

The following is a wrap-up from Tom E. about his experience playing in the Main Event this season:

Pre-game and the players at my table

First, going to the main event is a great feeling. The night before I was very nervous. Linn and I registered on Friday and we watched day 1b for a while. That helped calm things down as we watched a few people play not so great and realized that, hey, we can hang with these guys!

I Didn't sleep much Friday night. Linn played cash late into the night, but I checked in at midnight. However, I did the right thing by getting up early (as far as Vegas goes!) and walked around. I went and got snacks and a backpack. Took about two hours total, most of which was walking. By the time I got to the Rio, I was very relaxed and ready to play. I had just enough time to get a neck massage, which felt great!

When I got to my table, I obviously didn't know how people were going to play, but here is the assessment of the players that I built over the next several hours:

Seat 1 was a pretty unlucky player who busted out early. He wasn't that good, but also took bad beats. He was replaced by a young kid who I read as an internet player who would make a lot of moves. Seats 2 and 3 were pros. I've seen them on TV a bit, not much though. Seat 4 was a wealthy business man who knew the pros. I figure he plays tournaments a lot for fun since he can afford it. I was in seat 5. I played very few hands early so people perceived me as tight. Seat 6 was the same. I was a bit more aggressive than seat 6. He was a bit more tight passive where I was more tight aggressive. Seat 7 was tight aggressive. Seats 8 through 10 were the worst players. They played a lot of pots, called a lot, etc. For instance, seat 8 called an A,10, 4 board flop against the pro who bet to the river with AK. Seat 8 had Q4 and hit two pair on the river. I think that about sums up seat 8.

That is pregame. Now I will summarize the action during the 4 rounds that I played.

Round 1: blinds are 50/100

I played four hands total for the first hour:

First hand I raise on the button with AQ. Seat 8 (bad player) calls. Flop is Axx. Seat 8 leads out. I call. On the turn, seat 8 bets, I call. River seat 8 checks. I value bet, he calls and I win the hand.

I limp from the button with K4 suited. BB raises I fold

I call from late position with 98 suited, three go to the flop. I flop top pair, a flush draw and gut-shot straight draw. Original raiser bets, second player calls. I re-raise and take down the pot.

I raise on the button with A6 suited. BB (seat 8 since no one is in seat 7 still) calls. I flop the nuts. BB checks and I do too. BB bets the turn, I call. BB bets the river, I raise, he folds

At 1pm, I have 37k in chips. I play two hands this hour:

I raise late position with kings. The button calls. I bet the flop, button calls. Turn completes a flush, I bet anyway, button calls. On the river, I give the hand a lot of thought. Do I value bet or check? I go for the value bet and he calls, I win.

Seat 10 raises, I call with sixes in the BB. Flop is J87. I check, seat 10 bets, I raise as I figured I had the best hand, he folds

Round 2: blinds are 75/150

I started round 2 with 41k in chips. I played four hands the first hour:

I raise with J8 suited in late position, the blinds call. Flop is AJx, they check, I bet and win.

I raise late position with A10, BB calls. Flop is AK10, I bet and win

I call a raise in late position with 98 suited. I flop top pair and flush draw. It's checked to me and I bet and get one caller. I can't remember the turn card, but it was an over-card, so I check. River puts four to a straight. He bets and I fold. Not sure I played this hand well.

I'm getting 5 to 1 to call from the BB with 43. I call and fold on flop.

I start the second hour with 40k stack and this is the hour where the wheels start to fall off. Sometime in this round is when the new seat 1 player showed up. I also think at this point, we already lost seat 9 and get a new player there. So, two people already out. Seat 1 is a tricky player that makes moves. I see him watching how people raise, call. He seems to only glance at his cards then re-raise. He is very aggressive and people are folding to him. I now see the sequence of my play leading up to my demise.

I limp on the button with A5. BB raises I fold. Have to stop limping!

I raise early position with AQ, two callers behind me. I check a missed flop and fold to a bet. Starting to show weakness, but I was pretty sure I was beat.

I limp in mid position with Q10 suited, call late position raise and fold on flop.

SB vs BB and I am BB. Flop is Qxx. I bet with A7 and win

Early position raiser and one caller. I pick up KQ from the button and try the squeeze play. Both players call. Flop is Axx. One caller bets, other folds, I fold.

