



BALLER

THAT'S HOW WE ROLL

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An Unconventional
Genius

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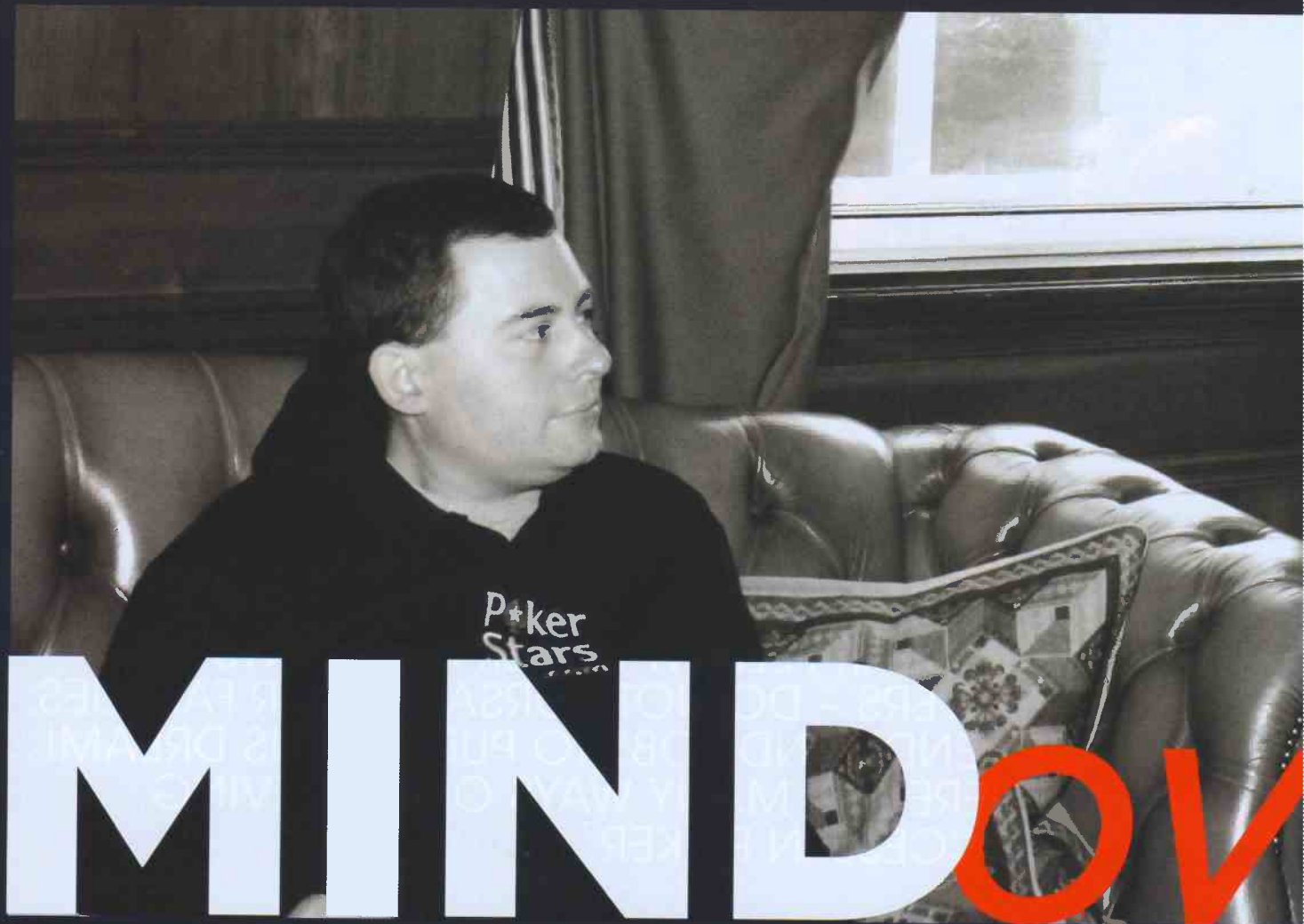
- + PRIVATE JETS
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- + PSYCHOLOGY OF POKER



JEFF LISANDRO

THE 2009
WSOP PLAYER
OF THE YEAR IS
LEAVING NOTHING
TO CHANCE

VII.



Being good at poker takes more than a casual indifference to money and the ability to pull sick bluffs, it's about having the right mental attitude. *Baller's* **BARRY CARTER** sits down with Mental Game Coach Jared Tendler to find out more

There are thousands of books, articles and training websites available to help you work on your poker game, but very little on the psychological aspects of poker. Every other sporting arena makes use of performance coaches and sports psychologists, but the mentally volatile world of poker hasn't caught up yet.

