

WPT LADIES CHAMP NANCY TODD TYNER IS ON A MISSION



She Wants to
Make History –
And Fulfill a
Promise to Her
Late Son



By Rebekah Mercer

WHAT MAKES a woman like Nancy Todd Tyner spend long days in anonymous poker rooms hawking hands with steady-eyed men over a card game? It's not the money that draws her. She has plenty of that already. It's not the status and fame. She has already experienced that in her political consulting career. It's something much deeper and much harder to achieve. It's about fulfilling a promise to the son she lost five years ago, and in the process, leaving some things about herself.

Nancy Todd Tyner has something to prove, not to the world, but to herself, and poker is the way to do it. If you have doubts about whether this perfectly dressed petite blond with diamonds on every finger (they don't call her the "Queen of Diamonds" for nothing) has the guts to pull off a huge WSOP tournament win, you might want to look up her statistics on political consulting. Or better yet, just ask all the consultants who happened to stumble into her sights by working for the other guy in the political campaigns she has waged for the last 20 years. Her 50 percent win rate in those campaigns resulted in her induction as the first woman into the American Association of Political Consultants Hall of Fame and

Nancy at the table.



effective treatments in Europe had been successful in forcing the cancer into remission.) The treatment resulted in an infection that eventually killed him. Nancy feels that cancer treatment in the United States is "a racket" that is fueled by money.

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money. It was this approach that killed my son."

To read more about Hayden's story see <http://www.therhap-donorship.com/HaydenStory.htm>.

The loss of her son was so devastating that she wandered around in what she described as "a fog" for several months. Then one day she was driving down the Strip and saw an advertisement for a poker tournament. She found herself driving into the parking lot and then wound up at the poker registration desk, asking how to register. She did well at that tournament and several others that followed.

"Poker brought me back to my strengths," she says, and it provided the occupation she was desperately seeking in those months following Hayden's death.

IN SEARCH OF HISTORY —

AND HEAVING

Nancy's focus now is on "making history," as her children refer to her quest, by being the first woman to win the WSOP Main Event title. And that's very important to her. The WPT win made her a recognizable figure in the poker community and a role model for many women who play poker. But the most illuminating part of the process for Nancy is the self-awareness poker has given her.

"Poker taught me about the world. Poker teaches me about myself, and it's a never-ending education." But it is ultimately and finally about furthering the message about cancer treatment in the United States. "This is the greatest coun-

try in the world, but cancer treatment here is a racket."

She wants to educate people about other alternatives besides those offered by the American medical system. She believes that poker has given her a platform to inform people to make decisions that can save lives.

As a way to fulfill the post that she and Hayden made five years ago, she has set up a scholarship fund in his name that is currently funding ten students to attend a university in the United States. The students are hand-picked by "some of the most influential political minds in the country" to fulfill their dreams of a college education.

"God gave everyone a gift, and I think my purpose with all this is to help students who lack the resources to go to colleges to find their gift."

The first recipient of a full four-year degree graduated last year, at the same time Hayden would have graduated from high school and headed off to college.

So Nancy's quest is about promises and about funding a charity that is very close to her heart. It's also about performing at the limits of a very demanding and disciplined physical and mental campaign. And it's about winning it all, not only to raise history, but to be the best. Thirty years of political campaigns have proven that winning is the only option.

To keep up with Nancy as she plays the 2010 WSOP, see her blog at <http://pokergossip.com/nancythemonster.com/>. You can also follow her on Twitter at [PokerQueen](https://twitter.com/PokerQueen).

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positions as past president and chairman of the organization.

Nancy has had a phenomenal career in politics, and when I asked her about what she does in her current political consulting business, she answered, "They pay me to think. They call me up and ask me questions, and they pay me to think."

So just a thought for those of you who may face her this year at the poker table: Anyone who is paid to think about strategic moves that relate to manipulating how other people think and perceive you is not someone you want to face at the poker table. Ask anyone who has played with her and they will tell you that this ability to think things through, along with her drive and ambition, make her a killer at the table.

Nancy's quest to become the best at poker began in 2006 when she placed eleventh in a field of 210 her first time out. But it was the televised WPT tournament in 2008 that really got her name and her face in the public eye, when she netted the title of WPT Ladies Champion against a seasoned pro, Vanessa Solter, who was highly favored to win. Since then she's finished first at an L.A. Poker Classic event and cashed in four WSOP events, along with numerous other solid finishes. Her winnings in the four years that she's been playing are more than \$250,000, but that's not enough. Her goal is a WSOP bracelet and her campaign to win it is being waged with the same intensity and determination as her political campaigns.