At this point, I didn't know it, but my table image is now crap. So, here's the hand that really did me in: I pick up Jacks from early position and raise. I get three callers behind me. Seat 6 (tight player) and seats 8 and 9 (loose players). Seat 1 re-raises to 2500. I call (first mistake) and seat 8, who has about 12k left calls. The flop is 10, 8, 4 with two clubs. Seat 1 checks. I bet 7k, seat 8 folds. Seat 1 then re-raises to 15k. I call (second mistake). Turn is the queen of clubs and seat 1 goes all-in with another 18k or so. I have him covered. If I call and lose, I will be left with about 5k. I fold. I am 80% sure at this point that I had the best hand pre-flop and probably on the turn. On the river, I could have rivered the straight or flush, even if I was behind. So, it might have been a mistake to even fold the river. I watched

seat 1 make this SB squeeze play two more times before I left, so it is very likely he was making a play on me, especially considering how bad my table image was at that point.

Anyway, I am now back to 30k in chips, right where I started.

Round 3: blinds are 100/200

First hour I play 8 hands. I'm a bit on tilt and end up playing more hands than I should

I raise with A10 in mid-position, get re-raised and I fold

I check the BB, then checked flop/turn, I call the river with a pair, lose to two pair

I call from SB, check and fold to bet on flop

I call on the button with deuces with 3 people in front of me. Four go to the flop and it's Ax2. Original raiser, the pro in seat 3, bets, I call, everyone else folds. Turn is a Q. He bets, I raise. He thinks for some time, checking me out, but decides to call. River is a blank. He checks. I look at my stack and try to act as nervous as I can like I'm bluffing and bet all my stack except about 4k. I didn't want to go all-in. He calls pretty quick. I figure he had AK or AQ. I am now up to 51k.

I raise with 68 suited from late position, BB calls. There is a flush draw on the flop, but not for me. I have air. I probe bet the flop and turn, he calls. On the river, he checks. Only way to win the pot is hope he was on a flush draw, which was my read. I bet, he folds. I can breathe now. It's a lot easier to pull this off when you have chips!

I call a raise with 88. fold to flop bet

I call in SB with jacks. I bet the flop and win (I had an over-pair)

I call a min-raise in late position with QJ. Flop top pair, checked to me I bet and win

Second hour I play six hands:

The main hand, where I lose chips back to 30k again is a repeat of my jacks. I raise late position with nines. button calls, seat 7 (SB) re-raises to 2500. This guy is fairly short stacked at about 18k. I call and the button folds. Flop is JJ10. seat 7 bets 3k, I call. 11k in the pot. Turn is another Jack. Seat 7 goes all-in for 13k. I fold. Did he have AA, KK, or QQ? Maybe, but now I have folded the same way twice.

The very next hand I pick up pocket eights and raise. This time, seat 7, on the button, raises me again! I call. Flop is 10 5 4, I check, he bets, I call. Turn misses me. I check he bets, I fold.

At this point I am back to 30k and know I have a weakness. The level of play is very good. If you have a weakness and it is exposed, people will start to attack it. I knew I had this problem before the tournament and know I have to fix it for sure now.

My last level - round 4: Blinds are 150/300 with 25 ante

I started the round with 30k. I saw a few flops, folded. Raised a few pots, won, but wasn't really getting anywhere.

With about 20 minutes left in the round, I got into the hand that knocked me out.

Seat 10, a player who has been raising and then folding a lot on the flop, raised. I called from the button with A8 suited (diamonds). The small blind called. Now, the small blind was pretty tight and a bit passive, so I liked my chances against these two players. The raise was 1k, so 3k in the pot.

The flop is 874 with two diamonds, so I have top pair and nut flush draw. Seat 10 bets 2k. I re-raise to 6k. Small blinds raises pretty quickly to 16k. Seat 10 folds. At this point, I'm pretty sure I am behind and seat 6 has me covered. I figure he has two pair or a set, and likely a set. The pot has 27k and I have to put 10k in. I have 24k in chips left. If I hit my flush on the turn, I figure he will pay me. So, 10k to win 43k, which is about 4 to 1 which are my odds. I need to accumulate chips at some point, so I decide to call. The turn is an Ace, and seat 6 goes all-in. There is 51k in the pot and I have 14k. I am getting 3.5 to 1 on my money and I figure I have 13 outs. So about 28% equity or about 2.5 to 1 to call.

So, the math says to call, but this is for the rest of my stack. I thought about folding first. If I fold, I have 14k left. In 20 minutes, the blinds go to 200/400 with 50 ante, so my M will be 14. Short stack territory. I would be the short stack at the table and needing to make big bets, all-in, etc. I figured the pros would pick me off in this situation, so I decided I am better off taking my chances and try to double up. If I do, I planned to take it easy in the last round and make it to day 2.

So, I call and brick the river. Seat 6 wins with a flopped straight.

Conclusion

Overall, I really enjoyed playing and learned a lot in one day. I know the areas I need to work on, and am already working on things to fix my weaknesses. Thanks to the syndicate for this great opportunity. I hope I get another chance next year, but I know everyone else wants to win as well. I look forward to next season!