

making life more fun

Poker For The People

(NAPSA)—It was once the exclusive province of old men in smoke-filled back rooms, but poker is now virtually everywhere you look—on TV, at the store, and especially on the Internet. Experts estimate that as many as 60 million Americans play poker regularly, making it the country's fastest-growing game.

A new breed of poker players are taking to the tables. Online poker allows players to minimize "luck," and leverage strategic knowledge. In addition, online users can play several more hands in a shorter period of time than they would in a live game, meaning they gain experience much more quickly. Physical tells (raised eyebrows, shaking, etc.) are not an issue online, so players rely more strictly on probability, statistics and game theory in their play.

Online poker hit the mainstream in 2003, when Chris MoneyMaker qualified for the World Series of Poker through a \$40 tournament at PokerStars.com and went on to win the \$2.5 million first prize. MoneyMaker, a 27-year-old accountant from Tennessee, had only played poker online before his victory, never in a live tournament. Online poker scored big again the next year when former patent attorney Greg "Fossilman" Raymer won \$5 million at the 2004 World Series of Poker after also winning his entry on the same site, PokerStars.com.

"Sites like PokerStars.com have revolutionized the poker world," said Raymer. "Now thousands of new players can quickly develop the skills to compete at the highest levels of poker."

While many individuals are



World Series of Poker champion Greg Raymer honed his skills online.

intimidated by casino card rooms, online sites allow players the flexibility and luxury of determining their own terms of play. PokerStars.com allows players to use personalized icons, keep notes on opponents and statistically track hands. The site is player friendly, offering five different types of poker—with stakes ranging from play money to \$100 a hand—and constant tournament action.

If you want to become a champion, Raymer says you should know the odds of ending up with the hand you want at all times. In addition, as with any game of skill, you will get better at poker the more you play and the closer you pay attention to what is going on. Take notes on your own play and the play of others in order to spot trends and vulnerabilities. Playing at PokerStars.com is a great way to practice because players can gain experience without having to feel embarrassed or intimidated about being a beginner or intermediate player.

For more poker tips, visit www.pokerstars.com.