

National tour, TV show planned

From page 11

game where nothing is at stake for you. There's no financial gain, there's no buy-in, there's no inducements, you don't have to drink and buy food; you can just come in and play if that's all you want to do. And I'm happy if that's all people do.

"The upside is that you can win trophies, prizes and bragging rights. The really neat aspect of all this is that you don't have anywhere else to play poker that you can be a rank amateur. There's people who come here to learn and there are people who are dead serious about it all and act like true professionals.

"The bonus for some is that you can drink while playing, which you can't do in the poker rooms at River Rock and The Boulevard."

Nielson is so pleased with the way things are going that he would extend poker to another night if there was the demand for it. Lundgren, too, is pleased with the inaugural season. "We've gained a reputation, if not in Canada, in British

Columbia, as a top poker tour right now. Our first tournament offered more than \$3,000 in prizes and we've had 233 players play at least once with us. I think that where we have come to in only 2½ months shows you that people are ready for this."

Creg Harrison showed up at the poker tour's Tournament of Champions and played as a guest using a qualifying chip supplied by a certain North Shore News editor who had won four qualifying tournaments during the summer. Since, at the time, Harrison was not a member of the poker tour, he took home a prize poker table but the winning name on the trophy went to the man he beat head-to-head, North Van tugboat and barge owner Gord Kleaman.

Harrison, a North Vancouver resident, is now running the fall Poker tour season. He has been playing Texas Hold 'Em for two years. Like so many others he began by watching the TV games and then played online and then with friends. "It's a passion now."

In fact Harrison quit his day



NEWS photo Victor Aberdeen

KARL Lundgren holds the Greater Vancouver Poker Tour cup that will be up for grabs again in December.

job Monday in order to devote more time to organizing and building the poker tour. He had been running a free poker tournament at Jack Lonsdale's Pub on Tuesday nights called Elite Beat. Harrison's tour attracted a total of 106 players, with the best night attracting 44 players and most nights averaging around 25.

Amalgamating Elite Beat with the poker tour gave North Vancouver two locations for the fall (Sportstown is still hosting on Wednesday nights and a new addition, Cheers, in Abbotsford, is hosting Sunday-night games.)

Harrison and Lundgren have their eyes set on expansions to a B.C. poker tour, an Alberta poker tour and, if that comes together, a national playoff between provincial champions.

Over the next year, Harrison hopes to get the poker tour running in 10 to 12 Vancouver-area bars. If that happens, he'll head to Alberta, possibly as soon

as the summer of 2007 to start a tour there.

"We're starting to think of ways to promote the tour. We're filming a pilot concept for a reality show based on our tour. The plan is to focus as much on some of the individual characters on the tour as the games themselves.

"As we get bigger, I'm hoping that our tournament prizes will get bigger. I'd like to be able to offer a buy-in to the World Series of Poker and then follow our player on camera when he plays in that."

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The river card defies the odds and is a five. I'm out.

But I'm back in the fall tour and learning more about the game every time I play.

For more information on the poker tour, visit greatervancouverpokertour.ca

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