



Bruce Paul has come up with a new game that combines elements of Omaha and hold'em.

New Hold'em/Omaha Variation Getting Rave Reviews at The Bike

NEW POKER VARIATIONS turn up every year. Home games are notorious for new wrinkles. That's how the game evolves. But few make it to the big time. After all, you do not find the Bellagio spreading "Night Baseball."

But an innovative new game, 2-11 Poker, seems to be the exception, and it's being spread now to rave reviews at one of the nation's most famous cardrooms, the Bicycle Casino near Los Angeles.

In fact, this year's North American Poker Tour Players' Appreciation Tournament at The Bike will feature the new game. Players will alternate playing two

levels of 2-11 Poker, followed by one level of standard Texas hold'em.

"We felt like the players would be able to play a more equal number of hands of each of the games with this new format," says The Bike's tournament director, known to players as Action Mo.

Bruce Paul, the creator of 2-11 Poker, agrees: "Players are beginning to appreciate 2-11's unique blending of poker games from the past and present and seem to be understanding and, more importantly, enjoying the game more with each tournament they play."

In what Paul is calling "Poker's 3rd

Dimension," he has taken the mystery and danger of the hidden card aspect of poker's original mainstay, five-card draw, and mixed it with hold'em and Omaha's community-card aspect. Combine that with 2-11 Poker's innovations – the "two or three cards from your hand" rule and only four (not five) community cards, and you suddenly have "a balanced blend of poker games in one exciting package."

The Bicycle Casino's four successful 2-11 tournaments drew more than 700 entrants and beat the cardroom's incentive-based guarantees in each event, so it seems players are warming to the new

Sample Hands

Photos (figs. 1-4) show an extremely strong hand and how the fact that you have an extra hole card to use can give you a hidden monster. In this high-only hand, you are starting with A-K-K-Q double suited, one of the strongest starting hands. All four cards are paint and all work together. The “flip” gives you kings full of aces. Someone would have to hold the other two aces and the case king to be ahead of you here. Huge “flip” for you! The turn gives you a straight flush draw and the river gives you the mortal nuts. Easy game! Fig. 5 shows the possibilities this game has for action and multiple draws with just average hands when a third hole card is allowed. This is an actual hand played at The Bike: a straight flush, quad sevens and quad fours!

variation in a big way.

We caught up to the creator of 2-11 Poker, Bruce Paul, for the latest on the game and some insight as to how 2-11 Poker was born.

HOW IT STARTED

Here is his story:

“It was a Saturday afternoon, April 9th, 2005, and I am lounging in my living room wondering what it would be like to be with my brother. He had been blessed with a Sunday attendance ticket to that year’s Masters golf tournament in Augusta, Georgia, and had taken this Saturday to drive there from his home in Pensacola, Florida. I was in the midst of dreaming about what it would be like to walk those magical fairways and, I must admit, was somewhat envious but mostly just glad that at least one of us had been given the opportunity.

“I was slightly jolted from my haze by the ringing of the telephone and after my usual Hello was surprised to hear my brother’s voice. ‘I just crossed the border of Augusta and wanted to call you. It’s as beautiful as everyone has described it and I can’t wait to go to the course’.

“I don’t even remember my response as the week was already an emotional one for my family. My father-in-law had passed away just two days prior and my wife was with her mother planning the unfortunate but necessary events that would follow.

“After I hung up the phone and for reasons I still cannot explain, I began to think about poker. Go figure.

“As I sat there watching the last min-

utes of that day’s broadcast of the golf tournament I watch every year, my mind went to some of the varied types of poker games played by the group of men who had welcomed me into their long established home game and to whom I will always be grateful.

“Suddenly, as if I had been struck by the proverbial bolt of lightning, a new game flashed into my mind. It began with four cards dealt to each player, had a portion of a rule from one of our games (now known as the ‘two or three’ rule), a ‘7-low’ condition from a different game (when played high/low) and my own rule of only two cards on the flop followed by the normal turn and river. I literally began to bristle and immediately went to my kitchen table and began dealing the game to a simulated group of players with all hands dealt face up.”

THE NAME OF THE GAME

Paul talked about how he named the game.

“I named the game 2-11 Poker. It’s pronounced ‘two-eleven’ and is derived from the order of the placement of the four community cards – two then one and finally one.”

The most glaring difference in the game is the ‘two or three’ rule – you must use either two or three of your hole cards, combined with two or three on the board, to form your five-card poker hand. Betting is standard.

