

CRUSH LIVE POKER PODCAST #726

How to Choose the Best Sizing for Value and Bluffs

• August 21, 2026

Chapter 1 Announcements — vacation schedule, the NFL survivor pool, and a summary-document experiment

 0:00 ·  6 min

MAIN CONCEPT

Episode housekeeping — no call-in show on August 31, the survivor pool is back at \$200 an entry with up to three entries allowed, and this episode ships an experimental comprehensive summary document Bart wants feedback on.

Housekeeping before the strategy. The episode is a day late — Thursday got hectic on the family side, nothing bad — and Bart promises a Thursday release next week, possibly in the morning. He leaves for Canada on Saturday August 29 for a week in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, so there is no call-in show on Monday August 31. Instead: a normal call-in show on the 24th, possibly a nighttime show around 9pm on the 28th to make up for the gap, and a normal show on Labor Day, September 7. The CLP NFL survivor pool returns, with a site-wide email coming by Monday at the latest. This year he plans to allow up to three entries at \$200 a head, which should push a prize pool that usually clears \$20,000 higher still. It is winner-take-all, you can deal at the end, and the only fee is the \$0.75 to \$1 per entry the hosting site charges. Pick one team per week, not against the spread; win and you advance, and you cannot reuse a team. Payment is through Cash App, which he says is the only peer-to-peer service that will not hassle you over sixty people sending \$200 at once — PayPal and Venmo all will, though he hears Apple Pay is loose too. Finally, the notes. The usual hand notes are in the podcast description, on the episode's content page, and in the CLP podcast notes channel on Discord, with the hands written into the chapter marks. New this week as a test, there is a second link to a comprehensive summary or study guide. He wants feedback — DM him or post in the episode's forum thread — on whether it is too detailed, not detailed enough, or worth extending to other content.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- CLP NFL survivor pool: \$200 an entry, up to three entries, winner-take-all, no vig, paid through Cash App. Watch for the site-wide email.
- Schedule: call-in show on the 24th, likely a 9pm show on the 28th, none on August 31, back to normal on Labor Day, September 7.
- The notes live in the podcast description, on the episode content page, and in Discord — plus the hands are written into the chapter marks.
- The comprehensive summary document is an experiment. Feedback by DM or in the episode's forum thread decides whether it continues.

Chapter 2 Cheating follow-up — MGM confirms the barrings and the Euro slide question

 5:40 ·  4 min

MAIN CONCEPT

MGM confirms it barred both the Aria thief and the two suspected cheats immediately, and the industry may be heading toward barring everything from the felt and adopting the European slide — with speed cloth the practical obstacle.

A follow-up to the recent cheating coverage. The video from last week's call-in show with CLP coach Peter (handle garbled in the transcript) on cheating in live games is now up on YouTube, giving the channel two long, heavily viewed cheating videos alongside the ones covering Joe — not his real name — who had \$5,000 stolen out of his bag at Aria by the player sitting next to him. The update: Sean McCormick, who Bart believes is head of poker operations across all MGM properties and who he has known since McCormick dealt at Bellagio in the mid-2000s, reached out directly. When the first video ran without naming the room, Bart had DM'd him and been pointed to public relations. After the follow-up video named Aria, McCormick came back with the facts: they did bar the woman who stole Joe's money, and they did it right away — Joe simply did not know. They also barred the two men Joe called in about, the ones with the hat on the rail and the cameras. The two then talked about where the game is headed. MGM is aware of the problem, and McCormick acknowledged it may end with everything barred from the table, card protectors included, and eventually a move to the European sliding deal. Bart has been told that is easier said than done, because a slide needs speed felt or speed cloth for the cards to travel. He is candid about his own arc on this: his first instinct was to ask whether anyone actually had proof, the same way he treats collusion claims, since people who collude are usually morons. It was Peter calling it a real problem in Los Angeles that made him take it seriously, because Peter would not say it otherwise.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Aria barred the woman who stole \$5,000 from Joe right away, and barred the two suspected cheats as well — Joe was never told.
- MGM acknowledges the camera problem and may eventually bar all objects from the table, card protectors included.
- The Euro slide requires speed felt or speed cloth on every table, which is the real barrier to switching.
- The full Peter interview from last week's call-in show is now on the CLP YouTube channel.