This is where Mental Game Coach Jared Tendler stands alone. With a masters degree in psychology and three years experience working with golfers and athletes, after meeting high-stakes US poker pro Dusty 'Leatherass' Schmidt around three years ago Tendler started working with professional poker players. He now works with over 125 players from all over the world including the US, Europe, Australia and Thailand. This year he will be releasing his much anticipated book on poker's mental game.

SOFA PSYCHOLOGY:

Jared Tendler (right) provides Dusty "Leatheass" Schmidt (left) piece of mind.



ERMATTER

"People think of the mental game as some sort of alien concept but it actually mirrors poker skill; you can improve at your mental game with order, logic and theory just as you can the technical side of poker," says Tendler. "The only difference is there is next to no knowledge on the mental game out there and an abundance of poker skill material available. What I do is bring a methodology to the mental game – I am trying to create the *Supersystem* of poker psychology."

Although the mental game is shrouded in mystery for most, everybody recognises one of its most devastating bi-products – Tilt. Unsurprisingly this is the aspect of poker that keeps Tendler in business:

"Tilt is probably the most common thing I get asked about. Sometimes people will come to me with a tilt issue and not even know that they had one. The best example is a guy who came to me with motivational issues; he was

really struggling to put in the hours at the tables. It turned out that whenever he would start to go on tilt he would quit playing. He kept quitting more and more to avoid tilt and eventually he just wasn't putting in the hours he wanted to. It went on so long he thought it was a motivation problem."

So being as we have the man in the know to hand, what the hell is tilt and more importantly, how can we prevent it?

"The thing that few players realize is that when you go on tilt, the emotion literally shuts your brain down and you lose control of your game. You're no longer able to think because you can't, your brain won't let you. So the key thing I tell all my clients is that you **MUST** prevent getting to that point. The best way to control tilt is to know what triggers it and then take steps to prevent it from getting worse. For example, if a run of bad beats will send you on tilt then you should start taking

steps to prevent going on tilt the moment that first bad beat happens."

Probably another major psychological issue poker players struggle with is handling bad beats. A long stretch of bad luck at the tables is probably one of the hardest things to cope with as a player, so how do we deal with it? "When you run bad for a sustained period of time you begin to wonder how long it will go on for – if you knew when it would end it wouldn't be anywhere near as bad. The longer it goes on the more uncertainty there is and you start to question things like your goals, and overall poker ability, which can effect your confidence."

The best way to get through a bad run is to create a consistency in your overall game. For most players their emotions are aligned with their results, they feel good when they win, they feel bad when they lose. Which means their confidence is based on wins and losses or money, not how skilled you are in the game."

“Getting better at knowing when you played well/poorly helps provide the consistency you need, because it is what you have 100% control of in the short-term. Winning or losing in the short-term is an unreliable way of gauging your skill at poker, instead you want your thoughts and emotions to reflect how you played. It becomes much more about the skill side of things, which is what makes you money in the long run. With your confidence attached to skill, you can lose but feel good that you played well and probably lost the minimum. Keep in mind too that recognising your own skill is a skill in itself, one which will improve over time.”

Tendler is not just a trained therapist who deals with the emotional baggage poker players bring to him, he is also a highly regarded performance coach who helps players perform at their best for long periods of time. Not only do his clients play their best more often and post some sick graphs, they are also able to increase the number of tables they play. Right now he is working on a project at training site DragTheBar.com to help one lucky player achieve SuperNova Elite on Pokerstars. Jared explains that his role here is not dissimilar to that of a personal trainer at the gym.



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“You need intense focus if you want to play your best. The problem for a lot of players is they can't sustain it through long sessions. The big reasons are from distractions or a lack of mental endurance. If distractions are an issue then you should identify what the biggest two or three are and work to steadily eliminate them. If the issue is endurance one, then increasing it is similar to working out in a gym. Start with what you know you can do and steadily increase that amount over time. Increasing the time you play or the number of tables gradually as you would increase weight in the gym.”

One of his biggest claims is that he can help you play in *The Zone* consistently and help you to bring your A-game more often than not. So what is *The Zone* and how do you get there?

“*The Zone* is that place of perfect focus, where the game seems easy, you lose track of time and you're in total control. It's a state of mind that people think occurs randomly, and has a seductive quality where once you experience it you can't wait to get back there, but you have no idea how you arrived there in the first place. Playing in the zone is actually very predictable, it just takes knowing the factors that produce it. The number one reason is focus, the second is the amount of skill you

have trained to the level of instinct and the third is having very clear goals.”

“How you prepare before a session is a very good way of getting closer to playing in the zone, working your way out of what you were doing before and warming up to poker, setting goals for the session, being focused and visualising how you want to play. This makes it more likely your brain will get the kick it needs to get into the zone.”

