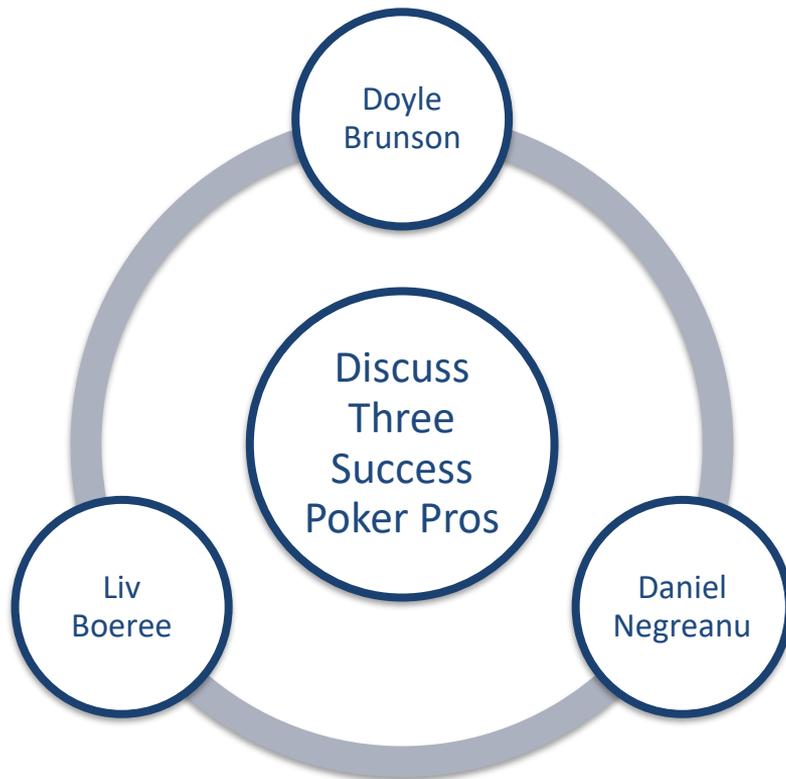# The Evolution of Poker

- Poker has greatly evolved over the years, from a game of street-smarts, reads and tells, to a game heavily entrenched in game theory and mathematics.

- Unfortunately, math still tends to be the red-headed stepchild to tells and reads in poker, when it's arguably just as important, if not more so, than reads and tells.

Changing of the Guard

Doyle Brunson

Discuss Three Success Poker Pros

Liv Boeree

Daniel Negreanu

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Changing of the Guard

In his seminal work, *Super System*, which was originally published in 1979, Doyle Brunson stated:

"Poker is a game of people…that's what poker's all about."

Arguably one of the greatest poker players of his time, Brunson emerged in an era where poker was a game of street-smarts, intuition, reads and tells.

In 1979, Brunson had already amassed over one million in winnings by the practice of "playing the player," or what we commonly refer to today as "exploitative poker"; in which players seek holes in their opponents' games and exploit them through tells, tendencies, and general weaknesses.

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We can contrast Brunson's style of play with one of the top female poker players in the world, Liv Boeree. Boeree, an astrophysicist and Team PokerStars Pro with over $3.8 million in live earnings, plays a modern style of poker based on game theory mathematics.

In a recent presentation to The Oxford Union Society in 2016 entitled *The Science behind Poker,* Boeree explains:

> *"The game is actually very different to how it used to be 10 years ago. Back then, most of the players that were very good were playing the game based on street smarts that they had gained from years and years of experience at the tables. Nowadays, the best players are the ones that are taking a very analytical approach, using mathematical analysis and practical application of a branch of mathematics called game theory."*

Changing of the Guard

In his 2016 documentary film, *KidPoker*, Daniel Negreanu explains how online poker has changed the game and how he had to re-learn modern theory and strategy:

"I'm proud of the fact that I've been able to put up winning years every year despite the game evolving and changing. Online poker has changed the game immensely, all of the sudden a lot of players got really, really good. What I found fun was just focusing on the fundamentals and the math and the stats and the numbers because I've always been a numbers geek. I decided to relearn a lot of the stuff that these kids are learning and adjust."

Daniel has amassed close to $42 million in live earnings.

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Driving Force in Poker's Evolution

- The advent and proliferation of online poker, along with a plethora of poker software and tools, has been the driving force behind the evolution of poker.

- As online poker emerged, software to help assist online poker players emerged as well.

- These software tools brought with them the ability to better understand the statistical and mathematical aspects of the game. This led to a greater focus on game theory.

- A wide array of software tools exist, such as:
  - Artificial Intelligence-Based Training Software
  - Equity and Range Analysis Software
  - Tournament Independent Chip Model (ICM) Software Trainers
  - Game Theory Optimal (GTO) Software Trainers
  - Poker Tracking Software
  - Heads Up Displays (HUDs)

Primary Aspects of Poker