

MASTERING YOUR HUD

HUDs give you invaluable information, but don't be fooled into using them the wrong way, says **Dara O'Kearney**.



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In my last piece, I talked about my friend, David Lappin, who returned to poker after some time off. Since he hadn't been on the scene for a little while, I gave him some coaching on how to use a HUD. As he watched, he made an observation that I used the HUD a lot differently from anyone else he had ever seen use one. Being entirely self-taught and never having even observed anyone else use a HUD, I had no idea what he meant – so I asked him to explain.

He explained that everyone else he observed used the HUD in much the same way. Pre-flop, with J-T suited on the button and facing a mid-position raise, they would check the raiser's statistics, and say "This guy has a high VPIP and PFR, so J-T suited is good enough to call here this deep."

Lets say the flop comes A-T-4 rainbow. The raiser c-bets, and the guy now checks his opponent's flop statistics. "He has a very high c-bet percentage, so it doesn't mean he has the Ace. I will call and see what he does on the turn."

The turn is a 6 (a blank), and the raiser bets again. Clicking his opponent's turn statistics reveal a high c-bet percentage. "Hmmm. Still not convinced he has an Ace, but don't think I can call as if I do, knowing that if he has it, I have to pay off the river bet."

Now, technically this is an intelligent way to use a HUD. It evaluates what looks like the most profitable play at every point in the hand, based on the most relevant HUD statistic. However, in my opinion, it is certainly not the best way.

David summarised my approach as follows. I click the raiser's statistics, trawling through them on every street. I then do the

same for the two players in the blinds. All of this I do BEFORE making my pre-flop decision.

The way I would explain it would be something like this: "This guy has a very high PFR. As a result, he has a wide range that I think I can play profitably against based on his post flop tendencies. The two blinds have very low three-bet and squeeze statistics, so I don't expect them to raise very often; I don't mind if they call as my hand plays very well multi-way. The raiser has a really high c-bet percentage on all streets, so if I do flop a monster, I think I can get three big streets of value by calling flop and turn, and raising river. He also has a high fold to raise percentage on the flop and turn, but a low one on the river – this makes it look like if he does get to the river with any showdown value, he will pay me off. Because he has a high fold to raise statistic on the flop, if I flop a marginal hand or a draw I will raise him on the flop, and expect him to fold all but a strong range. On certain boards that shouldn't have hit him, I may also attempt a bluff raise on either flop or turn."

Can you see the difference between the two approaches? While both use the same HUD statistics, the second approach looks at it all before putting a single chip into the pot. It formulates a plan for how to play the hand profitably in advance.

Before making the call, I know what I'm going to do on different flops, turns and rivers. If his statistics and post-flop tendencies were different, the plan would be different.

If he c-bets a lot of flops – but not many turns – and has a high fold to bet statistic on that street, then I'm going to float a lot.

If he tends to barrel every street and not fold to raises, then I'm going to play my draws and marginal hands more passively, and I'm not going to try to bluff him at any point.

If he has a very high fold to three-bet statistic, and a very low four-bet statistic, I'm going to three-bet him pre (expecting him to fold when he has nothing, and just call when he has a big hand, giving me a free shot at cracking it with the betting lead).

If he does call, and the flop comes A-T-4 or K-Q-8, I'm probably taking a free card, as I know from the pre-flop action I'm playing against a strong range.

If his statistics suggest he never folds a hand and likes to check raise, then I'm definitely checking behind to take a free one.

If his statistics are super balanced – he's neither a barrelling maniac or a station, and I have him pegged as a tough winning reg – I will probably just fold.

If one of the blinds has a really high squeeze statistic, and tends to favour big bet sizing that makes it unprofitable to peel, then again, I will probably fold, OR three-bet (if the squeezer's cold four-bet statistics are more sensible, and the raiser has a high fold to three-bet and/or low four-bet). Either that, or I might get creative and brave and go for a light four-bet, but only if the squeezer has a high fold to four-bet, or a low five-bet coupled with a high fold to c-bet.

I see the first approach outlined by David a lot when students come to me and tell me how they use a HUD. My job is to get them to transition from thinking in piecemeal fashion, to taking a more holistic approach. The point here is to have a plan, rather than stumbling through the hand, taking every decision as it comes. Interpret the data as you go to narrow his range, but also be aware of the relevant stats on future streets. This way, you can decide how much of that range will bet, call, raise or fold. Try to anticipate the future, but also remember the past.

I see one particular leak a lot when students run hand histories by me.

"Ok, so this guy raises. He has a high fold to three-bet percentage, so I three-bet J-T suited."

"Fine."

"He calls, and the flop comes A-K-4. He checks, so I c-bet, because he has a high fold to c-bet percentage."

"He may have a high fold to c-bet percentage, but surely that board smashes his three-bet calling range pre-flop. You said he folds a ton to three-bets, so once he continues, you have to put him on a strong range. What was his check raise flop statistic like?"

"Um, I didn't check that. But I figured I might as well c-bet, and maybe get him to fold Queens."

"That's one specific hand, and if you wait until the turn to do a delayed c-bet, you probably get the same range to fold. You also don't get blown off your equity if he has you crushed on the flop."

"Um yeah, maybe I should have checked... Anyway, he check raises me big."

"And you folded."

"No. I didn't want to give up having put so much in, and I thought maybe I could make a move on a later street."

"Against a nit who has shown monster strength on a board where he has either a set or top two? Can we double my coaching rate, as you clearly have money to burn!"

"The turn is a Queen, and he leads."

"Beautiful. Better lucky than good. So you raised big?"

I click the raiser's statistics, trawling through them on every street. I then do the same for the two players in the blinds. All of this I do BEFORE making my pre-flop decision.



"No, I clicked it."

"You clicked it? Why? Did he have an insanely high fold to raise stat?"

"No."

"So he's sitting there with a set or top two, there's no indication he will make a big fold, and you don't go for maximum value?"

"Yeah. Anyway the river is an Ace, and he checks."

"And you checked and lost to....?"

"No. I bet and he piled."

"Did he show when you folded?"

"I didn't fold. I called."

"And which house did he have?"

"Ah now, that's where you're wrong. He didn't have a house! He had...umm...Quads."

So remember: when in a hand, make your analysis based on the stats at the start, and remember it as you play down the streets. If you don't, you might kid yourself into thinking the nit is trying to bluff you, or the maniac has it on every street, even though the board and the story keep changing. ♦



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Dara O'Kearney is one of Ireland's most famous poker exports, with over \$1.5 million in live and online cashes. Before turning to poker as a career, Dara was a world class ultra distance runner, winning marathons across the globe. Follow Dara on Twitter at @daraokearney.