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## FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD, YOU ARE NOT BEING SCAMMED AT ABSOLUTE POKER!

by Justin West

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Online poker site, Absolute Poker, continues to be the target of rage for bitter online poker players everywhere...

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So, where are we now with the whole Absolute Poker "scandal?" Not much progress has been made, but the accusations continue to fly on numerous blogs, forums, and websites.

To refresh your memory, giant threads on message boards have posted images, hand histories, dialog from a professional poker player, instant message chats, etc., all designed to convince the masses that there is some grand conspiracy happening at Absolute Poker. Proponents of this insane theory would have you believe that there is a so-called "super user" being abused by certain players (which may or may not be the same person), which allows those players to see everyone's hole cards and earn tons of unwarranted cash in the process.

I maintain my position with extreme dedication - I sincerely and wholly doubt that there is any kind of cheating going on. In fact, I would bet money that if you were to look at the other sites, there's probably at least one or two people over on Full Tilt or PokerStars or any other site that have just the kind of insane win ratio that the players accused of cheating have, and in just such a time frame. Folks, the law of averages says it's going to happen sooner or later. It does not mean the site is cheating you, or that players have managed to subvert the system. This kind of "luck" is not only a mathematical probability, but a mathematical certainty in the long run in such a high variance game.

Let's take a look at two readers' opinions (which I'm not going to edit):

justin,

i liked your article regarding online cheating. i dont know enough about online poker card generators and poker software to know if its possible to cheat. im aware people act in collusion, which also happens live. one person can collude with himself in online poker, though, something which isnt possible in live poker.

im not comfortable losing money online, though, even if im winning more than im losing. maybe that's stupid, but i just dont feel the integrity is there. im sure that many talented online players who have played millions of hands and won a lot of money would vehemently disagree. how i feel about the integrity of online poker, though, is part of what keeps me away from the game.

id rather play live, as i usually have pristine reading skills at one table. add three more, and my head is spinning. id much rather get outdrawn live than on a screen. id also rather look my opponent in the eye when ive beaten him or caught him bluffing. i know these arent issues which address integrity, but they do increase my likelihood to play live, rather than online.

i understand where this 2+2 guy is coming from, though. i dont know enough about the processes which determine hands, allow people to see all the cards, or allow players to have multiple accounts and sit more than one player at one table, or in one tournament. so, ethics are left in the hands of programmers, hackers and site administrators. thats something im not comfortable with, whether they cheat or not.

if players are colluding live, i can call a floor person, and there are immediate live consequences. in theory, at least, i can use the floor to threaten such players to stop playing unethically. or, just like online, i can invite all the action. im also fairly certain that there are no cheating poker dealers in the rooms i frequent, and that most of them have the integrity of the game in mind as they deal.

while i am aware that unethical behavior or cheating can happen in front of one's face as easily as it can via computer, i dont believe online administrators can offer game protection the way live dealers can. nor do i believe most online players are privvy to the processes which generate their cards, or have any idea whether someone else is looking at them.

i understand that the online companies are vulnerable, just like live poker rooms, and dont want to lose their businesses because cheats have sacrificed their integrity. in my mind, though, there is much more integrity to the immediacy and flesh and blood involved in live poker, and i avoid online poker.

i will agree with you, though, that it is stupid for this guy to complain, when he could simply choose to not play at that site, or online at all.

thanks for your time

teddy kgb

Response: Excellent points, Teddy. I will say that your sentiments are probably shared by more people than you know. A lot of people avoid online poker entirely, and for precisely the reasons you state. There are variables there you can't see, which was part of my initial point, anyway.

This whole thread about possible cheating at Absolute Poker stems from an innate fear of the unknown. You cannot see the people monitoring the games. You cannot know the specifics of any "investigation" the online site is undergoing as a result of any charges. And because you're not privy to any conversations over at AP on the topic - of which I am positive there were many - you distrust statements they make that no cheating has been found.

This kind of fear of the unknown is natural. It's human instinct. And it is the driving factor behind claims of cheating at Absolute Poker.

On to another reader's thoughts...

First, let me say that I doubt that anyone is getting scammed at Absolute Poker. But, being a software engineer, I can tell you that such "master" or "superuser" accounts ARE created in many, even most, software apps that require some sort of security.

Also, "command-line" testing is very common to test a lot of back-end coding; but testing doesn't stop with just the back end -- the full system must be tested, which includes the front-end (GUI). the GUI doesn't just appear -- it is coded, by programmers, just like the back-end is.

And during a full system test, I know I would certainly want to see all poker hands at the table, to verify the correct hand wins the pot. So, its not only possible, its very likely that superuser accounts do exist. Only the software developers would know for sure.

Just my 2 cents. Thanks again for the Blog!

Response: I cannot say for certain, of course, whether or not Absolute Poker has such a "super user" account. But I did speak with one of the developers over at BugsysClub.com and he assured me in no uncertain terms that not only has no such super user ever been created for any reason on BugsysClub, but that there would be no need for one in the first place.

I've also spoken with an anonymous source who has had contact with individuals at Ultimate Bet and a few other sites, who notes that no such super user exists on those sites, either. Why, then, would Absolute Poker be the lone site that finds a need to create a super user?

It seems to me that any person with half a brain on them would realize that just creating a super user with access to all the hole cards would create an astronomical security risk, and put the website in direct danger of folding almost immediately should even the very knowledge of that super user come to light. I can't think the bigwigs at AP, who earn more than you or I ever will, would permit such a ticking time bomb to exist.

Quite simply, whether you agree with this statement or not, it is simply fact: There is no need for any online poker site to create the kind of super user that's being suggested on these online forums. Period. And even if there were, I sincerely doubt that any online site would create it, given the risk of the very kind of cheating that players on AP are being accused of now.

Here's the basic idea...

There is absolutely no reason for a website that makes as much money in rake as Absolute Poker, PokerStars, or any of the major online sites, to cheat their players. I don't think anyone can dispute that they make enough money that cheating their players, or allowing their players to cheat, makes no sense at all. It's the equivalent of running a bank, making millions on interest every month, only to knowingly allow a teller to slip a \$50 into their pocket once an hour and not not say anything about it.

So, Absolute Poker has come back to say that they've so far found no evidence of any wrongdoing. If you say you don't believe them, that there is wrongdoing and they are continuing to allow whatever was going on to happen, you're implicating Absolute Poker in a direct operation to scam their players. Does anyone really believe that?

A few people have pointed to Mark Seif personally to say he's the culprit, even going so far as to suggest he's the man with the "red button" and is playing on these multiple accounts. Really? The amount of money these supposed cheaters have earned absolutely pales in comparison to

the amount of rake that is drawn in to Absolute Poker on even a monthly basis, I'm sure. Again, why risk it?

I won't deny that one statement in my last blog was probably incorrect. The chances of an online site admitting this kind of cheating was going on is slim to none. But I think the chances of the site finding out about it and not putting a stop to it are even smaller. But, the chances of this cheating happening are the smallest of all, bar none.

I say again - you are not being cheated. Stop being cattle and mimicking the mindless cries of bitter players that are just angry to see a player that's worse than them get lucky.

J