

LOCAL

THE REAL DEAL

POMPANO POKER TOURNAMENT IS WOMEN-ONLY. 2B



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IT'S ALL IN THE CARDS: Women sit around a poker table in Capri Isle at Isle Casino & Racing at Pompano Park in Pompano Beach as they vie for prizes in the High Heels Poker Tournament for ladies only on Saturday. Staff photo/Angel Valentin

IT'S POKER, LADIES' STYLE

BY NICK C. SORTAL
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POMPANO BEACH • Two cards were dealt face-down to each player, as usual. Then, as is also customary, three cards up (the "flop"), then a fourth ("the turn") and a fifth ("the river").

But this Texas Hold 'em poker tournament Saturday was missing another routine component: men.

The High Heels Poker Tour drew 103 players for its debut event, including Mindy Crown of Davie, who, like many, said she was eager to play in the women's-only event at Isle Casino & Racing at Pompano Park.

"Some men can be arrogant and abusive playing with women, you know, set in their ways," said Crown, who plays once a week at area casinos.

She said she sometimes uses "the playing-dumb thing" while at a predominantly

men's table; Saturday she tried to be more expressionless. Alas, the cards didn't fall her way, and she was knocked out in about 50th place.

Rita Riddle has been playing online poker for four months, but sat down at an actual table for only the third time Saturday. The Orlando "grandmother" (most players declined to give their ages, but many likely were 40 or older) said had it been a mixed-gender tournament, "no way" would she have played.

"Too intimidating," Riddle said.

But Janee Steinberg, of Coral Springs, said she was comfortable "playing poker anywhere." A cosmetic surgeon and dermatologist based in Boca Raton and Fort Lauderdale, she says she has met former and future clients at the Isle's poker room, once making the final two in a tournament and agreeing to give a

man a discount on a procedure if they stopped playing immediately and divided the pot.

Her daughters, Fawn, 27, and Wendy, 24, stood near the table Saturday watching their mother. They all play in a home game each Sunday night, which began in October 2005 after Hurricane Wilma left them without power.

"For a long time, my neighbors thought Sunday night was some sort of odd Jewish holiday because of all the cars parked at our house," Steinberg said.

Whatever training she had, paid off: She finished sixth.

Said Fawn Steinberg: "It's awesome that my mom is playing. We want her to be the one everyone sees playing on TV."

Saturday's tournament is part of a series planned for the East Coast, culminating in a tournament of champions

next fall in the Bahamas. Players can compete in local qualifying tournaments — "satellites" in poker parlance — at area casinos next month, High Heels organizer Lauren Failla said. Satellite winners get free entry into tournaments such as Saturday's, which cost \$250 to enter. Prize money Saturday ranged from \$5,407 for first, claimed by Lisa Teebagy, of Lighthouse Point, to \$297 for 10th.

Women came up to the High Heels registration desk during the tournament and asked about playing in the next event, including Jean Beninato of Palm Beach.

"I'd pay the \$250 to play," she said. "I've blown more than that on slots, easily."

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