

As many reading this already know, the 2015 World Series of Poker introduced playing cards from a new manufacturer this year. It is my opinion that these cards are unsuitable for play due to their lack of quality.

Poker cards are touched many times during the hand, and often checked and rechecked with a rather sharp bend. In the past, cards were made of material that retained shape even after tough bends, which is necessary to keep them indistinguishable even after hours of wear.

The current cards are fouled almost immediately after one hard bend. The edges can be manipulated at every point. I have been at tables where it was blatantly easy to see which cards had been touched by which players. Some players look at their cards at the corner, some at the side, and this translates into a change in the card structure that does not snap back immediately.

In any given card game, the best cards (whether high or low) will be touched more than the worst, as a natural part of the game. It doesn't take a keen eye at all to tell, after a couple hours of use, which cards are good and which are bad. Some examples -

Holdem 1k - I look at all the cards as they come out, the two most bent cards belong to the gentleman in the big blind. Folds to the button who raises, and the big blind almost immediately reraises. He was a clearly amateur player who, bless his heart, was probably never bluffing there. I call the floor over to get a deck change, two hands later before it comes I'm in the big blind with two very bent cards, which end up being an ace and a king. I also found a card with two tiny notches on the short end, some have speculated that these could be auto-shuffler marks but this was early stages of a 1k (no shufflers).

Limit 2-7 - I'm drawing at 2457, needing a low card on the end to make a hand. I discard and I am passed a card, which is very clearly bent. I immediately start fistpumping mentally because I am more than 95% sure it is a good card. In fact, I am almost wishing my hand was 2567 instead because this card is so squeezed that it's probably never a six! Obviously it is a trey and I make a wheel. In the same tourney I found the biggest nail mark I have ever seen in my life on a card, the dealer refused to acknowledge the mark or call the floor.

PLO - I don't even know what to think here, we had to change out the deck 5 different times in the span of 30 minutes because there were giant nail marks in the cards. The nails eventually stopped after 5 different decks, but what was the deal? No one at the table seemed like an individual that would think about marking cards. How were they getting fouled so easily? Later in the day, a strange blue ink showed up on a card in two different hands. I busted out right after that so I don't really know what the resolution was there.

Basically I'm just totally petrified to play against anyone who knows a thing about card marking. These cards could be very easily marked up and down the side, bent slightly by rank, and no one would be the wiser given how they react to normal wear. I have no experience marking or

cheating in any form, all of the things I have observed are just from being in the games for the last 8 years and having a knack for pattern recognition. Right now decks are so fouled that after a few hours, I get moved to a new table and have to instantly call for a setup because I know where the good cards are. The problem can be somewhat reduced in holdem-type games, you get two cards and then you protect them for the rest of the hand. In draw games, you are pitched a face-down card for all eyes to see, and that card makes or breaks the entire pot. It's completely foolish how easy it is to read the cards from their back.

I didn't really know where to put this, but a dealer also told me that they are specifically instructed not to talk about the cards in the dealer meetings. Not sure what to make of this. I do know that I have had a completely rotten experience trying to point out marked cards. Four different times I was told there was no mark on the cards, and two of the marks were literal Marks 1 and 2 on the list of Biggest Mark I Have Ever Seen On A Card. Multiple times I have been told that the cards were fine because no other tables had problems. Something tells me this is more due to a lack of attention than a lack of markings.

Protect your hand, and protect yourself. Look at your cards and call out marked cards immediately. If too many cards are bent, call for a new deck and setup. There are sharper and less scrupulous people than me who are no doubt right now figuring out ways to cheat the system. However, I want to reiterate that the problem is not malicious marks, the problem is normal wear and tear marking.

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