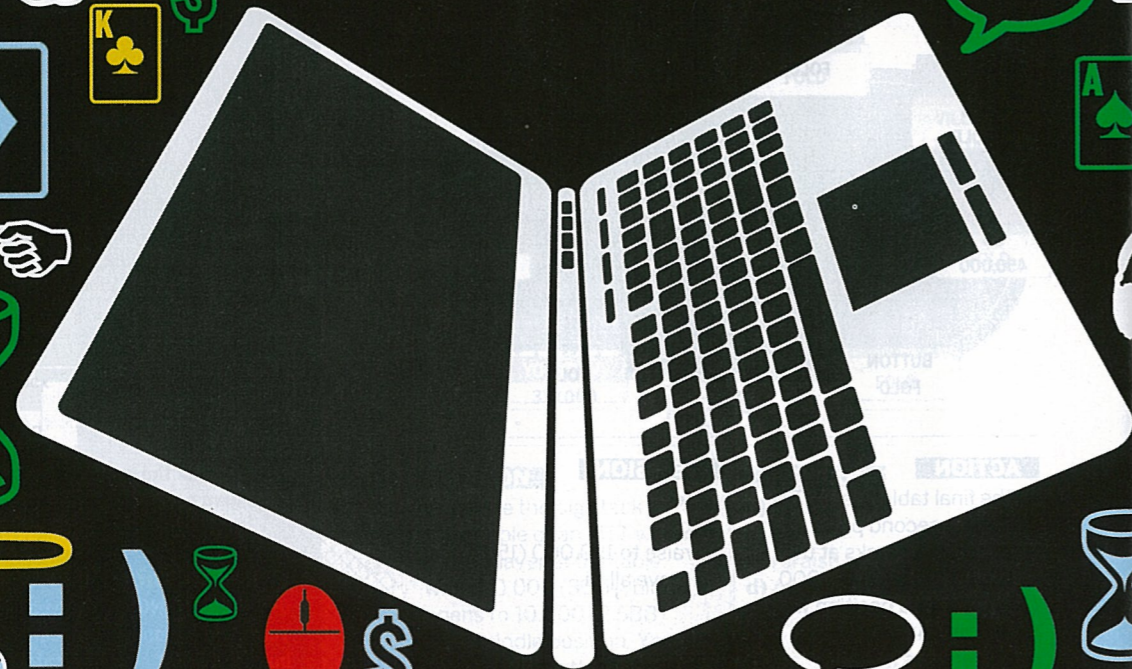


Training DAY

If you're serious about improving at poker, personal tuition is an increasingly attractive option. Mark Stuart gets some one-to-one time with a sit-and-go pro



→ A couple of issues back (issue 64, p44) we said that the most effective method for improving your game is to get personal coaching. The problem with that, of course, is it's often quite costly. Indeed, to get a regular coach you could be looking at hundreds of dollars a month.

But that doesn't mean you should knock the idea on the head. There are more options emerging all the time for players who have the skills but not the cash. One option which is becoming very popular is to pay for a coaching session or two that is conducted online. This keeps the cost down to an affordable level, can be done quickly and easily with a couple of free pieces of software, and can help raise your game very quickly.

If money is really tight, another option is to look into taking a coaching/staking deal where you are given money to play and receive regular advice from your 'mentor'. In return you hand over

a percentage of your profits (usually around 50%) for a certain amount of time or money.

Whatever route you decide to take, though, the most important thing is that you get the right coach for your game. I wanted to find out how effective and easy the coaching process could be, and seeing as I've had some success at six-max sit-and-gos in the past, I thought I'd hire someone who could help me improve further.

A quick Google search came up with a site called '6max Sit'n'Go Coaching' (www.6maxcoaching.com). It's run by two career sit-and-go players – Marcos 'PezRez' Perez and AI 'md261' McClenahan – both of whom have six-figure profits on PokerStars. I gave them a ring and Perez said he would be delighted to work with me, training me on optimal push/fold play, ICM and bubble strategy, reviewing my hand histories and tailoring further sessions to my needs. Here's how it went...

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FIRST SESSION

In preparation for our first session I had to download Skype (www.skype.com) and TeamViewer (www.teamviewer.com). Both programs are free and quick to set up. In case you haven't used it before TeamViewer allows you to see someone else's computer desktop screen and vice versa, and is an incredibly useful tool for sweat sessions and training such as this.

I'd already sent Perez four tournament hand histories so he could get a feel for my game in advance, and find out what leaks I have. The first session involved him going through push/fold strategy when close to or on the bubble. He discussed three different 'pushing tables' for the 'all-in or fold' endgame stage, breaking down what hand ranges and how many big blinds you can profitably shove and call all-in with.

Straight away I realised just how exploitable my strategy was. The pushing tables give very accurate guidelines (which I stuck to the wall next to my computer as an immediate reference) and it was →

