

Poker

Mind games: Spotting weakness in your opponent

BY STEVE ROSENBLUM
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Mike McDermott, the character portrayed by Matt Damon in *Rounders*, opens the seminal poker movie with the game's most basic rule: "If you can't spot the sucker in the first half-hour at the table, then you ARE the sucker."

At April's \$25,000-buy-in World Poker Tour championship at Las Vegas' Bellagio, Josh Arieh spotted the sucker — or if not the sucker, he at least spotted a player he could take advantage of. The player in question sat in Seat 6, which was middle position in this hand. With blinds at \$50-\$100, Seat 6 made it \$300 to go. Holding K-9 of hearts, Arieh called from the small blind. The big blind also called.

"That's the kind of guy I want to play a lot of hands with, because I can tell he's real active early," said Arieh, who has won

Josh Arieh's hand:



The flop:



The turn:



two World Series of Poker bracelets and finished third in the 2004 Main Event.

"I'd never seen him before, but I thought he was going to gamble and get his chips in in a bad spot. He'd been in over 50 percent of the hands. If it was a good player doing it, I'd think it was a good strategy, but I'd never seen the guy before, and it's one of those things that I thought he was getting in too deep by playing too many hands."

Three players saw a flop of 6-8-2, giving Arieh the second-nut-flush draw. He checked, as

did the big blind. The original raiser thought for a minute and bet out \$800. Arieh called. The big blind folded.

"Early on, what I picked up from him is that he's not thinking much," Arieh said. "When he's got a hand, he's acting fast and betting fast, and when he doesn't have a hand, he's acting fast and folding. So, he thought for a minute, and I thought, 'He's weak. If it doesn't come a big card on the turn, I'm going to try to take the pot away from him.'"

The turn came the 7 of diamonds, giving Arieh an open-

ended straight draw to go along with the flush draw. He also had two overcards.

"A 6-7-8 board is a bad board to a hand like A-K and A-Q, because I'm in the blind and he doesn't know what I have," said Arieh, who represents the *Bo dog.com* online site. "The 7 of diamonds is a huge card. I could easily have made two pair. I could have made a straight. I wanted to represent two pair. I didn't care if he called, because I was going to bet again on the river. I was fairly confident he didn't have anything."

Arieh bet \$2,300, about the size of the pot. The original raiser folded without showing his cards.

"One thing I'm always trying to do is manage the size of the pot against opponents who aren't afraid to put chips in the pot," Arieh said. "I could've check-raised on the flop and tried to take it there, but I'm out of position. The bigger the pot gets, the more advantage that the guy with position has."

Table talk

Middle position: Seats 4-6 in a nine-handed game.

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