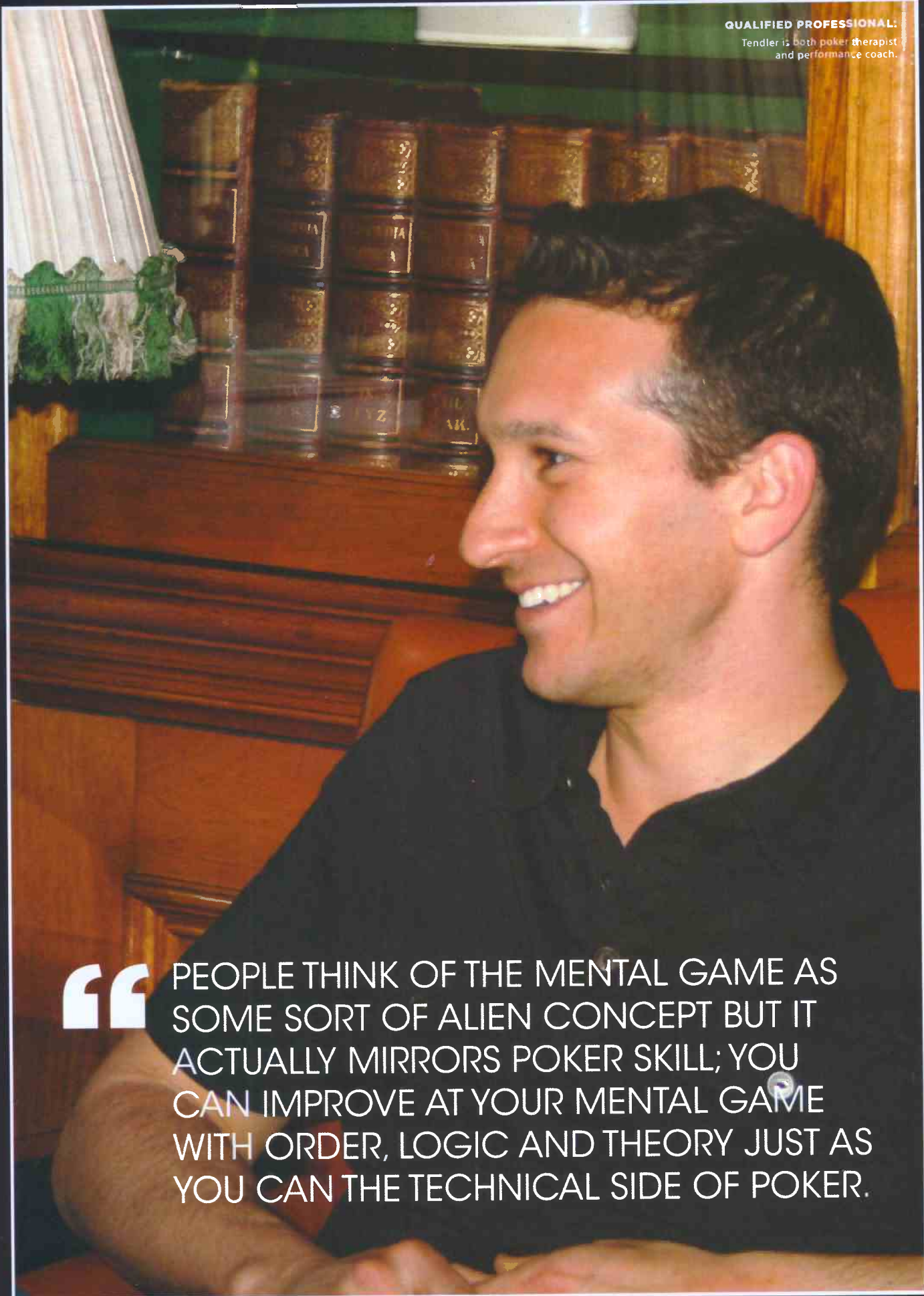
The games are getting tougher all the time and anyone who thinks that poker is in any way solvable only needs to look at what Jared Tendler teaches to realise just how much else there is out there to learn:

“I work with some of the most successful high stakes players in the world, but as good as some of the players I have met are, the one thing they have in common is they were all mental game fish. There just isn't much good poker psychology material out there right now. Anyone who can work hard on the mental game in the right way is going to have a massive edge on the vast majority of players out there that don't.”

You can find out more about Jared Tendler and his upcoming book on the mental aspects of poker at jaredtendlerpoker.com

QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL:

Tendler is both poker therapist and performance coach.

A man with dark hair, wearing a black shirt, is shown in profile, smiling. He is sitting at a wooden desk. Behind him is a bookshelf filled with many old, leather-bound books. To the left, there is a window with white curtains and a green plant. The lighting is warm and focused on the man.

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