

**Take your passion for poker online
and play to win!**

Winning at Internet Poker

FOR
DUMMIES®



Mark "The Red" Harlan and Chris Derossi
Creators of the next-generation poker software at Gamesgrid.com

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®

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Winning at Internet Poker For Dummies

**by Mark "The Red"
Harlan and Chris
Derossi**



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Winning at Internet Poker For Dummies®

Published by

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

111 River St.

Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2005 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.,
Indianapolis, Indiana

Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2004116935

ISBN: 0-7645-7833-2

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

1O/RY/QR/QV/IN



About the Authors

Mark “The Red” Harlan: Mark “The Red” Harlan was born in Rawlins, Wyoming and has lived exactly the life you would expect as a result. Armed with a degree in Applied Mathematics (from a school he never utters the name of), he began a 20-year stint in the computer industry. Red has worked with several cutting-edge Silicon Valley companies ranging from Apple Computer (where, among other positions, he was Human Interface Evangelist — making applications easier to use and openly berating those who didn’t) to Danger (makers of the T-Mobile Sidekick). Alarmingly, Red has probably already touched your life, since he designed the bidding schema that is in use by eBay today. Red has a heavy writing background (some of it actually readable) having authored *Notes from the Fringe*, InfoWorld’s most popular computer column in the heyday of the Internet; and the *DevEdge News* for Netscape’s developer community. Red now sports the hefty title of Chief Marketing Officer at CyberArts Licensing, a company providing software for the next generation of poker rooms on the Internet (such as www.gamesgrid.com). CyberArts is the place where Red mixes his love of poker with his deep understanding of graphical user interfaces to make online poker easier to use, better looking, and considerably more fun. Today Red lives a glamorous lifestyle, roughly akin to a well-to-do college student, in Santa Clara, California. Red welcomes non-spam email at mharlan@cyberarts.com.

Chris Derossi: Chris Derossi is a 20-year computer veteran and serial entrepreneur. Having started his first company at the age of 14 he has worked at a myriad of corporations since (creating several along the way). Among other positions, Chris has been: the Chief Architect of the Macintosh Operating System at Apple Computer, the founder of ePeople, and the CEO of Trading Technologies. Chris was a founder of *MacTech* magazine and has written extensively for the computer industry, in publications such as *Byte* and *Dr. Dobbs's Journal*. Today, Chris is the CEO of CyberArts Licensing, a software company working feverishly to take Internet skill games (including poker, naturally) to the next level. Aside from running day-to-day business matters, Chris is responsible for the entire architecture of CyberArt's poker offering (seen at www.gamesgrid.com), ensuring that the technology is stable, robust, and hugely scalable. For the last 15 years Chris has been an avid poker player and is often found clutching the first place trophy in the tournaments he enters. Chris was born in Laramie, Wyoming and today lives in Henderson, Nevada (a stone's throw from Las Vegas) with his wife and two children. Chris can be reached at cderossi@cyberarts.com. Red and Chris both man a *Winning at Internet Poker for Dummies* discussion board at <http://pokerbook.gamesgrid.com>.

Dedication

From Mark “The Red” Harlan: I dedicate this book to Jacqueline because I always said I would, to members of the Math Alliance just because, and to my Uncle Poison because legends should live on.

From Chris Derossi: I dedicate this book to my wife, Jennifer, and my children, Grayson and Miranda, who are always there with love and support.

Authors' Acknowledgments

From Red: My Mom, Marijane “Quarter Slots” Harlan, worked backbreaking hospital nights for 20 years, simply to assure I was educated and would turn out “okay.” There are debts I owe to the world and then there is this. All moms *wish* they were as good as you.

Super-thanks to those Lakewood High School teachers from all those years ago: Luanne “Thesis” Rohovec (Pendorf), for teaching me how to write; Derald “Liver Green” Dunagan and Gary “Jag” Hurst for teaching me how to think; and Nic “Shorts” Ament for the bad ass poker nickname. You’d be amazed at the difference you’ve made in my life. Books can’t be done without basic sustenance, which is to say music, food, and caffeine. So thanks to Isaac “Shaft” Hayes, Curtis “Superfly” Mayfield, Sly “Stand!” Stone, James “Mr. Dynamite” Brown, Donna at the Hick’ry Pit, Hanan at the Original Pancake House, Rahim at 7-11, and Clarus at the Bitmap Café. Dig it.