She approached last year's WSOP as a "boot camp" and tried out some new things and learned a lot. Now she's ready to put all of that into play. She has a very focused and disciplined lifestyle that will stand her in good stead at this year's grueling marathon. To see details on her lifestyle regimen while preparing for the Main Event, see the box titled "What Does It Take to Make a Champion?" It will make you feel so deprived just reading it that you will have to stand in the fridge to get a beer before you get through it.

WHAT DRIVES HER?

By the time the Main Event arrives, most people, including those who may have underestimated her, will have learned

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from experience that Nancy is every bit as much at home at the table as she is on her estate back home. She could be there sitting by the pool playing with her young twins and having her nails done, but she chooses to be at the felt instead.

Why does she do it? She obviously has a very affluent lifestyle, she has a business that she runs from home (a very successful one), she lives in a beautiful estate in the suburbs of Las Vegas, with a very busy home life and a supportive family. Most people in her position would sit back and relax while enjoying a very comfortable lifestyle. But Nancy Todd Tyson is not "most people." Her life is all about being the best she can be and the challenge she has set for herself is now poker.

She came to poker by fighting another campaign, a very personal one, and she lost. That loss was the most devastating thing to ever happen in her life and she is out to make something positive out of it.

She lost her oldest son, Hayden, to leukemia five years ago, and the winnings from her poker tournaments keep the memory of him alive through a scholarship fund set up in his name. He is responsible for getting her into poker

and he is the reason she continues to play. He is very much alive in her home and in her heart and his unnecessary death is what fuels her campaign to educate and possibly save others from what she and her family went through.

"Hayden was the entire reason I got into poker in the first place," she says. "When he was sick, we would watch poker on TV for something to do, and we started playing some at home. He was really good at it and was a certified math genius." (Hayden was in a Johns Hopkins program for exceptional math scholars who were ranked in the top tenth of 1 percent of students in the country.)

"He was great at the game, especially the math part, but I was much better at reading people. He was always boasting that we would be the first mother/son team to take down the World Series. He really believed that and wanted to make it happen."

"UNNECESSARY DEATH"

Tragically, his life was cut short at age 14 and he was unable to realize that dream. He died "an unnecessary death" due to complications from forced medical treatments here in the U.S. (Hayden's father insisted on conventional medical treatment in the U.S., although recent, more



Nancy in
Hayden's room

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A CHAMPION?

Take it from the Queen of Diamonds – if you want to win you have to be in top physical and mental shape.

Below are the five things that Nancy feels are most essential to winning and maintaining the best possible form at the table.

See how your preparation stacks up by comparison. Or, on the other hand, don't. It will be very depressing, I promise.

EDUCATION – Reading about the game, discussing it with others, and then dissecting hands after tournaments are all elements in this facet of the mental preparation. "I always try to think of those things I could have done differently, or more successfully," she says. "Then I apply them next time."

POSITIVE MINDSET – "It's important to be able to move on after a bad beat. You can't focus on the times you lose, because we all have those times when we just have had luck. You just have to let it go and move ahead with a positive frame of mind."

Manifesting the future in the present is one way she does this. An example like and the twins were driving across town and the kids pointed out the distinctive neon sign of the Rio. Nancy told them "that's the place where Mom is going to make history."

Now they refer to it as such ever time they drive by. (Her kids understand the seriousness of the endeavor as well. Her son Lincoln calls Nancy's quest to win the World Series title "The World Series.")

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING – Get a good night's sleep every night, but especially before a tournament.

Eat a light breakfast the day of the tournament, then snacks throughout the day.

No heavy meals, especially those including starches. This means no flour, pasta, or bread.

No alcohol throughout the entire WSOP.

No dairy products. No sugar. Lots of alkaline water and numerous supplements.

An intensive three-day detox that rid the body of toxins and provides incredible energy and clarity.

FOCUS – Limit distractions by finding a comfortable hotel or rent a house near the casino where you can rest and stay focused. In order to do that, Nancy moves into the Rio for the entire length of the tournament. She doesn't tell anyone she's there, and she doesn't answer her phone or her mail, for the most part. She never goes out to dinner or for drinks with her poker friends. She stays focused on the task at hand.

In addition, she brings everything from home that she can possibly imagine needing, including her invention machine, her microwave, blender, food, snack items, and cases of water and supplements.

And then there are the clothes and other items that packed six suitcases and three cardboard boxes were moved into the Rio.

It's important to be comfortable.

SYNTHESIS – And finally, she brings all of this together, every single day, to make it all part of a laser-sharp focus that is incendiary.