

STUDY SESSION 3

Chip Stack Dynamics

The 100 Big Blind Stack

- The common starting amount for many tournaments.
- Play resembles a cash game to some degree.
- Speculative hands (small pairs, suited connectors) have a lot of value due to high implied odds.
- Big pairs should be played with caution post flop.
- Positional Advantage is very important.
- Advantage is to the better players.
- Bluffing is powerful and usually has the lowest risk with larger stacks.

The 50 Big Blind Stack

- Some hands begin to lose value (Suited Connectors, smaller pairs).
- Some hands begin to have more value (Broadway Cards).
- Pot or close to pot bets on all streets will lead to being all in.
- Be aware of pot commitment (25-30% of your stack in the pot).
- Bluffing is powerful although usually requires a large portion of stack so tread lightly.

The 20-25 Big Blind Stack

- Many hands lose value due to low implied odds (small pairs, suited connectors). Playing them can be very costly.
- Cards with showdown value become very important (Broadway cards, big and medium aces).
- Look for situations to 3 bet shove (a 20 BB stack that shoves over a standard 3X order increases stack by 25% if the original raiser folds)
- This stack size can raise and fold one or two times only.
- Pot commitment happens very quickly, often pre-flop.
- Bluffing usually requires your entire stack.
- Tighter play is usually the best strategy.
- Probably the most common stack size during the middle to end of a tournament. You will be in this range the majority of any tournament you get deep in.

The 15 Big Blind Stack

- Small pairs and suited connectors should not be played unless you decide to 3 bet shove or open shove in late position.
- Calling a raise is very bad. You have a fold or shove stack.
- Open shoving is an option but usually a bit of overkill unless the antes have kicked in.
- You want to find 3 bet shove situations but be aware you are more likely to be called now (3 bet shoving over a standard raise with the original raiser folding will increase your stack size by over 30%)
- If you open raise a hand, be prepared to play for your entire stack.
- Raise / folding with this stack size is almost always a critical mistake.
- Do not panic. You are not dead yet.
- Be aware of the clock as any increases in blinds will take you from critical to short stacked.

The 10 Big Blind Stack

- You have one move: All in (either open shoving or 3 bet shoving)
- Your 3 bet shove will almost always be called so make sure you are not shoving with air.
- You are looking for a double up.
- Blind versus blind you should almost always shove from the small blind.
- NO Limping and NO standard raising. Fold or All-In are your only plays.
- You aren't dead yet but you have very little margin for error.
- Be aware of the clock. Increases in blinds will take you from short stacked to life support.

Less Than 10 Big Blind Stack

- You are on life support. You need to double up and you need to do it soon.
- Every blind that passes has a huge impact.
- You cannot fear busting out. Find a spot, get your chips in the middle, and hope your hand stands up.
- You have to expect that your hand will get called by a wide range of hands. The shorter you are, the wider your opponent's calling range will (and should) be.
- When you have 5 or fewer big blinds you are approaching "Any Two Cards" territory. You cannot wait for a big hand. Find hands that have some level of showdown value and hands that will be "live" (ie suited connectors, gappers, etc).

Effective Stack Size

- Effective Stacks are defined by the player in the hand with the smallest stack size (ie if three players are in the pot with 100, 50, and 25 BB, the effective stacks are 25 BB).
- The Effective Stack size will define how the hand is played (ie even if you have 100 BB, if you are in a hand with 25 BB Effective, you need to play the hand as if you have 25 BB).
- It is crucial to be aware of the stack sizes of your opponents at the table to avoid getting into bad situations (ie raising light when the BB is 10 BB deep and they shove. You are usually mathematically required to call in such a spot).
- Understanding Effective Stacks and how to play various stack sizes in a tournament might be more important than any other tournament skill.