

# Razzamatazz

**The poker world sat up and took notice last month as Katja Thater took down a bracelet in that most excruciating of games, Razz – the second German bracelet score of the Series. Bluff caught up with her to talk about the ups and downs of life on the circuit.**

Hey Katja. Let's start at the beginning. How did you discover poker?

My husband Jan "50outs" has been playing poker now for more than 15 years. I was always interested in poker and I watched him whenever I had time. You have to realise that, at the time, I was a full time director of an event and marketing company and I was breeding horses. So my daily schedule was stuffed – even the weekends were filled with horseshows.

What was the German scene like when you started playing, in comparison with today?

Well, when I started with poker there was only one game available: Pot Limit 7-Card Stud with a huge buy-in – three times a week in the Spielbank Hamburg, from 8pm to 3am. There were only a few live tourneys in Germany and Austria then. That selection changed a lot when online poker arrived. In





my hometown there are now daily live games and tournaments. But I guess poker became popular in our country as people recognized that it is a great game, mostly based on skill, and there are also some successful Germans around in the international scene.

**What were people's attitudes when you told them you were a poker player? Did the game have a seedy reputation? Does it still?**

My parents were horror-stricken: "Our daughter in dangerous society! What a shame!" But I don't care so much what people think... I just trust my instincts. Most of the time, when I tell people what I do as a profession, they roll their eyes. Some are really interested and some are not. But it's getting better and better every day. Poker is a great game and I am still putting a lot of blood, sweat and tears into upgrading the image.

**Was it difficult being a female player in a "man's game"?**

It's not difficult to be a woman, inherently, and it is not difficult to survive in a man's world. I've been used to it since birth.

**Well said! Tell us about the bracelet. What does it mean to you?**

It is great to be a world champion. That feels really cool. I enjoyed beating such a strong field and it's wonderful to have the title. It is like an Oscar in Hollywood. Winning it is beautiful, but the Oscar – the bracelet itself – well, it has more of an idealistic value. Small tip for Harrah's, though: Just in case a woman wins another tourney at the WSOP, please have some bracelets in your drawer that actually fit us (*laughs*).

**A lot of people hate Razz as it can be a most frustrating game. Do you hate Razz?**

I love Razz. It is the sickest game ever. In what other game are you able to win a hand with no pair, no draw and your highest card is at its best below eight (*laughs*)? Razz is a Stud game and I grew up with them. I played Stud games for years in my home casino against skilled Persian guys. So this was the best preparation ever. Thank you so much Mr. Vafa...

**What qualities do you need to be a good Razz player? Give us some tips...**

An Austrian journalist wrote that winning a



## Learning Razz is very simple. But bring some painkillers and the phone number of your headshrinker with you. This is a game of pain.

Razz tournament is like studying quantum physics – and getting a master degree in it (*laughs*). The players on my final table must have had 14 bracelets between them! Learning Razz is very simple, though: Go to PokerStars, log-in, join a table and you can play with a lot of good Razz players from

around the world. But bring some painkillers and the phone number of your headshrinker with you. This is a game of pain.

**What's your favourite form of poker?**

I love poker in all variations. My favorites are changing every month. One week it is PLO, next week it is Stud hi/lo. I am flexible. I like to play Pot Limit the most – limit is painful. In No Limit – even my grandmother can be deadly dangerous on a good day. In Pot Limit games skill is dominant.

**What's the strangest thing you've ever seen happen at a poker table?**

Oh, well, I've played poker for eight years now and, believe me, I've seen a lot of strange things. One of the strangest things was the power cut in the Bellagio during a poker tournament, and how cool the players acted – continuing to play in candlelight!

**Will your achievement and that of your fellow countryman Michael Keiner have an effect on poker in Germany? Will people start to sit up and take notice?**

I think Germany started to take notice some time ago. For the last few years, Michael and I have been very popular on TV and in the print media. We're both working very hard to push poker into a better light in our country. I hope we can inspire more people to get into poker and appreciate how wonderful this game is. My stepson is now 16-years-old and he and his friends are playing poker because it is "cool". They are right: Poker is cool, for sure.

**What are the best and worst things about being a professional poker player?**

Poker players don't live under normal circumstances. We know "Sunday" or "week-end" only as a words on the calendar. We travel a lot. We risk money. We sleep less and work hard. We do not see our family very often. So you can decide for yourself what's worse and what's best. I'm part of Team PokerStars and this means a lot of work obligations, besides the glory. Fact is, I have no free time. But this is the way I love to live.

**What's the biggest bluff you've ever made in life?**

Telling the tax authority that I have nothing to declare. ♣