

As seen in the  
November 2002  
edition of  
*Strictly Slots*



# IGT's TRADE UP POKER

Turning  
up the  
heat on  
multiplays

by Bob Dancer

The newest game from Action Gaming/IGT is called Trade Up Poker. It plays as regular Triple Play or Five Play video poker, except that, sometimes, you get to trade three or five starting hands for at least twice as many hands. Trading up is always a good idea when you have the option, and the trade-up option adds between 1.4% and 3.1% to the base paytable.

The game starts out as regular Triple Play/Five Play with a variety of games offered, including Jacks or Better, Bonus Poker, Bonus Poker Deluxe, Double Bonus, and Double Double Bonus Poker. Whenever you are dealt a three of a kind (a once-in-47-hands event), and sometimes when you are dealt some or all full houses (a once-in-700-hands to once-in-9,000-hands event, *depending...*), you are offered the option to trade that hand for at least twice as many identical hands where you must hold the three of a kind.

I know that's confusing, especially with the "depending." It's easier to discuss once we look at the available pay schedules:

Let's look at some sample hands and see how it works.

In Figure 1, we see an example from 8/6 Jacks or Better Trade Up Triple Play, and we have been dealt trip aces. Holding the three aces is the best play by far. Under the normal version of Triple Play, on each hand, we have a 6.1% chance to get a full house worth 40; a 4.3% chance of getting four of a kind, worth 125; and the other 89.6% of the time, we end up with the trips we started with, worth 15.

In Trade Up Poker, we have the option of giving up the normal three hands and



Figure 1

receive ten hands in their stead, as shown in Figure 2. We still have the same 6.1% and 4.3% chance to get the full house and the four of a kind on each hand, but the price we pay for this is we now receive nothing when the three-of-a-kind hands don't improve.



Figure 2

We could lose on this trade up. In 41% of all times we draw to 10 three of a kinds we'll end up with the same 10 three of a kinds we started with. On those occasions, we will have lost 45 coins by trading up, because each of the three original three of a kinds paid 15 coins when they didn't improve. The remaining 59% of the time, we'll score at least one full house and



possibly up to several quads. We'll improve on three or more of the trips about 4% of the time. Overall, this is a good deal for us. Refusing the trade-up option leaves us with a 98.39% game. Taking the trade-up option every time it is offered in this game leaves us with a 100.36% game. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that you should press the "Always Trade Up" button.



Figure 3

In Figure 3, we see that we were fortunate to draw both a single full house and a single quad. Upgrading exactly two of the trips (including both being full houses or both being quads) happens about 16% of the time.



Figure 4

In Figure 4, we have the same hand in 8/5 Bonus Poker Deluxe. Accepting the trade-up option, we come to Figure 5, where we see we only get six hands starting from trips, rather than the ten hands we had in Jacks or Better. What gives?

What gives is that, when we connect on four of a kinds in Bonus Poker Deluxe, we receive 400 coins,

rather than the 125 coins we receive in Jacks or Better. Since it is so much more lucrative when we connect on the quad, we are offered fewer chances as a bonus. Even so, always taking the trade-up option when offered on this game turns a 97.40% game into one worth 99.94%. Again, it's a no-brainer to always accept the option.



Figure 5

In normal Double Bonus and Double Double Bonus, quad 5's through K's normally return 250 coins. In Trade Up Poker, for these games, these quads return 275 coins instead.

Sometimes you are given a choice to Trade Up full houses. On Jacks or Better (where quads return 125), this option is never offered. In Bonus Poker Deluxe (where quads return 400), this option is offered when full houses return 35 or less. In other games, we always break full houses with trip aces and sometimes full houses with trip 2's, 3's, or 4's. The pay schedule chart on the following page gives the complete rules for this, but you don't need to worry about it. Just follow the rule to *always* trade up when offered the chance.

This game can strongly encourage you to make the best play, even if you normally wouldn't. In Double Double Bonus, for example, how would you play A♥ A♠ A♦ 2♣ 6♥? Although the best play is holding A-A-A only, some players hold A-A-A-2 because four aces with a kicker returns so much. How foolish this is depends on the pay schedule, but it's over a three-coin mistake *per hand* on a game that only requires five coins to play. If you want to play that way in Trade Up Poker, you can, but only if you refuse the trade-up option. Not a wise choice.

Trade Up Poker adds a nice bonus feature once every 47 hands (which grows to 1-in-44 hands if all the full houses are traded up). This comes about every five

**This game can strongly encourage you to make the best play, even if you normally wouldn't.**

## Just follow the rule to *always* trade up when offered the chance.



minutes or so, and having lots of chances drawing to trips is exciting. Plus, it's easy to play the hands that are traded up. You just let the machine hold the trips and you hit the draw button. But to succeed at this game means that you need to correctly play the other 46 out of 47 hands, some of which are not so easy.

A further complication is that you will probably be playing lesser pay schedules than you are used to. A casino that normally offers 9/6 Jacks, for example, returning 99.5%, may well need to drop down to 8/5 Jacks Trade Up, returning 99.3%, to stay within casino guidelines. While

these games are played identically at the recreational level, stronger players know of quite a few differences between the games. The numbers listed in the first chart are only if you play every hand perfectly. Since most players will not choose to practice on a new pay schedule before they play, casinos will find they have a higher hold on these games than usual.

One final point: The trade-up option only applies when you are betting maximum coins. Therefore, if you are a less-than-max-coin bettor, you should play a different game, as you would never qualify for the bonus and the pay schedule was slashed to be able to afford the bonus.

Will I personally play this game? Absolutely, providing the pay schedule is lucrative enough given a casino's slot club and promotions. I like this game a lot, but if a casino offers a less-than-acceptable pay schedule, I simply won't play. ●

### TRADE UP POKER PAY SCHEDULES

GAME DESCRIPTION	OPTIMAL RETURN	3 OF A KIND	FH WITH THREE 5s-Ks	FH WITH THREE 2s-4s	FH WITH THREE ACES
Bonus Poker-6/5, 3X-10X	99.50%	X		X	X
Bonus Poker-5/5, 3X-10X	98.533%	X		X	X
Bonus Poker Deluxe-8/5, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	99.944%	X			
Bonus Poker Deluxe-7/5, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	98.764%	X	X	X	X
Bonus Poker Deluxe-6/5, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	97.803%	X	X	X	X
Bonus Poker Deluxe-5/5, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	96.843%	X	X	X	X
Double Bonus Poker-9/6/5, 4oK=55, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	100.338%	X			X
Double Bonus Poker-9/6/4, 4oK=55, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	98.912%	X			X
Double Bonus Poker-9/5 4oK=55, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	97.812%	X			X
Double Bonus Poker-8/5, 4oK=55, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	96.598%	X			X
Double Double Bonus Poker-8/5, 4oK=55, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	100.338%	X		X	X
Double Double Bonus Poker-7/5, 4oK=55, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	98.914%	X		X	X
Double Double Bonus Poker-6/5, 4oK=55, 3X-6X, 5X-10X	97.736%	X		X	X
Jacks or Better Poker-8/6, 3X-10X	100.364%	X			
Jacks or Better Poker-8/5, 3X-10X	99.269%	X			
Jacks or Better Poker-7/5, 3X-10X	97.817%	X			
Jacks or Better Poker-6/5, 3X-10X	96.365%	X			
NOTES:	X= Eligible for the Trade Up feature The feature is only offered on hands where accepting the feature is the best play				