

# JONATHAN LITTLE: TOP POKER PRO BECOMES TOP POKER INSTRUCTOR

Little Parlays Success On The Felt Into Popular Poker Training Program

By Card Player News Team



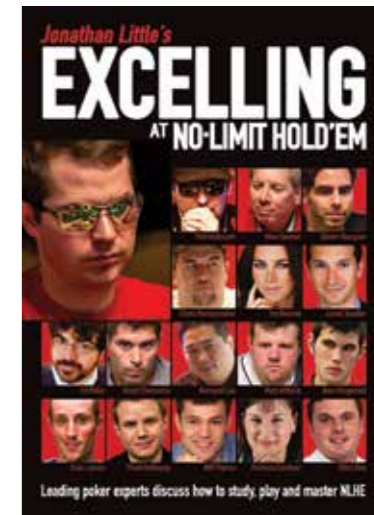
**W**ith more than \$6.2 million in live tournament winnings, another \$1 million online, two *World Poker Tour* titles and *WPT* Player of the Year honors, Jonathan Little has easily established himself as one of the top poker pros on the circuit over the last decade.

The Pensacola, Florida native picked up the game in college when he was studying psychology and engineering at the University of West Florida. He soon grew a sizable bankroll online and eventually decided to drop out and pursue poker full time. In January of 2007, he made his first of four *WPT* final tables when he took fifth in the *PokerStars Caribbean Adventure* main event for \$317,873. Later that year, he won the *Mirage Poker Showdown* for \$1,091,295 and then narrowly missed out on a second title when he finished as the runner-up in the *North American Poker Championship* for another \$714,905. In 2008, Little headed to Foxwoods where he won the *World Poker Finals* main event for \$1,120,310.

Little has also found success at the *World Series of Poker*, where he has made four final tables, including a third-place finish in the 2013 \$5,000 six-max event for \$317,873. The 31-year-old Little has won 13 live poker tournaments during his career, including events at stops such as the *Festa Al Lago Classic*, the *Five-Star World Poker Classic*, *EPT Prague*, the *Lucky Hearts Poker Open* and *The Million Dollar Heater*.

But perhaps even more impressive than his long list of poker accolades, is the army of up-and-coming poker players he is forming behind him thanks to his tireless efforts as a poker educator. Little has written 11 poker strategy books in total, including the *Secrets of Professional Tournament Poker* series, the *Jonathan Little on Live No-Limit Cash Games* series, the *Strategies for Beating Small Stakes Poker*

Jonathan Little's *Excelling at No-Limit Hold'em* free webinars will be held approximately once per month in 2016 and early 2017. If you'd like to attend these free webinars, be sure to sign up right away so you don't miss any of the upcoming sessions. Sign up now at [holdembook.com/signup](http://holdembook.com/signup).



series and *Positive Poker: A Modern Psychological Approach to Mastering Your Mental Game*.

His latest release, *Jonathan Little's Excelling at No-Limit Hold'em* brings together 18 of the greatest poker experts, including Phil Hellmuth, Mike Sexton, Olivier Busquet, Ed Miller, Scott Clements, and many more, to discuss all aspects of the game.

*Card Player* caught up with Little between tournament stops to talk about his poker career, how training others helps him keep his own game sharp and how *Card Player* readers can improve their game with his *Excelling at No-Limit Hold'em* webinar series.

**Card Player:** You've established yourself with your series of books, webinars, columns for *Card Player*, Twitch streaming, and so on as one of the most consistent and popular poker educators in the business. What do you enjoy about teaching people to play better poker?

**Jonathan Little:** I have always enjoyed helping people who have the desire to improve themselves, whether it be at poker or life. I realize that I would certainly not be where I am today if it was not for the immense kindness and generosity of numerous players who were willing to help me out when I first started playing 13 years ago. I strive to be as helpful to my students as my mentors were to me.

