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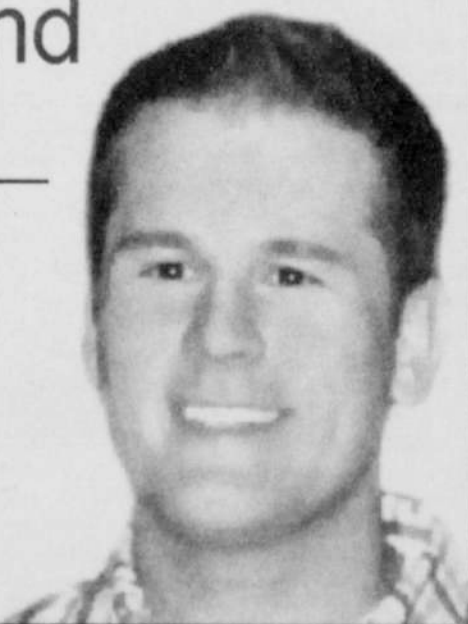
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culture



The Egyptian Club holds the Texas Hold 'Em Tournament every Monday and Wednesday.

Poker Face

Texas Hold 'Em Tournament draws a welcoming, diverse group of players

by Cristy Barsky

I recently traveled to the Egyptian Club to sit in on one of its twice-weekly poker tournaments. What I found was an incredibly welcoming group of lesbians, gay men and community members enjoying a raucous, fun evening of Texas Hold 'Em.

While catching the wave of poker popularity, the E Room has created an unusual format: free tournaments in which participants start with an equal stack of chips and play for weekly points and prizes and, if they finish well, seats in the monthly playoffs for even better prizes.

Club owner Kim Davis told me that she decided to hold the tournaments in part because she herself plays and loves the game and in part to build business. She says she has been amazed and pleased at the overwhelmingly positive response of her patrons. She has used that popularity to not only stage the weekly events but also to sponsor special tournaments to raise money for Basic Rights Oregon.

I was struck by the dedication players exhibited to playing good, solid poker. There was a lot of discussion about correct plays and betting strategies.

The tournament started with about 25 players in a comfortable tournament room. Smoking is allowed, which might be a drawback for some. Even though I am a 26-year reformed smoker,

I found the enthusiasm and friendliness of the staff and participants to be so contagious that I stayed the entire evening and had a fine time.

Throughout the evening I heard participants comment on the joy of being able to compete in an exciting poker tournament once or twice a week without having to put any money at risk, how much they enjoyed each other's company and just how much fun they had playing the same game being shown nightly on ESPN and the Travel Channel. I found the age range (players I spoke with ranged in age from 22 to 74), diversity and cordiality of the environment to be heartwarming and refreshing. People with little or no experience with poker or Texas Hold 'Em but who would like to play can show up early and get some instruction on the basics before the start of the tournament. **10**

The Egyptian Club presents the TEXAS HOLD 'EM TOURNAMENT 7 and 9:30 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays at 3701 S.E. Division St. For more information call 503-236-8689.

CRISTY BARSKY won gold and silver medals in billiards at the 1994 Gay Games in New York and a gold medal in golf at the 2006 Gay Games in Chicago.

Texas Hold 'Em—A Quick Introduction

Texas Hold 'Em is a variation of the game of poker and has become the most widely played form of poker in the world. The same rules apply for "what beats what" as in most games of poker (Seven Card Stud and Five Card Draw being other examples). For example, two pairs beat one pair, three of a kind beats two pair and so on.

What really distinguishes Texas Hold 'Em is the concept of "community cards" and the manner in which the game is dealt. Generally players sit at a round or oval table and the dealer distributes two "hole" cards face down to each person. A round of betting occurs, and then the dealer deals three "community" cards face up in the middle of the table. Again, there is a round of betting, followed by a single community card being dealt face up next to the initial three community cards, followed by another round of betting.

Finally, a fifth card is dealt face up and a final round of betting takes place. Players are trying to make the best possible five-card hand using any combination of their "hole" cards and the five community cards.

A good site to check out online is www.cardplayermagazine.com for instruction, rules, reviews and ordering information on instructional books and videos, coverage of the professional and amateur poker scene and dates of regional and national tournaments.

—CB

