

Celina Lin

Not Just Your Average Poker Player

FROM BONDGIRL TO BUBBLE GIRL AND NOW THE ASIAN POSTER GIRL, **CELINA LIN** DOESN'T HAVE ANYONE HOLDING HER HAND ANYMORE. INSTEAD SHE IS OUT TO CONQUER THE POKER WORLD ONE TABLE AT A TIME!

Spending her early years in Shanghai, China, before the family relocated to Melbourne at age seven, Celina Lin made the most of the land of opportunity that is Australia. Graduating in 2000, Lin moved onto a Science/IT degree at Melbourne University before the allure of the \$4-8 Limit Hold'em felt came calling one night following a long session on the Caribbean Stud tables at Crown Casino.

Lin walked away with a tidy profit in a game normally reserved for the Lygon Street coffee shop regulars of yester-year, and following that successful session she moved to the virtual felt where the Limit Hold'em tables of Pacific Poker would see her reap more profits. "I played what was the

Tim DUCKWORTH

softest game at the time, 15/30 limit on Pacific Poker, deposited \$600 and ran the bankroll up to \$10,000 in 3 weeks playing any two suited cards . . . That was my intro to poker, I was hooked!"

After deferring her degree



indefinitely, Lin started playing more and more online, and through the guidance of Tony Dunst, she made the transition to tournament poker in late 2007. It would prove to be a very successful venture as it would take only four months to see her soar up the Australian online poker rankings. Under the moniker of BondGirl, Lin was placed seventh as we ticked into 2008. With a bevy of results online, Lin followed in the footsteps of Dunst, tackling the felt of live tournaments on both the local and international front.

"Adapting to live from online was most difficult for me. People's ranges live are so much tighter than online" and as a result Lin found it hard to adjust, occasionally falling just shy of the money and therefore earning the nickname of bubble girl. "I am extremely competitive and always have my sight set on the win. I will never fold Aces on the button no matter how many times I get busted by them – especially on the bubble . . . I am always happy making the right decisions with every hand I play and making optimal decisions" quips Lin before mentioning, "so folks, if I am all-in on the bubble of a tournament – I have Aces!"

However online giant PokerStars would see past her lack of major results and through to the potential she possessed, along with the influence she had in the new untapped poker demographic of Asia. Taken on as a Team PokerStars member Lin would eventually become the poster girl for Asian poker, "It's definitely a fun experience and one I never imagined to be possible. But poker is a hard industry for a girl to be taken seriously, and respect comes with results."

"I think that it is definitely a hard career choice for most women . . . you definitely get a lot more attention as probably the only girl at the table," however after some



small cashes, Lin finally earned the respect she has been craving for at the inaugural ANZPT event in Adelaide during February.

Combining fearless play on the bubble, some well-timed re-raises and a flurry of cards at the right time, Lin was able to register her first final table in Australia. She called heads, but flipped tails to see her pocket sixes send her to the rail in 7th place for \$23,475 in prize money as her chase for that elusive tournament triumph continued. "I have worked very hard over the years, and have had a lot of online success. What is hard about getting great results in a live tournament is that you only really play 10 to 15 events a year, and online – that's what you will play in a day." There is something extra special for Lin to have been part of the team and put in a good showing at the ANZPT



still been able to keep the mouse clicking.

Playing a full schedule of tournaments online can be difficult for someone that is so busy, but with a goal to make Supernova Elite status on PokerStars this year, nothing is out of reach for Lin who recently bungee-jumped off the Macau Tower. "The final thought I had was if I can travel the world playing poker, I can definitely do this!"

With yet another box ticked

Lin has overcome, you will not see a hint of it on the outside, with a smile that stretches from ear to ear, there are no signs of remorse or sadness but rather, a glowing complexion portraying happiness and new found self-confidence. It is deep down where you can see that there is a desire to do more than just win money, "My mum has inspired me the most in general. She was able to live through the culture revolution and come to an English speaking country where she provided such a fulfilling life for me and my sister. I am really happy and appreciative to be given this opportunity to make the most of what we have. I want to do well in poker so I can take care of my family." Her ultimate dream may be to win a major tournament and be successful, but to her there is more to it, with a goal to help the people in need and open an orphanage to facilitate her love for working with children.

Professional poker player are three words that hold true with Lin, and she definitely believes this to be the case, "I certainly enjoy the lifestyle. It is also my job, and for the most part, it is a fun and exciting job. When it comes to poker, if you are at all serious about it, it becomes your life!" With the remainder of the ANZPT and season three of the APPT locked in, alongside the big championships in Melbourne included in her schedule, Lin will be trying to squeeze an EPT or two in along with Mecca of poker tournaments - the 2009 World Series of Poker.

For this 27 year-old who was originally not planning to make a career out of poker back when she first sat down on that \$4-8 Limit Hold'em table, things have certainly changed. "Poker has always been my passion, something I can see myself doing for a very long time", and with the way this poker princess is headed . . . there is a very bright future ahead of her. PN

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to "show that skill in poker does eventually prevail into final tables and wins."

With what can be seen as a real breakthrough result now etched firmly on her poker CV, Lin returned to her current base in Macau, which she describes as the Las Vegas of Asia – a place that has really grown on her over time. "Many people think that playing poker for a living is the dream; and a lot of the time it really is . . . Being on the ANZPT and APPT also combines my love for poker with travel and experiencing different culture, food, music and meeting fun interesting people," but even with all this touring Lin has

on her "to do" list, Lin's fast paced life continues to motor on, even following her much publicised relationship break-up with Tony Dunst. Like a pre-recorded message Lin declares, "He was my boyfriend and mentor for three years, and a great coach for me to be the player I was. But since we went our separate ways I have put in a lot of hard work, and the fact that I felt like I didn't have someone there to hold my hand every step of the way made me work even harder to get better. Since then, I have done very well...and proved to myself I am capable of being a great poker player on my own."

Whatever personal challenges

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