**CP:** What have you been working on lately besides playing poker?

**JL:** A few years ago while playing at a *European Poker Tour* stop, I realized that I have the unique opportunity to discuss poker with many of the best players in the game. I also realized that most amateur players never have that opportunity. I decided to figure out a way to bring the discussions the pros have on a day-to-day basis to the players who need that information the most, those who are doing everything in their power to improve. I set out to find world-class players who are experts in their specific niche of poker and asked them to write between 20 and 50 pages on their subject of expertise. The result was *Excelling at No-Limit Hold'em*, an awesome 500-page book filled with wisdom from some of the best players and mindset experts in the world. I couldn't be happier with it!

**CP:** How has learning the game of poker changed since when you started 13 years ago?

**JL:** When I first started playing poker in 2003, there were only a few ways to learn: books, discussion (both live and on forums), rudimentary programs, and experience at the table.

By the time I started playing for significant money when I was 19 years old, I had read basically every poker book on the market. Unfortunately, many of them were on games that are rarely played or they contained blatantly bad advice. Today, there are many excellent books written by world-class players. I strongly suggest every player read a few books on the game of their choice by someone who beats those games.

I used to post on the various poker forums, which, at the time, provided a great way to learn because most people who were savvy enough to find and post on the forums were highly motivated to learn. Today many of the forums aren't a great option because they have become too mainstream. The vast majority of people on the larger poker forums want to tell everyone else how bad they are in order to make themselves feel important, making the forums somewhat useless to those who only want to improve their skills.

When I first started playing, I spent countless hours working with the early analytical poker programs, such as *Poker Stove* and *Sit N' Go Power Tools*. These provided invaluable insights that helped me develop a strategy that is difficult to beat. Today, there are numerous programs that can essentially tell you how to play in an unexploitable way. If you spend a ton of time tinkering with them, you will possess more knowledge than most players.

Both in the past and today, getting experience at the table is vitally important. All the study in the world will not fully prepare you for the heat of battle. That being said, I diligently studied over ten poker books before I ever made my first (and only) \$50 deposit into an online site as an 18-year-old.

**CP:** Why should players participate in unique learning opportunities such as your *Excelling at No-Limit Hold'em* webinar series?

**JL:** Today, perhaps the most useful resources to poker players who are trying to improve their skills are training videos and live webinars. Training videos are great because they let you see exactly how the video producer thinks. Webinars are even better because, in addition to seeing what the video producer is doing, you get to ask questions in real time. Of course, webinars can be recorded so they can be replayed for people who cannot attend live.

I am currently hosting a series of 18 free, one-hour webinars in conjunction with my new book, *Excelling at No-Limit Hold'em*.

*Card Player* readers can sign up for this webinar series by



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This webinar series provides the viewers a unique opportunity to learn poker in the comfort of their homes from world-class players and mindset experts about their subject of expertise for free. I only wish I had this opportunity when I first started playing! I am honored to be in the position to offer this webinar series to players who want to take their games to the next level.

**CP:** How has your own poker game improved as your commitment to poker education has expanded?

**JL:** I constantly strive to improve my poker skills. I realize that if you are not progressing at a faster rate than your opponents, you are falling behind. I discuss poker with some of the best players in the world on a regular basis and work hard to develop sound strategies using various poker training programs.

When I am not traveling the high-stakes poker tournament circuit, I spend a large portion of my time coaching students, writing books, and developing interactive webinars. By constantly thinking about and discussing poker with players of various skill levels, I am forced to fully understand every aspect of the game.

**CP:** Can you describe how your corresponding webinar series works and what poker players can expect to learn from these sessions?

**JL:** Each month, one of the authors from *Excelling at No-Limit Hold'em*, along with myself as the moderator, will host a free one-hour webinar. In addition to the monthly free webinar, each author will also host a more in-depth four-hour webinar.

I decided to present my own webinars first to set the tone and provide an example to the other authors of the high quality that my students have come to expect. My free webinar discussed when to value bet and when to pot control. The corresponding four-hour webinar discussed how to properly think about hand ranges versus various types of opponents.

Ed Miller went second. His free webinar discussed live

no-limit hold'em cash games as a war of information. His four-hour webinar outlined how to use the information you gather from your opponents in live cash games to get extremely out of line in order to blatantly exploit their mistakes and maximize profits.

