

The real story on the 6-8 offsuit against Howard Lederer

At the end of the second night of play, I went up to Howard Lederer and gave him what I recognize as the most prestigious compliment anyone could give a poker player, especially someone whom slept in Greenwich park during the day and played poker at night according to ESPN's remarks on television. I said, "Howard, my name is Steve and it's a pleasure to meet you. I've watched you on television and out of all the poker players out there, you are my favorite. You are the Cal Ripken of poker." Howard kindly nodded his head and walked away. The next morning I found that I was playing at his table and was nervous and excited.

We were at hand for hand at that point with over 565 players left and only 5 away from the money or approximately 63 tables. It took over 10 minutes to play a hand and wait for the other tables to finish up before the next hand would start. Up to this point I was on the phone with my buddy Mark Schaech who coached me every two hours after we had a break and who was the communicator to all my poker buddies of my status in the tournament given the short breaks we had in between levels. After every hand, when we were waiting hand for hand I would give him an update on the closeness to the money. He also saw a pattern that Howard was taken advantage of players at the table and playing every hand since we were so close to the bubble of money, which is normal and customary given the many amateurs and the concern of \$12,500. You could also see that he had many \$100 chips which is clear that he has been stealing many blinds.

Before the Main Event started I had my picture taken at the expo with Bluff Magazine holding my favorite hand up being a 6-8 offsuit. So isn't ironic that when it came to my big blind at the table and Howard once again has raised the blinds that I play back with my favorite hand against my favorite player who has lost the last 4 hands that he has played and over half of his chipstack since we started playing the last hour. I figured Howard had a small pair or just about any hand, so being the amateur that I am I played my favorite hand. When the board came strong, I check raised him like I am suppose to, to see where I am at in the hand, and I win. Since now we are in between hands I call my friend Mark to tell him where we are at in players and that I just bluffed Howard. Maybe I had the better hand. I could have been disrespectful to him and showed him the hand but have to much respect for him. I was bragging on the phone to my buddy behind the bleachers of fans and never thought for a moment that I was microphoned up or if they did hear it that they would be interested in putting it on the television.

During the Tournament of Champions I apologized to Howard and he said no problem, it was just one hand.

The next round when I played the K5 of hearts and hit the flop, I figured I had the best hand at that time. I was wrong, but Howard made the same raise with his AJ as he did with his Aces, and since he was low on chips at that time I did not think he would call if he missed the flop.