Chapter 3 Session setup — three mini-sessions, a drunk neighbour, and a \$1,000 PLO detour

 9:55 ·  5 min

MAIN CONCEPT

A six-hour day split into three two-hour mini-sessions across two games, driven by an unbearable table neighbour rather than by game selection, ending down \$400 — up \$600 in hold'em, down \$1,000 in PLO.

Setup for a Tuesday session that broke into three pieces. Bart arrived around 11:30am and played until 5:30 or 6 — about six hours, his normal length, but split as two hours of \$2/\$5 no limit, two hours of \$5/\$5 pot limit Omaha, then two more hours of \$2/\$5. The switch had nothing to do with game quality. A player at the first table was slamming beers at 11:30 in the morning, hammered, loud and relentlessly talkative; Bart was in seat two, the drunk in seat five. The final straw was the man asking seat eight, across the table, to rate how annoying he was on a scale of one to ten, getting an eight, and howling at his own joke. Bart says this almost never bothers him enough to move, and he only did because the PLO game was being called. Nobody showed up for it, so he started it heads-up with a non-regular — an excuse for his standing complaint that people will not sit and take cards when a game is forming or about to break, when getting the cards in the air is usually what makes a game go rather than waiting hours for the next attempt. He lost about \$1,000 in PLO, effectively heads-up: all in on a ten-seven-deuce flop with two hearts holding A-A-J-9 with the nut hearts against top two, 60% on the flop, run twice, lost both. He won about \$600 in hold'em, leaving him down \$400 on the day. Conditions in the no limit game: \$2/\$5 with a \$10 straddle that was not always on early, a \$1,000 cap, and a table of complete unknowns. Two or three hands will be highlighted in the notes and capitalised in the chapter marks.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- \$2/\$5 with a \$10 straddle and a \$1,000 cap, table of complete unknowns; the straddle was off for part of the early session.
- Getting cards in the air is what makes a forming game go — refusing to be dealt in can cost everyone hours of waiting.
- The PLO loss: A-A-J-9 with nut hearts, 60% on a ten-seven-deuce two-heart flop against top two, run twice and lost twice.
- Result: about six hours for -\$400 overall.

Chapter 4 Hand 1 — Trip fives and the case for a huge river value bet

 14:50 ·  8 min

MAIN CONCEPT

The paradox of live poker on the river — when your big bet looks purely polarised, opponents call wider, not narrower, so a huge value bet beats the textbook small one against a range full of one-pair hands.

About \$800 effective against an unknown in the big blind, no straddle. Bart opens the cutoff with A♥5♥ to \$20 — his standard four-times raise when the straddle is off — and the big blind calls for a \$40 pot. The flop is 5♦5♠4♦ and he flops trip fives. The villain checks and Bart bets just \$15, deliberately tiny: at \$30 hands like K-Q, K-J and Q-J simply fold, but a small enough bet gets overcard holdings with almost no equity to float. The villain tanks and calls. The turn is the 3♣, making the board 5-5-4-3. The card does not scare him for six-seven; what matters is that every ace-high is now a genuine draw — on 5-4-3 an ace-high is either a pair plus a draw, two overcards with a wheel draw, or A-6 open-ended with two overcards. He bets \$35 and is called again, though he thinks \$50 was better, since the queen-jack floats now fold anyway. The river is the A♦ into a \$135 pot: it completes the front-door flush and gives every peeling ace top pair. The villain checks. Conventional advice is to bet half pot or less to get called by ace-x. Bart argues the reverse, invoking the paradox of live poker — an overbet here looks so polarised between a flush and nothing that opponents refuse to believe it, so an ace that called flop and turn is not folding, a flush is not folding, and a slow-played five is not folding. The only hands calling \$50 but not \$150 are 77, 46 or 63, which he is not targeting. He bets \$200 into \$135. The villain snap-folds, which only tells him there was no ace.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Tiny flop bets on paired boards buy floats from overcard hands that a half-pot bet folds out immediately.
- On 5-4-3 type boards every ace-high becomes a real draw, which is what keeps opponents calling the turn.
- An overbet on a flush-completing river reads as polarised, so one-pair hands call it — bet big, not small.
- Had the villain led \$100 into \$135, Bart would have raised to at least \$500: the \$2/\$5 pool does not fold a king- or queen-high flush.
- "I just want to get called" is a tournament thought. In a cash game the only question is which size makes the most EV.