Jared Tendler went third. His free webinar outlined his proven strategy for eliminating tilt, which many viewers found to be incredibly enlightening. His four-hour webinar was actually a workshop where he analyzed numerous tilt profiles that the webinar attendees submitted. This allowed the attendees to get immediate feedback and advice on their specific problems that they can immediately put into use.

I am excited to continue hosting these webinars every month. Each free webinar has been viewed by over 2,500 people, with each new one getting more viewers than the last. If you aren't taking part, you are missing out.

**CP:** How and why did you choose the players you did for your book and webinar series?

**JL:** When deciding on which pros to get involved in the book, I only asked a select group who I respected and wanted to work with. Fortunately, enough of them replied and let me know that they would love to be part of the project.

For each author's subject, I allowed them to write and teach about whatever topic they were passionate about. I know that when I am passionate about something, I tend to do extremely good work. I hoped the authors would do the same, and they didn't disappoint.

Here are a few of the many chapters in *Excelling at No-Limit Hold'em*:

Lower Buy-in Tournament Strategies, by Chris Moneymaker

My Strategy for Success, by Scott Clements

An Overview of Poker Tells, by Zachary Elwood

Range Analysis, by Alex Fitzgerald

Short Stack Strategies: Old School Versus New School,

by Phil Hellmuth and Liv Boeree

Tackling the Final Table, by Jonathan Little

Playing Heads-Up, by Olivier Busquet

Mental Toughness: The Ultimate Psychological Edge, by Dr. Patricia Cardner

As for the webinars, I have again given the authors free reign to discuss whatever topic they are passionate about. I am excited to see what the future brings!

**CP:** You've now spent more than ten years traveling the high-stakes tournament circuit. What are the most important lessons you've learned along the way to remain a profitable player? And what are some of the biggest mistakes you see players make that are holding them back from being winning players?

**JL:** Consistently staying on the high stakes tournament circuit for ten years is a minor miracle in itself! I have done a lot of things right, but also many things wrong in my time as a professional poker player. Perhaps the most important thing I have learned is that you must constantly work on your game if you want to stay at the top. Many players devote an immense amount of time to studying when they first start playing but then shift their attention entirely to grinding out profits at the table. Some of these players reach the high-stakes games but inevitably become disgruntled when they are relegated back to the small and middle-stakes games, as the average skill level of their opponents increases. The best players in the world find a balance such that they are consistently devoting time to both playing and studying. This allows them to continuously improve their skills while also putting in a reasonable amount of time at the table.

When you are playing poker, I suggest you make poker your only focus. In the past, I would spend time at the poker table on my phone, dealing with business issues, browsing the internet, and generally not paying attention. I now realize that my lack of focus certainly caused a decrease to my win rate. I have squandered a countless amount of equity with this leak. Your focus and energy at the table should be spent entirely on playing your best poker. Everything else can wait until you are finished with your session. A first easy step in the right direction is to turn off your phone.

Another focus-related leak I used to have was spending some amount of my time gambling, either at blackjack or on sports. Although I studied both of these diligently, I never devoted the time to become world-class at either. This led to me spending time and energy making either neutral or -EV bets, which is the exact opposite of what every poker player concerned with bankroll management should do. Sports betting was particularly distracting for me because when I wagered on a game, I would want to watch it or sweat the scores on my phone. Seeing how I want to focus on poker when I am playing poker, betting on sports at the same time was a gigantic blunder.

Another thing I suggest poker players do is keep expenses low. Many players think as soon as they have a large score, they can start spending money as if they will win that amount on a regular or semi-regular basis. This leads them to buy a nice house and fancy car, fly first class, and stay in the most extravagant suites. While living like a rock star is awesome, you will find that paying for these luxuries will quickly drain your bankroll, especially if you are a mere mortal who doesn't have a million-dollar score every year.

One final leak I think many poker players have, especially at the middle and high stakes, is they try to play a robotic, unexploitable strategy at all times. While playing in an unexploitable manner is ideal versus strong opponents, the way you maximize your profits versus weak players is to get well out of line in order to exploit their tendencies. If

you study the best players in the world, you will find that they know how to play a solid strategy that is difficult to exploit versus good players while adjusting severely to their opponents who will make blunders. If you never get out of line, you will have a difficult time winning the maximum (or losing the minimum) versus players who frequently make mistakes.

