

# Hold Up On Hold 'Em

The popularity of Texas Hold 'Em poker has grown by leaps and bounds since The World Series of Poker was created in 1970.

No one knows the true origination of poker, but some say the first game of Hold 'Em was played in Robstown, Texas, in the late 1890s or early 1900s. It was supposedly first seen in Dallas between 1923 and 1925.

At that time the game was known as "The Devil's River" or "Styx", because the final card is known as "the river".

According to some historians, saloons across the Southwest were populated by cowboys and miners who couldn't get enough of the exciting game. It's even said that cowpokes engaged in gunfights over the game.

When the government attempted to outlaw the game in 1927, many players protested so vehemently that sheriffs cowered in fear and the ban was lifted.

Now, in Ohio, another ban—this one on gambling—may well reduce the number of venues for Hold 'Em fans.

"It's public gaming," explained Brent Devery, agent-in-charge, Cincinnati District, Ohio Investiga-

tive Unit, Department of Public Safety.

Unlike bowling, darts or billiards, which are considered games of skill, card games are games of chance.

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**Brent Devery  
Agent In Charge  
Ohio Investigative Unit  
Department of Public Safety**

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Specifically, noted Devery, no venue that sells liquor may sponsor any sort of card game that awards money or prizes except for those owned and licensed by 501(c)3 nonprofits and veterans' or fraternal organizations. Even then, they must be licensed to conduct charitable gaming operations.

"There are three locations Texas Hold 'Em can be held—in a location owned by a charity, a veteran's or fraternal lodge or a government-owned entity," he said.

"You can't do it in your bar," he emphasized, even if the bar takes no portion of the proceeds.

"Games of chance for profit can only be conducted by an eligible charitable organization. The point is that gambling for profit is illegal in Ohio except under limited charitable exceptions provided for in the statute," noted Michelle Gatchell from the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

More importantly, not only are the bar owner and employees held liable, so are the players.

"Theoretically, every person playing could be criminally charged, as well as the person running it," stated Devery.

In fact, noted Gatchell, even if a group decides to hold a friendly game without the bar owner's knowledge, all can be charged.

However, those conditions aren't applied to the 14 types of organizations that meet certain requirements under the Ohio Revised Code, Gatchell determined.

Tournaments held under the auspices of certain nonprofit, veterans and fraternal organizations do have to meet other requirements, including the use of volunteers, limited retention of profits and stringent bookkeeping.

The Auglaize-Mercer Counties Convention & Visitors Bureau,

which has proposed hosting a World Series of Poker qualifying tournament meets none of those requirements.

"We ourselves are not legally able to hold a tournament. We would have to partner with a 501(c)3 (nonprofit organization)," said Donna Grube, the Bureau's director.

She emphasized that the point of hosting such a tournament is not to benefit the CVB but to attract tourists.

"Our whole goal—we won't make anything—is to bring people into the area."

In order to organize the tournament, Reece's Las Vegas Supplies, a Dayton supply company that has held similar tournaments in Piqua and Lancaster, was contacted.

The tournament in Piqua benefited the Council on Rural Services Programs/The Learning Place, which also serves Darke County.

Grube noted that further planning has been put on hold until January, but they hope to have a tournament organized by early spring.

"Our goal is just to bring folks into the area and fill up the hotels. We want to do that in March or April before the season."