

PokerPro heads e-table revolution

Phil Laak is pretty excited about these new digital tables that are making their way to many casinos and poker rooms near you, so we here at *Bluff Australasia* figured we would do a little research on the matter. Let's face it: if Phil is excited about something, we should all take heed.

'The Unabomber' has embraced his role as a spokesman for PokerPro automated poker tables. For local players who may not have seen the tables at Melbourne's Crown Casino (which has more PokerPro tables than any other card room in the world), we asked Laak to explain how they work.

"PokerTek's PokerPro tables are automated poker tables. All players have a screen in front of them. Their chips are digital and the automated table is the dealer, which keeps track of everything and deals a lot more hands per hour," Laak said.

"The hands are dealt electronically on a big screen in the middle of the table. Everyone has a clear view of the pot size and everyone else's chip count is handily in front of you.

"There are no misdeals, there is no lost time for dealer changes, and there are no delays with side pots. There are no bent cards. The nifty part is that your cards are face down, but when you cup your hands around the cards, they magically (digitally) peel up so that you know what you have. Cool."



Former star Jason Alexander samples PokerPro at Crown.

Australia – in particularly Crown Casino – can be proud of the role it played in spreading the word of digital tables throughout the poker world, particularly in the US.

Bluff Australasia's resident rock star and Laak's good mate Antonio Esfandiari spread the word after he experienced a PokerPro table at the 2006 Aussie Millions. In fact, Antonio enjoyed them so much that at his annual WSOP party he had two of them in action, as his guests played for a seat at the 2006 WSOP main event.

Closer to home, PokerPro is steadily building a following among regular Crown players. Since installing 10 tables in early December, more than 200,000 hands have been played on PokerPro.

The most popular game currently spread on PokerPro at Crown is \$1/\$2 No Limit Hold'em, however 50c/\$1 No Limit Hold'em (which was offered during the launch in December) proved so popular that the game was recently reintroduced.

Perhaps the greatest indication of players' acceptance of the automated tables was the scheduling of a \$1000 buy-in PokerPro event as part of the recent Aussie Millions. US player Adam Weiss collected the first prize of more than \$12,000, and declared himself a huge fan of the tables.

In another world first for Crown, the room will soon feature the world's first PokerPro Heads-Up tables where two players can play against each other on their own table (a free heads-up demo table has been on show).

In addition to cash games, single table tournaments are being offered with players able to enter sit 'n' goes plus Phase 1 satellites for the 2008 Aussie Millions (with reduced admin fee compared to live satellites).

Crown is also offering a regular \$45 PokerPro Shootout Tournament each Wednesday night at 7.10pm. Other innovations that will follow in coming months include multi-table functionality (which will allow freezeout tournaments to be scheduled) and Omaha cash games.

So the next time you walk into your local poker room and see one of these bad boys staring you in the face, you may want to give it a try. ♦



Phil Laak checks out PokerPro at the Hollywood Park Casino in LA.