**CP:** How do you keep your own game sharp and what advice can you offer *Card Player* readers to do so?

**JL:** I currently spend most of my time discussing poker with my friends, coaching a wide range of students, working with various poker programs, and studying training videos.

I strongly suggest everyone find a group of poker-playing friends who desperately want to get better at the game. Schedule a regular time to talk poker with them each week. If the topic of conversation frequently veers away from poker, you should probably find a new group. You can also post hands and concept questions on poker forums. Since the major forums now tend to provide an environment that

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is not conducive to learning, I set up a small forum at my poker training site, [FloatTheTurn.com](http://FloatTheTurn.com), for humble, dedicated students of the game who want to improve their skills.

I also coach a wide range of students at [PokerCoaching.com](http://PokerCoaching.com). Some of them are beginners while others are world-class experts playing the highest stakes. In order to explain poker to players of various skill levels, I must fully understand what I am teaching. When I wrote my first book, *Secrets of Professional Tournament Poker*, I found holes in my general strategy that I had to work on (namely, I played poorly from the blinds and I did not respond well to extreme aggression). After pinpointing these flaws and working hard to correct them, these situations are now some of my strengths. If you think about every single aspect of the game, you will likely find areas you can improve. My students' difficult questions force me to continuously improve.

I strongly suggest everyone spend a significant amount of time learning from poker training videos, or even better, highly interactive webinars. My webinar series for *Excelling at No-Limit Hold'em* provides a rare opportunity to learn poker from some of the best players in the game in real time for free. By learning from the best players in the game, you will discover numerous facets of your strategy that can be improved.

You must realize and accept that getting good at poker takes a lot of hard work and diligent study. If you think you can master the game by simply showing up to the casino once a week, you are in for a rude awakening. It is far from easy, but that's a good thing because if it were easy, everyone would be great and you'd have a hard time rising above your opponents. If you devote the time and energy that poker demands, you will eventually become a winning player in your games.



# Top 5 Mistakes Amateurs Make



## 1. Overplaying Marginal Made Hands.

Almost without fail, every time I play a major tournament where lots of people satellite in, I see an amateur vastly overplay a hand like A-A after the flop. They see a board of J-9-5 and think that if they can get all in on the flop, they have the nuts. In reality, when 300 big blinds go into the pot after the flop, A-A is almost always crushed.

## 2. Reraising Preflop With Only Premium Hands.

Many amateur players tend to play in a blatantly face-up manner before the flop. They reraise their best hands, or their best hands plus a few decently strong hands, such as A-J and K-Q, and call with everything else. In reality, they should be reraising with a range tailored to take advantage of their opponent's strategy. Against some players, you should reraise with your best hands and your hands that are not quite good enough to call with, such as A-4 offsuit and K-7 suited, because you expect them to either four-bet or fold preflop. Against another, you should reraise with an incredibly wide range to help ensure you see the flop heads-up in position because you know he will check-fold most of the time after the flop when he misses.

## 3. Playing Incorrectly With a Short Stack.

Most amateurs play either way too tight or way too loose with a short stack. Both of these problems can be quickly solved by diligently studying a short stack push/fold chart. These charts can be found online through a quick internet search. However, be careful of strictly following charts as they assume your opponents play well, which often will not be the case.

## 4. Failing To Study Away From the Table.

I am constantly asked how I can make complex decisions at the poker table in the few moments you have to act. The answer is I have studied most situations away from the table. You are fooling yourself if you think you can come up with the correct decision in every spot with just a few minutes of thought. Poker is a difficult game that requires diligent study.

## 5. Worrying About Short-Term Results

I have been told many times by amateur players that they can't believe how unlucky they are. Usually these players have lost five tournaments in a row and can't comprehend their "bad luck." In reality, even if you are a world-class player, you will almost certainly go 15 or more tournaments in row with no cashes at some point in your career, if you play enough. The sooner you comprehend the incredible variance that is inherent to poker, the sooner you can focus on the things that matter.



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