Chapter 5 Hand 2 — King-ten of diamonds, a flop raise, and a turned king-high flush

 22:45 ·  8 min

MAIN CONCEPT

Lead flushing turns when you were the one check-calling — but when your opponent raised the flop and took the betting lead, checking to him is free, because his value range bets again anyway.

About \$1,000 effective against a younger unknown in his late twenties, immediately to Bart's left with the straddle on. He opens with a caution about age reads: after Black Friday in 2011 a young player with money at Commerce was good nineteen times out of twenty, off millions of online hands. Today the assumption should be the opposite. Folded to him in the big blind with K♦T♦, Bart raises to \$40 — larger than his usual \$30 because he is out of position — and is called for an \$80 pot. The flop is 8♦5♦4♠. He notes this is about the widest configuration in poker — wider even than button versus big blind, since the defender also has position — which argues for checking a fair amount. But if he is opening wide from the blind he holds as many strong hands as the villain — 8-5, 5-4, 6-7, pocket eights, pocket fives — unlike an under-the-gun open, where folding 44, 55 and 67 hands the board to the defender. So he bets \$50, on the principle that low, semi-connected boards like 8-5-4 are barrel boards: opponents call flop and turn with pair-plus-draw hands, then fold the river once an overcard caps them at eight-x. He also thinks players credit a blind defender with more bluffs than an early-position raiser, so they call wider. The villain raises to \$150, a move Bart calls a big spew against an unknown. He calls, leaving \$800 behind in a \$380 pot. The turn is the 3♦ for the king-high flush. He usually leads flushing turns, but only when he was the check-caller — here the villain took the lead, and sets,

two pair and six-seven bet again anyway. He checks, the villain bets \$250, and he jams \$800 and is called.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Blind or straddle versus a late-position open is the widest configuration there is, so some flops genuinely should be checked.
- Defending wide from the blinds means you hold the two-pair and set combos an under-the-gun opener has folded — that is what makes betting 8-5-4 viable.
- Low, semi-connected boards are barrel boards: opponents call flop, call turn, then fold the river when an overcard caps them.
- The old age read is dead. A young player with chips today should be assumed inexperienced, not online-trained.

Chapter 6 Aside — short buy-ins, rake, and why you should move up to the \$5 blind level

 31:15 ·  2 min

MAIN CONCEPT

Rake is roughly flat across stakes, so it eats a far larger share of small games — move up to the \$5 blind level as soon as you can, buying in short and playing tight, rather than grinding \$1/\$3.

A short but pointed aside prompted by the villain from the previous hand rebuying for only \$500 or \$600 rather than the full \$1,000 cap. Bart treats that as information: unless someone is short-stacking well, which is very rare, a partial buy-in is a signal the player probably is not good. That leads him into advice he gives constantly and rarely sees taken. If you are playing \$1/\$3 and buying in for \$300, and there is a \$2/\$5 or \$5/\$5 game with a \$300 minimum, go and play the bigger game — buy in short, play super tight, get your feet wet, and start learning the player pool. Michael G has a podcast dedicated to the idea. The reason is rake, not ego: rooms take roughly the same rake at every level, so \$6 at \$1/\$3 and \$6 at \$5/\$10 are wildly different as a percentage of the pot, and the smaller you play the more of your win rate the house takes. With a few exceptions, such as the Texas games, the \$5 blind level is where a live player first starts making real money and can actually build a bankroll — even a recreational player just looking to profit on the side. The catch is that short buy-ins have to be played correctly, which mostly means not flat-calling preflop, and Bart says he almost never sees a \$300 or \$500 stack played