“Not being what I consider a ‘numbers guy,’ I wanted to do something to make sure I hadn’t just come up with what I termed a ‘28 wild card, high school poker



game.' So I had 2-11 Poker mathematically analyzed by Minimax Consulting of Rhode Island," Paul said. "Their analysis and the other variations of the game can be read on my website at www.211poker.com.

"I then took the necessary steps to correctly and legally sanction 2-11 Poker with the United States Patent and Trade office. Currently, 2-11 Poker is trademarked, copyrighted and patent pending. 2-11 Poker has also been approved for play by the state gaming commission approval process in both California and Nevada and is currently being spread at the Bike."

Currently, the game is being played as

high-only at limit and no-limit, and tournament action is playing in a mixed game format alternating between 2-11 Poker and hold'em, but the game can also be played high-low.

ADVANTAGES

Paul says the game offers some advantages for poker rooms.

"For poker rooms and online sites considering offering 2-11 Poker to their players, 2-11 Poker brings players a new and exciting level of action that deals more hands per hour than any game with the exception of Texas hold'em. It has also been found to be extremely easy for dealers to adapt to the dealing procedure of

only two cards on the flop and the reading of hands at the conclusion of each game. The Bicycle Casino has also seen an increase in the number of new players coming to the casino since they began spreading 2-11 Poker."

He added that while new game implementation differs in each state, the approval process can easily be determined by contacting that state's gaming commission.

Paul says he was watching players at the Bike during the game's debut and heard this comment: "I feel like I'm watching Doubleday watching baseball." The man who invented baseball was Abner Doubleday.

Paul couldn't help a little pride when he heard this one during a tournament break: "While we were playing hold'em, I couldn't wait to go back to playing 2-11." ♠

2-11 POKER PLAYER'S GUIDE

Here are the basics of playing 2-11 Poker.

Each game begins with the normal posting of small and big blinds prior to dealing.

The most important aspect of 2-11 Poker is to remember the following rule prior to the dealing of four down cards to each player:

Players must use **either two or three cards** from their four-card hand with **any two or three cards** from the board to make their best five-card hand.

In 2-11 Poker, each game begins by dealing four down cards to each player, followed by a normal round of betting.

After the betting concludes, the dealer will "flip" two cards up in the center of the table instead of the traditional three-card flop.

After betting concludes, the dealer will continue with a normal turn card and another round of betting followed by the river card and the last round of betting.

Each player shares the four-card community board.

The goal is to make the best five-card hand by using any two or three cards from your hand with any two or three cards from the board.

HAND STRENGTH

Because you can use two or three cards from your hand (rather than the mandatory two as in standard Omaha), very

strong hidden hands are possible in 2-11 Poker. You must always keep this in mind.

STARTING HAND SUGGESTIONS

Your starting hand is stronger when your four cards work together or "with" each other to create multiple possibilities to hit the flip.

Some good suggestions are as follows: high cards, a pair or trips, or your cards are connected and double or triple suited

SAMPLE HANDS

9-7-6-4 offsuit. This is a minimum playing hand because you're holding low cards, unconnected, unsuited and you have no pair.

A-8-7-6 with three of a suit. This is a much stronger hand because you have three cards of the same suit headed by an ace, and three cards are connected.

A-A-10-9 double suited. This hand is a good starting hand because you have a pair of aces that are suited along with two connected cards.

A-K-Q-Q with three of a suit. This is an excellent starting hand because you are holding high connected cards, a triple-suited ace and a pair. It would be even better if the pair was aces, but nonetheless it's a huge hand! ♠

INVENTOR IS GRATEFUL

BRUCE PAUL, inventor of 2-11 Poker, is grateful to all who've helped him bring his game to the public.

"I believe the most important aspect of the life we all lead is to remember to be grateful for what we have, and I think it is extremely necessary to express that gratitude. The Bicycle Casino and all of its staff have been one of the most vital parts of the evolving success that 2-11 Poker has attained and I will be forever grateful to everyone there. I would also like to say thank you to the great and accommodating staff at Poker Pro magazine for their professionalism.

"I have always welcomed any comments from those who have played 2-11 Poker. Please feel free to tell me about your own experiences in my website at www.211poker.com.

"To everyone who has played 2-11 Poker, I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you. Best of luck to all and let's keep playing 2-11 Poker!" ♠