

## World Class Poker Review by Jeff Kennedy *World Class Poker with T.J.Cloutier* Masque Publishing Amazon Price: \$19.99

I started up World Class Poker pretty much like any other Mac user. Double-click on the install logo. Click "okay". Start up the game. Manuals are for Windows users.

You start with a bankroll depending on the difficulty level you set on the sign in screen. I was a bit of a card shark back in the days when an enterprising Boy Scout could make a quick buck dealing off the bottom, so I was expecting to start right out with a few quick wins. Imagine my surprise when I was digging into my bankroll within 30 minutes. This is an easy game to jump right into and not be overwhelmed (if you're a beginner or casual player) or bored (if you aspire to sit across the table from T.J. at a tournament). I played for a couple hours the first evening and coming from someone who's much more likely to be dodging bullets in a 1st person shooter, that's saying something.

I was a little disappointed to not find an on-line play option. The variety of game play is impressive offering Five Card Draw, Seven Card Stud, and Omaha Hold'em (which I'd never even heard of). Where the game really shines, however, is Texas Hold'em. You can play Limit or No Limit Texas Hold'em or join the Multi-Table Tournament. Texas Hold'em offers the most options. You have to buy your way into the tournament, so you can either win the cash or set the difficulty level to low and reset your bankroll (cheat). This is, of course, how I got in. The learning opportunities are many and varied. You can read the rules for each game, but I'd recommend watching the more engaging tutorials. There's an explanation of "poker math" (probability and odds). There's a replay mode where you can see all of your opponent's hole cards as well as each person's probability to make their hand. And there's advice from The Man "himself." "T.J. Cloutier is a legendary player having won more tournaments than anyone in history including six first place wins at the World Series of Poker. "T.J.'s Tips" include the 21 top tips for beginners as well as multiple choice scenarios narrated by T.J.

Probably the most interesting feature, however, is the "in-game advice" in the *No Limit Texas Hold'em* mode. In the middle of the game, tip boxes will pop up with advice, sometimes with a video of T.J. These tips add a lot to the game and are an excellent teaching option. I would love to have seen this feature in all the play options, but I guess that's asking a lot of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) of a \$19.99 game. I didn't see much intelligence or personality with the computer generated players, but other reviewers have noted that in the higher difficulty settings, players (there are supposedly over 2,000) start showing distinct personalities and styles ranging from "complete wus" to "Hunter Thompson".

The player asides are a little lame, but you can always turn down the "Talkative Level". In short, World Class Poker with T.J. Cloutier is an excellent value for beginner, casual player, or aspiring card shark.