that way. Meanwhile he had also clocked that this particular villain was steaming from the flush hand, down a couple of hundred within an orbit — which is exactly the setup for the next hand.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A short rebuy in a capped game is a read: almost nobody short-stacks well, so it usually marks a weaker player.
- Rake is close to identical at \$1/\$3 and \$5/\$10, so as a percentage it punishes the small game far harder.
- Buy in for the minimum at \$2/\$5 or \$5/\$5, play tight, and learn the pool — that is how you move up safely.
- If you are going to play short, play it correctly: stop flat-calling preflop.

Chapter 7 Hand 3 — Calling off with king-seven off a bet-sizing read

 33:17 ·  5 min

MAIN CONCEPT

Bet pacing and bet sizing are the read — an overbet on a dry flop followed by an instant jam on a disconnected turn card is a tilting player's line, not a value line.

About \$380 effective. The same young villain, now visibly steaming, opens under the gun to \$30. It folds back to Bart in the straddle, immediately to the villain's right, with K♥7♥, and he calls for a \$60 pot. The flop is 7♠3♠2♦, giving him top pair, and he considers check-raising for protection and value before checking. The villain bets \$75 into \$60, and the overbet is the whole hand. Bart is careful about the word read — he is not claiming a Hellmuth-style live read, he works from bet pacing and occasionally bet sizing — but the combination of a strange overbet on a dry board and a player who is tilting tells him the villain is dusting it off. He just calls. He notes that the king kicker matters enormously here compared with 7-5 or 7-4: when a king or an ace arrives, those are precisely the cards the villain will fire as bluffs anyway, and Bart improves rather than being counterfeited. The pot is \$210 with \$275 behind, and he decides he is check-calling every turn card, with an ace the possible exception. He also observes he would be more likely to check-raise this flop with a queen-high flush draw and no pair, since that hand has no showdown value if it misses, whereas king-seven is a comfortable check-call. The turn is the Q♥ and the villain instantly shoves \$275. Bart asks what hand overbets 7-3-2 and then insta-jams on the single most disconnected turn card in the deck. He calls, the river is an offsuit deuce, and he says "I've got a seven" and tables it. The villain is disgusted, says nothing, and leaves.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- An instant all-in on the most disconnected turn card available is a bluff tell, especially from a player who is steaming.
- Top pair with a big kicker is far better here than 7-5 or 7-4: the overcards that arrive are the villain's bluff cards, and they improve you.
- Check-raise the flop with a big flush draw and no pair; check-call with a pair that has showdown value.
- Decide your plan on the flop — Bart committed to check-calling any turn before the card came, and that made the instant shove easy.

Chapter 8 Hand 4 — A thin ace-jack value bet on a four-flush river

 38:20 ·  5 min

MAIN CONCEPT

A check behind the preflop raiser's check is real information — it discounts flush draws that would normally bet — which is what makes the thin value bet correct on a river everyone else is scared of.

