

THE AMATEUR'S MIND

AMATEURS vs PROS... SCREAMING HORDES AT THE GATE

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When the numbers get big enough, luck will run all over skill. At some point there were too many Visigoths to keep out of Rome; too many Red Chinese to keep out of North Korea... and too many amateurs to keep out of the final tables. The pros complain that going all in frequently is "no way to play poker." I imagine the Romans felt the same way about the Visigoths, and the American Army about the Red Chinese. The battle technologies (skills) of the defenders were simply not enough to keep out the waves of barbarians.

In an age mesmerized by reality programming (that is anything but real), televised tournaments have become the ultimate game show for recreational players. I like the WSOP championship event as much as the next guy, but deep down I realize it no longer represents accomplishment at the highest level. It's about stumbling into money and fame.

Skill is simply the price of admission; and the primary skill is aggression, aggression, and aggression. This poorly kept secret was pioneered by Stu Ungar, and is being perfected today through countless hands of play on the internet.

The amateurs are willing to gamble because they have nothing to lose and everything to win. Even the deep structure of the WSOP cannot stop large numbers of loose-aggressive players from overwhelming the pros. Regardless, we haven't seen an exodus of professionals, either because they are sponsored into the event or the \$10,000 entry fee isn't a big enough bite out of their bankroll to cause them to miss the carnival and cameras.

This is why the Professional Poker Tour and the H.O.R.S.E. tournament are well-timed for the pros. These types of formats are going to represent the true recognition of poker mastery. Don't get me wrong; I would still enjoy conquering the WSOP, even by wielding a large battle-axe. In such an unlikely eventuality, I still would not pretend I was the "world champion" of poker. I know my place... I am a poker philosopher, not a great player.

Michael Rome can be found on his poker philosophy website at: www.romepoker.net