My Project Editor, Sherri “The Spine” Pfouts at Wiley was not only forced to endure my incessant sassiness, taunting, and flexing of deadlines; but she then went well above the call of duty by doing a bunch of stuff (I still don’t even know what) to make my life easier when my eye exploded in the midst of writing this book.

Then there is Chris “No Nickname” Derossi. A true force of a human being, he’s the smartest and most ethical person I’ve ever done business with. Chris has been and is *always* the calm in the eye of the storm that is my life. His continual unquestioning support, deep understanding of my psyche, and sharp attention to detail has made this book not only happen crisply, but also be twice as good as it would otherwise have been. And although I’m a considerably better person just by knowing him, I still have no idea what he did to deserve me. Thank you, sir.

And my sincere thanks to you, the reader. Nothing here is possible without you. It sounds trite, but that doesn’t make it less true; you have helped fulfill a lifelong dream of mine. I sincerely hope something in these pages makes you think, learn, or at least laugh. In the Western world, time is the most precious of all commodities; I truly appreciate you spending it with us.

From Chris: My name would not be on this book at all if it weren’t for the monumental talent, effort, and graciousness of my coauthor, partner, and friend, Mark Harlan. Writing a book takes an enormous amount of work and creates a mountain of pressure. Mark not only handled both with ease, he did it while keeping his sense of humor and unique, thought-provoking outlook on life. Mark deserves most of the credit for what’s on these pages, and he has my thanks and respect for all of the sleep he gave up to get it done.

I must acknowledge Konstantin Othmer for introducing me to serious poker. Instead of keeping his friends in the dark to bolster his poker profits, he helped us learn. I owe thanks to Kon for many years of recreation and extra income.

Thanks also to Margot Maley Hutchison, who asked me if I wanted to write a book when I first met her a decade ago. She waited patiently until I said yes, and was very helpful throughout the entire process.

Finally, thanks to the many, many people who have helped and encouraged me while I've spent countless hours in entrepreneurial pursuits, of which this book is just a small part. I consider myself to be fortunate enough to follow my dreams thanks to my family, friends, and associates.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/ .

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

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Cover Photos: © Getty Images/ Photodisc Green

Cartoons: Rich Tennant (www.the5thwave.com)

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Introduction

For something like 150 years, people have been playing poker on shady riverboats, in smokey backrooms of otherwise legitimate businesses, in booze-laden college dorms, on cramped tent floors, and at family kitchen tables. Although the games are often social events, the underlying purpose is always the same: play, play, play, and try to take as much of whatever you possibly can from the steely-eyed person sitting across from you. Be it pretzels, lingerie, or cold hard cash, what your opponents have is what you want. Victors get the spoils; losers get large servings of crow (usually served cold with no garnish).

A few years ago, the Internet came along, and along with it, the first “Big Change.” Now you can play against people anywhere in the world, at any time of the day, and for varying sums of money. And the card house where it all goes down is exactly as far away as your computer.

Early concerns of cheating and the inability to see the faces of your competitors, crossed with the uncertainty of passing electronic cash to an unknown foreign entity, gave many would-be online players reason to pause, but the efforts and technology aimed at making the game safe have prevailed. Internet poker has truly exploded in the past couple of years, no doubt due in large part to the numerous televised poker events and Internet sponsorship of some of the top players in the world.

The Internet traffic statistics are staggering, with the busiest poker sites dwarfing the clientele at brick-and-mortar casinos: At any given moment, tens of thousands of players duke it out on a multitude of tables. Internet poker was nothing 10 years ago, and today it's a billion-dollar industry with no signs of subsiding.

In some ways, the online world is identical to the real one. You can play Texas Hold 'Em, Omaha, and Seven-Card Stud. You can play less popular competitive games, such as Pineapple, Five-Card Stud or Draw, or wild card games, depending on the site. You can compete for play chips or hard currency. You can play in ring games or tournaments.

But in some ways, the online world is very different. You have to be able to judge a site for quality. You have to download and master the software. You have to make electronic transactions over-the-wire to move your cash. And don't forget that you have to choose between table sizes and game types.

At first it can all be a little much. But don't despair. You have a clear path through this wilderness. Come along, and we'll take you there.