Back at \$2/\$5 at a new table with a fresh \$1,000, this is a setup hand for the one that follows, against the same young unknown. There is no straddle. A super-tight OMC regular limps under the gun, it folds to Bart in the small blind with A♥J♦, and he makes it \$25. The villain calls from the big blind and the limper calls, making the pot \$75. The flop is Q♦8♦3♠ and Bart checks rather than c-betting: if the OMC so much as breathes on the pot he is folding, and checking buys him that information for free, since the limper checks behind everything that is not a queen. It checks through. The turn is the A♣, he bets \$40, the big blind calls and the OMC folds. The river is the T♦, completing the front-door flush into a \$155 pot. Bart says many players panic and check here, and that it makes little sense: your opponent checks behind every worse hand, so a bet means he beats you or is bluffing — and there is no bluff in this range. More importantly, the villain checked the flop after Bart, the preflop raiser, had checked. That is a very different check from checking to a player still to act; someone with a flush draw on Q-8-3 bets at a high frequency once the raiser gives up. So flush draws are heavily discounted, queen-x is discounted because he would have bet the flop, and there is no backdoor flush draw on this board either. What remains is mostly ace-x that turned a pair. Bart bets \$85 and is called by worse. It is the third or fourth week running he has gone this thin.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Checking a flop with a marginal hand when a super-tight limper is still in buys you information for free.
- Checking behind a preflop raiser who has already checked is not the same as checking to a player in position — it discounts the draws that would bet.
- Check-calling a big river bet makes no sense when your opponent checks behind every worse hand: it is bet or fold for him.
- Fear of a completed front-door flush costs value. The range here was mostly ace-x, and \$85 into \$155 got called.

Chapter 9 Hand 5 — Check-raising ace-four of spades, and a 24% call at 3-to-1

 43:20 ·  12 min ·  Highlighted by Bart

MAIN CONCEPT

Taking two points the worst of it is defensible in a capped game when the pot buys image and puts chips in front of a bad player — but only for that reason, never as a habit.

Exactly \$1,000 effective — the villain had just been near-feltd and pulled about \$1,200 from his pocket, and the dealer called him for going north and made him bring it back to the cap, the first time Bart has seen that. He first sets out his rule on bluffing a bad, sticky player: bluff him less often overall, but with a caveat — a bad player betting early in the hand does not mean he has anything, so flop bluffs are live; once the action tells you he does have a hand, stop. The villain opens from plus one to \$30 and Bart calls in the straddle with A♠4♠ for a \$60 pot. The flop is J♠T♥3♣ rainbow, he checks, and the villain auto-bets \$40. Recalling a CLP call-in hand from six months ago where a subscriber check-raised this exact two-Broadway-plus-low-card texture with an ace-x wheel draw, Bart check-raises to \$150 with an overcard, a backdoor wheel draw and a backdoor spade draw. Snap call, pot \$360, about \$820 behind. He reads the villain for A-K, K-Q or A-Q, and knows any card below a five or any spade adds equity. The turn is the K♠, giving him the nut flush draw plus a gutshot to a queen. He bets \$275 — sized so it does not look small and still leaves a river jam that could fold a one-pair hand — and the villain jams \$820. It is \$545 into \$1,455, just under 3-to-1, needing roughly 27 to 28%. He has 27% against K-J, about 22% against A-Q, and less against A-K than against K-J because A-K shares the queen out. Against a range of A-Q, K-J and jacks he has about 24%: a hair short.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 3-to-1 needs 25%, 2-to-1 needs 33%. Memorise the conversions so you can do the count in the moment.
- A-4 beats 4-5 suited as a check-raise bluff on J-T-3: the ace overcard is a live out on top of the draws.
- Your equity can be lower against a weaker made hand — A-4 does worse against A-K than against K-J, because A-K shares the queen out.
- The villain turned over K9o for one overcard and a gutshot, against which Bart actually had 33.5%. He missed the river.
- Bluff a sticky bad player less overall, but do bluff him early — his flop bet means nothing until the later action confirms a hand.

Chapter 10 Hand 6 — A river bluff-raise all in, built entirely from preflop position

 55:00 ·  10 min ·  Highlighted by Bart

MAIN CONCEPT

Preflop position is the hand-reading tool — a limp from plus one rather than the blinds eliminates the only cheap holdings that beat you, leaving a single combination and turning a weak hand into a river bluff-raise.

