

Owning the Antonius Wannabe's

Before we move on, I have to share where the name “Antonius Wannabe’s” comes from. When I first started coaching, I had a student that was having trouble playing against maniacs. One day after a lesson, we were chatting about the psychology behind the maniac players at the table, similar to the European aggro maniacs that get a lot of publicity on the forums.

Her theory was simply that deep down inside their little degenerate hearts, they desperately wanted to be like Patrik Antonius. So from that point on, I called all the Euro-maniacs Antonius Wannabes. Anyway, it’s important to know how to play maniacs in PLO, because even though the majority of fish are passive, there are many maniacal fish as well. Being in the Jesus seat on the left of a Scandinavian guy that’s lighting money on fire is worthless unless you know how to adjust properly.

Although I use the term Antonius Wannabes loosely, it generally means a maniac whose very aggressive pre-flop and post-flop. For the sake of discussion, let’s assume it’s the players opening more than 40% of hands, and who also have a high four-bet percentage.

One of the main weapons against these player types is to three-bet smaller than pot in position. There are mainly two reasons for this. First, if he decides to call instead of four-bet, there is less money in the pot and more in the stacks, which allows more post-flop maneuverability, while maintaining the positional advantage. Generally the positional advantage is greatly reduced as the SPR decreases, but as the SPR gets higher, the advantage is greater for the player in position. Normally the SPR in three-bet pots hovers close to 4 when the three-bet is pot-sized. If the three-bet is smaller than pot-sized, the SPR will more likely be closer to 6 or 7. Consequently, you won’t feel as trigger happy to get the money in post-flop, check back and realize equity if needed, or peel a street if he decides to donk-lead the flop. All of this amounts to having more room to maneuver post-flop, which is undoubtedly +EV when in position against a maniac.

Additionally, three-betting smaller than pot has several advantages if he four-bets. When players four-bet, they typically bet full pot on any flop regardless of the texture. Since they can only four-bet to ~25bb instead of ~35bb, we’re getting the same implied odds for winning our opponents entire stack, but for a cheaper price. This is the same reason why three-betting small works well against players whose four-betting range is heavily weighted towards Aces. In short, using this method against the right opponents allows you to play almost perfectly against them in position.