If an opponent typically opens to 4-5x but then makes a significantly larger open (8-9x) and is later shown to have a strong but not premium hand (like pocket tens), how should you respond if you hold a hand that beats their likely range?

Quiz Answer Key

1. **Snap Call on the Turn:** An opponent who snap calls on the turn usually holds medium-strength hands or draws, indicating they are not considering a raise with a very strong hand. To exploit this, if you have a bluff on the river, you can bet very big to get them to fold, knowing their best hand is likely not strong enough to call a large bet.
2. **Check Back Top Pair on Wet Board (Value):** Against an opponent who checks back strong hands from out of position on wet boards, you should be less inclined to range check and instead start betting immediately with strong hands like pocket kings. This puts pressure on them right away, as they are unlikely to fold strong hands, allowing you to build a pot.
3. **Check Back Top Pair on Wet Board (Bluff):** If such an opponent checks the flop and then bets the turn, they likely have a more polarized range (nuts or air) because they tend to pot-control strong hands. You can exploit this by check-raising frequently with draws and semi-bluffs, even with a small size, to get them to fold air and pressure their draws.
4. **Cold Call a 3-Bet (Four-Betting):** If the opponent cold calls 3-bets but avoids playing for all their chips with hands like Jacks, Queens, or Ace King, you can use more four-bet bluffs with hands like A6s or K8s. If they are willing to call off with those hands, you should four-bet thinner for value with hands like AKs, AKo, QQ.
5. **Cold Call a 3-Bet (Folding):** When an opponent known to cold call 3-bets with Ace King or Queens then cold four-bets, their range is extremely strong, typically limited to Aces or Kings. Therefore, if you hold pocket kings in this spot, it is often correct to fold, as your hand is highly likely to be dominated by Aces.
6. **Check Out of Position with Top Pair Top Kicker (Value):** When an opponent checks the river with strong single pair hands from out of position, they are rarely planning to fold unless faced with an enormous bet. This means you should bet massively with your value hands, knowing they will call with King Jack, Queen Jack, or Jack Ten, allowing you to maximize value.
7. **Check Out of Position with Top Pair Top Kicker (Bluff):** If an opponent is known to check strong single pairs on the river but instead bets, they are representing a highly polarized range (two pair+ or air). With a bluff, you can min-raise them, as their air hands will fold, and you can sometimes get them to fold marginal strong hands that don't beat your implied value.
8. **Check Call with a Set on a Wet Board (Value):** When an opponent check-calls a set on a wet board, they are not "capped" on the turn, meaning they can still have very strong hands. Therefore, you should bet small on the turn to give them another opportunity to raise with their strong hands (like two pair or smaller sets) and also encourage calls from their weaker hands.
9. **Limp-Call Player (Open Raise):** A player who frequently limp-calls but then open-raises pre-flop indicates they have a very strong range for their open raises. Their weaker and middle-strength hands are generally in their limp-call range, so you should be very cautious about 3-betting them when they open-raise.
10. **Varying Open Sizing (Exploit):** If an opponent significantly increases their open sizing (e.g., from 4-5x to 8-9x) and is known to do this with strong but non-premium hands, they are signaling that they are not going to fold. If you hold a hand that beats their likely range (e.g., Queens, Kings, Aces, Ace King), you should put in a monstrous 3-bet to maximize the pot, rather than a standard one.

Essay Format Questions

1. **The Nuances of "Snap Calling":** Discuss the different implications and exploitative strategies associated with an opponent snap calling on the turn versus other streets (e.g., flop or river). How might the perceived range and subsequent exploitation differ based on the street of the snap call?
2. **Balancing Aggression and Pot Control:** Analyze the strategic tension between aggressive betting and pot control when playing against opponents who are prone to checking back strong hands on wet boards. How does understanding their tendencies inform your decision to bet or check, both with strong hands and bluffs, across different streets?
3. **Exploiting Pre-Flop Tendencies:** Compare and contrast the exploitative strategies for dealing with opponents who "cold call 3-bets" versus those who "limp-raise" pre-flop. Detail how your perceived range for their actions and your optimal response (e.g., 3-betting, 4-betting, folding) differ in these two scenarios.
4. **River Play with Polarized Ranges:** Explain the strategic considerations for betting for value versus bluffing on the river when you know your opponent's range is highly polarized (nuts or air). Provide specific examples of hand strengths and sizing adjustments for both value bets and bluffs in such situations.
5. **Live Poker "Tells" and Game Theory:** Select three of the "10 quick hitters" (e.g., buying in with cash, chip alignment, refusing to straddle) and discuss how these physical/behavioral tells can inform your poker decisions. How do these "tells" deviate from a theoretically optimal game plan, and why are they particularly exploitable in live poker?