The hand of the session, at about \$1,000 effective against an unfamiliar player in his late fifties who limps from plus one. Bart raises the hijack to \$40 with A♥T♦ and gets called out of position for a \$90 pot. The flop is 4♥3♠2♣ — the wheel board he told listeners to remember from hands one and two, where opponents call the flop and call the turn with pair-plus-straight-draw hands and then fold the river, because overcards keep arriving and keep changing top pair. He bets \$35 intending to triple barrel. Called. The turn is the 8♥, and because he holds the A♥ the villain cannot have the backdoor nut flush draw. He bets \$130 into \$160 and says plainly that this bet is terrible unless you are firing most rivers — checking back the turn forfeits the whole plan. Called, pot \$420, about \$800 behind. The river is the 2♠, pairing the board, and he was still going to fire, probably \$600 to \$700 and near all in, because unlike a one-liner board a large size here genuinely folds out 5-4 and 5-3. Instead the villain leads \$200. Bart's read is that it makes no sense for value, since any two pair or better raises the turn from out of position. The only value hand is a deuce, and position kills it: the man limped from plus one, not the blinds, so 5-2 is out, leaving only A-2 — and with the 2♣ and 2♠ on board and the A♥ in his own hand there is exactly one combination. He cannot call with ace-ten, so he jams about \$850

as a bluff raise and gets a snap fold. Afterwards his friend Josh, at the table but not watching, told him the villain is a huge station.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Start from position, not from the board: a plus-one limper cannot have 5-2, which reduces the entire value range to one combo of A-2.
- Betting the turn on these low boards is only correct if you are committed to firing most rivers — checking back forfeits the plan.
- Ace-ten is too weak to bluff-catch here, which is precisely what makes raising better than calling.
- On a paired river a very large bluff size does fold out 5-4 and 5-3 — unlike a one-liner board, where huge sizing is inefficient.
- Bart still defends the bluff-raise even knowing the villain was a station, because a station leading here still has nothing strong.

Chapter 11 Hand 7 — The up-front bet: check-calling the turn to donk the river

 1:04:45 ·  6 min

MAIN CONCEPT

The up-front bet — check-calling a strong but non-nut hand on the turn out of position specifically to donk the river — is the line that maximises when a turn check-raise would fold out everything worse.

Against a station, Bart adds, he would hesitate to plan a triple barrel at all — he would check back flops with the good ace-highs and might not fire the river — but if a station leads the river representing nothing, he would bluff-raise. Then the closing hand, against the same opponent, about \$1,000 effective. Under the gun raises to \$30, the villain calls from mid position, and Bart calls in the straddle with 9♥6♥ for a \$90 pot. The flop is 7♥6♣5♠ — middle pair, backdoor hearts, a gutshot to an eight. He checks, the preflop raiser checks, the villain bets \$40, and Bart calls with no need to raise. The raiser folds. The turn is the 9♠, giving him top and middle pair, but there is a one-liner to an eight on board, so anyone betting an eight already has a straight and leading is wrong. He checks and the villain bets \$50 into \$170 after betting \$40 into \$90 — and from that sizing alone Bart is certain the villain cannot have an eight and is beaten a ton. The problem is that the straight is so obvious that a thin check-raise folds out everything worse and gets called only by nine-seven or pocket fives, a way-ahead-way-behind spot. So he uses what he calls the up-front bet: check-call a strong but non-nut hand on the turn out of position,

planning to donk the river. That is the line that maximises when a check-raise would fold out too much. He calls into a \$270 pot, planning to lead almost any river. The river is the 8♠, the worst card in the deck — a straight on board and backdoor spades home. He checks, the villain checks back, and they chop. The villain had jack-nine, exactly as read.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Use the up-front bet when your hand is best but a check-raise turns the spot way-ahead-way-behind: call the turn, lead the river.
- Opponent bet sizing is the read — \$40 into \$90 then \$50 into \$170 rules out the straight on a one-liner board.
- Do not lead a turn that puts an obvious one-liner out there; you fold everything you beat and get raised by the straight.
- On a blank river Bart would have led \$85 to \$100 into \$270. The 8♠ chopped it instead; the villain showed jack-nine.
- Session result: -\$400 overall, up about \$600 in hold'em and down about \$1,000 in pot limit Omaha.