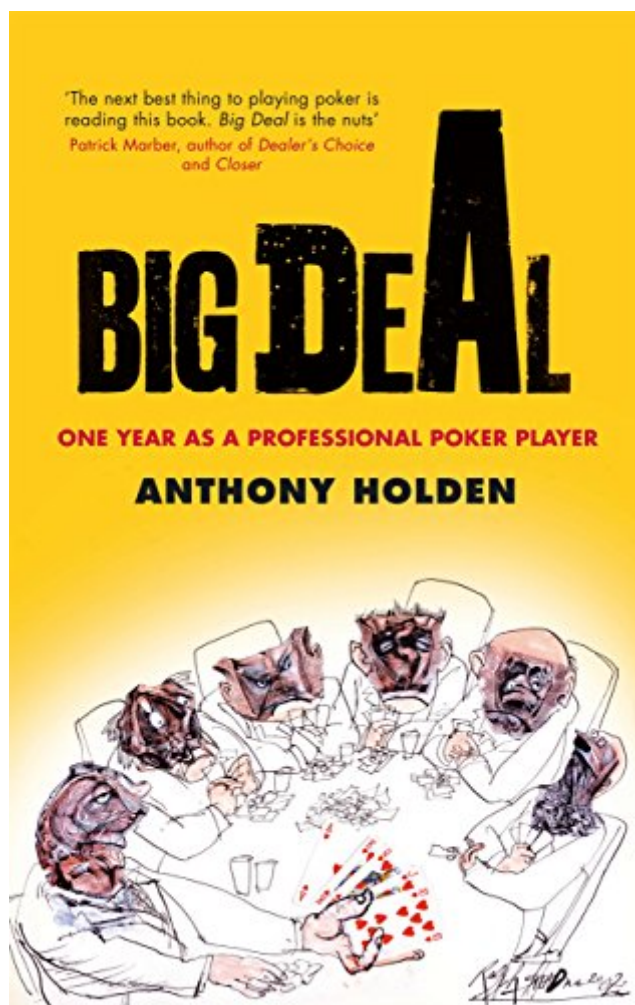


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# Big Deal: One Year As A Professional Poker Player



## Synopsis

BIG DEAL is the mesmerising story of a year spent by bestselling biographer Anthony Holden in the tough world of the professional poker player. He spent days and nights in the poker paradise of Las Vegas, in Malta and Morocco, even shipboard, mingling with the legendary greats, sharpening his game, perfecting his repartee, and learning a great deal about himself in the process. Poker, Holden would insist, is not gambling. Like chess it is a paradigm of life at its most intense, a gladiatorial contest that brings out the best as well as the worst in people. Its heroes, its eccentrics and its comedians stalk the pages of this remarkable book, along with all the hair-raising, nail-biting excitement of the games themselves. A classic of the genre, BIG DEAL is here reissued with a new introduction by the author.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It's a worthwhile read if you love playing poker. There's plenty of tall tales, crazy hands, and interesting psychology. However, Holden's style drags a bit in the later chapters, and his dry English prose is a bit dull at times. Overall, a good gift for the literate poker nut.

Big Deal is a vivid, charming tour many famous poker venues and events around the world through the eyes of a full-time writer and wannabe pro. Mr. Holden is quite skilled as a journalist. Through his description, one really feels like they are there in Malta as rain causes the roof to crumble. He has a strong eye for important and interesting details. Many of his quotations are invaluable and the book flows like words from the mouth of Amarillo Slim. The narrator has his own issues but one cannot help but be sympathetic towards him and cheer for his doomed attempts in becoming a poker legend. The book will completely appeal to dreamers on every continent who wish to avoid spending the rest of their days working for the man (or mam as the case often is nowadays). His trip to the psychologist and brief discussion of the psychology behind gambling was enlightening. I learned from his "shrink's" perspective and welcomed the alternative hypothesis concerning what makes people gamble. Saying it's simply masochism alone is in no way a universal explanation. As a narrator, Holden unfortunately introduces some politics into his text. He exudes smug anti-Americanism in spades. (Yawn...) He appears to think the majority of us are uncouth and disinterested in the finer things of life although his friend Eric Drache obviously belies his stereotyped impressions. He makes digs about Margaret Thatcher and embraces the foppish left-wing notions of many in the English elite but there is no substance behind his snarky comments. Holden intentionally describes some hick at the table as predictably being a Republican. Southerners are also a target and to think, just because a gambling event in Louisiana was cancelled, that nothing has changed in the south in 150 years time is absurd, flawed, and deeply prejudiced. He notes that many poker players are right wing, but why they are is the crucial angle he refuses to explore. All poker players are capitalists by definition--whether they admit it or not. Maximizing profit is why we sit at the table. Those who play should be opposed to redistributionist schemes. True social justice is about keeping what you've earned which is what poker is all about. Oh well, such mindless political asides are not representative of the whole book but they are annoying enough to keep me from giving it five stars. Otherwise, good show London Tony!

A great story for those of us crazy enough to dream of having a chance at playing and beating the poker elite.

good book

To me this book was like pocket sevens, you feel bad throwing it away, but it's really not worth your time. Interesting at times, some good stories, but not all that great.

Anthony Holden gives us a look inside the globe-traveling world of high stakes poker as he chronicles his one year attempt to make a go of it as a professional poker player. His perspective is that of a well-educated British journalist, and this comes through with a score of literary references as well as with some self-deprecating wit. For the aspiring serious poker player, the book is interesting, but not necessarily helpful in guiding one's poker-related career goals. In fact, it's not so much a "How to" as a "How NOT to." Over the course of a year, Holden is obviously playing well, as his various near-money finishes demonstrate. However, he also makes a series of poor decisions, and the biggest financial moments of the year are predicated on luck and fluke rather than on skill. Playing jet-lagged and inebriated, habitually turning to the blackjack tables as a way to rebuild lost funds, Holden nails huge pots when he shouldn't, as when he catches one of two sevens in the deck to take down a big score against Johnny Moss. Conversely, he is busted out of two consecutive World Series of Poker tournaments by being extremely unlucky, falling to a "three-outer" each time. The book is generally interesting and exciting to read, although I would have liked fewer digressions into the history and culture of poker, and more information on the mechanics of the solid play that gets Holden rolling on a poker cruise. This book will teach people a lot about poker, without teaching them about how to play better poker.

Journalist 'London' Tony Holden, clearly no slouch at the poker table, is emboldened by a boss placement at the World Series of poker (he finished ninetieth). He decides to see if he can 'run with the big boys,' or become a professional poker player. Thus begins a year of much intercontinental travel and poker play. Reading this account, it helps to be familiar with card games, especially Texas Hold 'Em; if you're not you might be perplexed or just bored by the play-by-plays of various hands ('the flop was a Qc-Kh-7c... Did the river hold an ace?'). But you need know nothing about gambling to enjoy Holden's breezy writing style: within these pages lie more than a few telling and insightful remarks on the foibles of gamblers, on his own gambling obsession (courtesy of a shrink Holden hires for that purpose), on the history of gambling and cards, especially in America, and the crazed capitalism concentrate that is Las Vegas. It's good stuff, delivered with the wisdom of a seasoned traveler and the self-effacement of a confirmed Briton. The book probably isn't representative of what might happen if Joe Public were to start mixing it up with the pros of poker; given the ease with which Holden mops up most of his competition, and regularly busts out old pros, he must be one of the better players out there. But if you're looking for a book that takes a hard, sympathetic look at the culture of gambling, this is a good one.

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