Glossary of Key Terms

* **Air:** A hand with very little or no showdown value, typically a pure bluff.
* **Backdoor Flush Draw:** A draw to a flush that requires two more cards of the same suit (on the turn and river) to complete.
* **Bank It:** To buy chips from the casino cashier or a dedicated poker room "bank," indicating a more professional or serious player.
* **Big Blind (BB):** The largest of the two forced bets in a poker hand, typically placed by the player two positions to the left of the dealer button.
* **Blank:** A card dealt on the turn or river that is unlikely to significantly change the hand's strength or create new draws for either player.
* **Bluff:** A bet or raise made with a weak hand, intended to induce opponents with stronger hands to fold.
* **Button:** The player position with the last action in all post-flop betting rounds, often considered the most advantageous position.
* **Capped Range:** A range of hands that does not include the very strongest possible hands, usually because those hands would have been played more aggressively on previous streets.
* **C-bet (Continuation Bet):** A bet made on the flop by the player who was the pre-flop aggressor.
* **Check Back:** To check when it is your turn to act, often indicating a desire to pot control or a weaker hand.
* **Check-Call:** To check and then call an opponent's bet.
* **Check-Raise:** To check when it is your turn to act, and then raise after an opponent makes a bet.
* **Chip Alignment:** The way a player arranges their chips, sometimes indicating their playing style (e.g., perfectly aligned chips might suggest a conservative player).
* **Cold Call:** To call a bet when you have not previously put any money into the pot (e.g., calling a 3-bet directly).
* **Cold Four-Bet:** To make a four-bet when you have not previously put any money into the pot.
* **Cooler:** A situation in poker where a very strong hand runs into an even stronger hand, resulting in a large loss that is difficult to avoid.
* **Cutoff:** The position directly to the right of the button, the second-to-last position to act post-flop.
* **Double Barrel:** To bet on both the flop and the turn (after making a c-bet on the flop).
* **Draw:** A hand that requires one or more specific cards to improve to a strong hand (e.g., a flush draw or straight draw).
* **Draw Dead:** To have a hand that cannot win, even if it improves, because an opponent already has a stronger, unbeatable hand.
* **Exploit:** To take advantage of an opponent's specific tendencies or weaknesses to gain an edge.
* **Fast Play:** To play a strong hand aggressively (betting and raising) to build a large pot quickly.
* **Fish:** A weak or inexperienced poker player, often prone to making exploitable mistakes.
* **Flop:** The first three community cards dealt face-up in Hold'em and Omaha.
* **Fold Equity:** The portion of the pot you expect to win by getting your opponent to fold to your bet or raise.
* **Four-Bet:** The fourth bet in a betting sequence, typically a re-raise of a 3-bet.
* **Game Theory Optimal (GTO):** A poker strategy that cannot be exploited by any opponent, assuming perfect play from both sides.
* **Hijack:** The position two seats to the right of the cutoff.
* **Linearly (Betting/Raising):** Betting or raising with a range of hands that are strong and get progressively stronger, without including many bluffs.
* **Limp-Call:** To enter the pot by just calling the big blind (limping) and then calling a subsequent raise.
* **Limp-Raise:** To enter the pot by just calling the big blind (limping) and then re-raising a subsequent bet.
* **Low Stakes:** Poker games with relatively small blind sizes and buy-ins.
* **Min-Raise:** To raise the minimum allowed amount.
* **Mo:** Short for "modus operandi" or method of operating, referring to a player's typical strategy.
* **Nuts:** The best possible hand given the community cards.
* **Open (Open Raise):** To be the first player to voluntarily put money into the pot in a betting round by raising.
* **Out of Position (OOP):** To be in a position where you act before your opponent in a betting round.
* **Polarized Range:** A range of hands that consists primarily of very strong hands (nuts) and very weak hands (air), with few medium-strength hands.
* **Pot Control:** To manage the size of the pot, often by checking or betting smaller, to avoid playing for all of your chips.
* **Pre-flop:** The betting round before any community cards are dealt.
* **Pro:** A professional poker player.
* **Quarterback:** To buy chips from a "box," which is typically a designated chip storage area at a professional poker table, indicating a more serious or pro player.
* **Range:** The set of all possible hands an opponent might hold in a given situation.
* **Range Check:** To check with virtually all hands in your range in a given spot.
* **Recreational Player:** A player who plays poker for enjoyment rather than as a primary source of income.
* **Read:** An observation about an opponent's tendencies, behaviors, or hand strength.
* **River:** The fifth and final community card dealt face-up.
* **Semi-Bluff:** A bet or raise made with a hand that is currently not strong but has good potential to improve to a strong hand (e.g., a flush draw).
* **Set:** Three of a kind, where two of the cards are in the player's hand and one is on the board.
* **Showdown:** The act of revealing hands at the end of a poker hand to determine the winner.
* **Single Raised Pot:** A pot where there was only one raise pre-flop (e.g., an open raise called by one or more players).
* **Snap Call:** To call a bet almost instantly, without much hesitation.
* **Stab:** To make a bet, often as a bluff, into a pot that has been checked previously.
* **Straddle:** An optional blind bet made before cards are dealt, typically larger than the big blind, which allows the straddler to act last in the pre-flop betting round.
* **Suit (Suited):** Cards of the same suit (e.g., Ace of Spades, Six of Spades).
* **Thin For Value:** To bet or raise for value with a hand that is not exceptionally strong but is likely to be better than an opponent's calling range.
* **Three-Bet (3-Bet):** The third bet in a betting sequence, typically a re-raise of an open raise.
* **Top Pair Top Kicker (TPTK):** Having a pair with the highest card on the board, and the highest possible accompanying card in your hand.
* **Turn:** The fourth community card dealt face-up.
* **Under Bluffing:** Bluffing less often than mathematically optimal or less often than expected.
* **Value:** Betting or raising with a hand that you believe is the best and want to be called.
* **Wet Board:** A board with many potential draws (e.g., multiple cards of the same suit or connected cards for straights).