

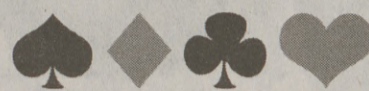
AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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What happens in Vegas...



Gambling not strictly limited to Sin City; Aggies ante up in town, on campus

By Jimmy Hissong
THE BATTALION

Bryan Jolly, a freshman general studies major, entrusts a small fortune to the click of a mouse and the glare of a computer monitor.

"Between the swings I've lost as much as \$400 and won as much as \$2,000," Jolly said.

Fueled by endless late-night television coverage, the growing interest in gambling has reached a whole new stake level. Everyone from movie celebrities to college students has been bitten by the betting bug.

For many gambling enthusiasts, the only true game is poker with an emphasis on the game Texas Hold 'Em. Hold 'Em is the icon of the poker syndicate hailed by ESPN's Poker World Series and the Travel Channel's Poker World Tour.

Hold 'Em and other poker games can be readily found online, in most casinos or in the study lounge of most residence halls between the hours of 10 p.m. and 2 a.m.

"Games are pretty easy to find. People are always talking about poker. I'll hear them all the time in class or around campus," said Greg Davidson, a junior English major. "All you usually have to do to play is ask. Everyone is always looking for one more player."

With most traditional poker games, the more players involved and the more money invested, the more interesting the game is. And money is, of course, an excellent motivation to play.

"It's all about numbers," Jolly said. "The more people you have, the bigger the pot gets. I mean, it's fun to sit around and talk to a lot of people, but it's more fun to take their money."

However, the money swings and changes are far surpassed by the emotional ups and downs, which are the real reason most players claim to play. The emotional elation experienced while dragging a gigantic stack of chips in the winner's direction is paralleled only by the pitfalls of distress expressed by the loser.

"I hate losing, but it happens," said John

Wahrenberger, a senior civil engineering major. "I guess it's just money."

In "no-limit" games, where there is no limit to the amount of money a player is able to wager on a single hand, the emotional ante is raised tenfold, Davidson said. Stacks of chips and 'chip leader' titles move around the table faster than the dealer's button. But a disciplined player learns to focus on the actions of fellow players rather than these entertaining shifts of dollars and depression.

"You try to get good and be better than everyone else by studying everyone else for a sign or a tell or something," Davidson said. "The problem is, for some reason, everyone thinks they are good."

The social atmosphere of a poker game can be the source of laughs and arguments.

"There is definitely a level of intensity when money is on the table," said Elhindi Al-Barazi, a junior accounting major.

As is to be expected with any competitive game, poor losers and cocky winners can cause tensions to run high. Some individuals try to compensate by keeping games friendlier.

"People can get mad over a hand. We try to keep pots low so games aren't as serious. At most we play for \$5 a person," said Jordan Phillips, a freshman mechanical engineering major.

As long as poker games are in accordance with Texas law, arguments between players are the only problems the participating individuals will have to deal with. There are three main criteria that state law prohibits regarding in house poker games as expressed by the College Station Police Department.

"No player may have an unfair advantage over another player, an entry fee cannot be assessed to players choosing to participate in the poker game and the 'house' cannot take a percentage of any player's winnings," said Lt. Mark Langwell of the College Station Police Department.

Basically, no one can profit off of the sponsorship of a game. Participants are permitted to wager whatever they wish in a game and are the



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only individuals able to make money as long as there is an equal opportunity for winning among the players.

"Blackjack, dice and other games of chance are also illegal," Langwell said.

There are no separate governing regulations for on-campus games.

"Poker games are permissible on campus as long as they follow Chapter 47 of the Texas Penal Code," said Sgt. Allan Baron of the University Police Department. "But if you are going to play poker, just make sure you take other student rules and regulations in mind when doing so."

The poker attraction might circumvent legal

conditions, but some may express moral convictions on players. However, the decision is ultimately up to the individual.

"If you have the money, it's your choice," Al-Barazi said.

That said, the only obstacle that might remain in an individual's way is personal. Character can have a lot to do with a person's ability to perform rationally around a poker table.

"Whether or not you can be a good poker player depends on what kind of person you are," said Clint Walling, a junior sociology major.

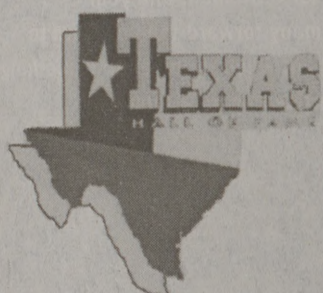
"You have to manage your money well and keep from getting too frustrated. Poker only becomes a problem when you let it become one."

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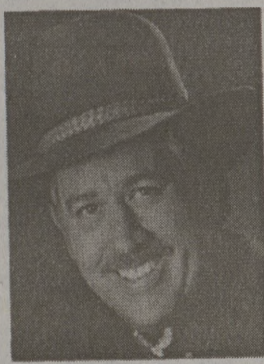
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