About This Book

This book specifically covers the nuances of Internet poker as compared to everything in the brick-and-mortar

world. You should think of *Winning at Internet Poker For Dummies* as an augmentation to any and all poker knowledge you already have; you definitely shouldn't think of this book as the stand-alone, end-all, be-all poker reference. We've written this text to dovetail cleanly with *Poker For Dummies* (Wiley), but it can just as easily walk hand-in-hand with any other beginning or intermediate poker text.

Thinking Internet poker is identical to brick-and-mortar poker can be a costly mistake. The two are similar, but they have key differences. Our main goal is to point out the differences and help you avoid the myriad of pitfalls lying in wait for the unsuspecting.

We help you discover the nuances of an Internet poker table, pick a site to your liking, and transfer your electronic funds. From there, we take a peek at online poker psychology and delve into some of the unusual table sizes and games that, for the most part, only exist online. After we get you playing, we give you handy tips and tricks on how to stay ahead of the game — and hopefully even win.

Conventions Used in This Book

Some of the special terminology we use in this book includes:

✓ **Brick and mortar:** We use this phrase to describe real, physical cardrooms where you sit across a table from live human beings. It doesn't necessarily have to mean casinos; in most cases, you can just as easily think about any home game you play in.

✓ **Godzilla:** Large radioactive monster that mostly hangs out in Tokyo bay. Aggressive player with a good poker face — bad temper when losing. Known as *Gojira* in Japan (“go” from the English gorilla and “jira,” the Japanese word for whale). We talk about Godzilla a little in Chapter 13.

✓ **Hard currency:** When we use this phrase, we mean the money that you have on deposit with a poker site — the actual money that you gamble with. When you place a \$1 bet online, you put hard currency on the line. We use this phrase to minimize confusion with money as a general concept. Chapter 4 is where we talk about transferring your money online.

✓ **Ring game:** A single poker table, with anything from two to ten players, where everyone competes for hard currency. You can come and go as you please in these games. Some brick-and-mortar players call this game form *money play*.

✓ **Tournament:** A special form of poker where you pay a set entry fee, plus a smaller registration fee, to receive a set amount of tournament chips. Players compete, busting out one by one, until only one person remains. Chapter 10 is where we start to get down with tourneys.

For a slightly longer glossary, head to the Appendix in the back of this book.

What You're Not to Read

Well, maybe you shouldn't take it to the "I boycott this" extreme, but we should let you in on a couple of things to know about this book:

✓ *Sidebars* contain information that you don't have to read to understand Internet poker. They serve as asides, anecdotes, or extended forms of examples. Only reading the sidebars in this book is the mental equivalent of sitting on the back porch and hearing your favorite poker stories from your uncle.

✓ Order doesn't matter. That being said, you can read anything you want without hurting our feelings. Read any chapter at any point. Feel free to skip around. We use copious cross-references to help you understand anything you may have skipped over during your reading journey.

Foolish Assumptions

In order to begin, we've made several assumptions about *you*, our dear reader. We assume that

✓ You're already familiar with the basic forms of poker, and that you have a cursory understanding of poker strategy. If you don't, turn around right now and buy yourself a copy of *Poker For Dummies* (Wiley) or some other introductory-to-intermediate text on the game.

- ✓ You can use a computer and have the ability to connect to the Internet. We also assume that you have downloaded and installed software onto your computer before. If these concepts are foreign to you, pick up a copy of *Internet For Dummies* (Wiley) and/or *PCs For Dummies* (Wiley).
- ✓ You've used the Internet to the extent that you're familiar with using search engines and making elementary transactions (for instance, you've bought something online).
- ✓ You think winning is better than losing. If you don't, we honestly can't tell you where to go for help, but we'd love to sit with you the next time you play.
- ✓ You're a noble human being. You must be if you're willing to spend this much time with us, and hey, we *truly* appreciate it.

How This Book Is Organized

We've intentionally written this book in such a way that you can jump into it at *any* point and just go. We haven't created complete word chaos, however; here's the method to our madness:

Part I: Internet Poker Basics

This section talks about the hardware and software you need to play, includes a tour of an Internet poker table, tells you how to pick a quality poker site, and coaches you through the transfer of your precious money. By the time you reach the end of this section, you should be able to play a simple game of poker online.

Part II: Taking Your Poker to a New Level — The Cyber Level

Here we explore the variety of games available to you on the Internet, and we let you in on a few secrets about what's different in the online poker world, including a bit on the nuances of Internet poker psychology.