

# From cardboard box to

He is one of Europe's biggest names in professional poker and has won over £1m in prize money. Brought up in Southampton, Roy Brindley's life story – as detailed in his new book - is a classic rags to riches tale. He talks to SARAH JONES.

**E**VEN when he was living on the streets without a penny to his name, Roy Brindley would not have been shocked to hear that one day he would see wealth beyond his wildest dreams.

For he was an addicted gambler, always certain that his payday to end all paydays was just around the corner. All it would take was just one more bet.

But it was not through his beloved dogs or horses that would see him finally turn rags to riches, it was an altogether different game.

It was poker: a glorious battle of wits that is not down to

chance or luck, but skill.

The 39-year-old firmly believes tournament poker is different to gambling because of this. It's a "thinking man's game" he says.

"You definitely need a mathematical brain, patience in abundance and card sense. My whole family played cards night in, night out, I got an understanding from a young age."

His new book – *Life's a Gamble* – tells Roy's story, from his dysfunctional early years, through a career as a greyhound trainer and journalist, before playing cards for cash became his vocation.

After a lifetime of never being good at anything much, Roy at last found he did have a natural talent when he discovered poker in 2002.

"I was

always the kid who couldn't kick a football," he says. "I was always the last one picked for the team, and that would go for darts, pool, snooker, whatever.

"To go from spending your entire life believing there's nothing you're even moderately good at, to suddenly finding something that brings you notoriety, big titles and trophies in your cabinet is an amazing feeling."

It was this new-found talent that Roy believes saved his life.

He had spent his late-teens and 20s ensconced in the bookies.

Born into a gambling family, he learnt to fritter his entire pay packet away every week without fail, trying to chase his losses.

Even his first memory revolves around him placing a winning a bet on Southampton lifting the FA Cup in 1976. He was just seven-years-old.

Living in Binstead Close, Bassett Green, his working-class parents stretched themselves beyond their means to send him

to private school, St Mary's College in Bitterne. "It was very pretentious and la-de-da," he says.

Mocked by his fellow pupils because his dad owned a junk shop on Lodge Road in Portswood, these early experiences shaped his approach to life.

"If you are born into wealth you don't appreciate what you have or how bad things can be," he says.

With gambling addiction coursing through his veins, his

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life was crippled by what he describes as a "festering sickness" that he was born with.

After getting into trouble with the police and constantly throwing his money away, he found himself living in a cardboard box in Southsea at the age of 28. He had left Southampton for good ten years before.

Thankfully he was able to turn his life around and managed to get work and a roof over his head again.

A few years later, after a chance viewing of the Hollywood poker film *Rounders*, he at last found a use for his sharp mathematical brain.

The card game was his salvation.

Soon he was hooked on it – he walked, talked and breathed



# a £1m jackpot



Roy at the poker table. LEFT: Roy with fellow poker champion and Soccer AM presenter Helen Chamberlain



poker – and spent every waking hour learning its intricacies.

It was 2002, just as poker was “going berserk”.

Internet poker was becoming hugely popular. No longer did people need a table full of friends or a casino to be able to play. They could do it any time of the day or night.

Tournaments were just starting to be televised, and

on the continent, been crowned the Poker Masters of Europe, finished runner-up in the Paris Open and World Heads-Up Championship and finished third in the Grand Prix.

Despite winning big, Roy’s gambling addiction is with him for life.

“Unfortunately I have a problem with gambling but I do it far less than I used to,” he says. “The goalposts have changed these days. I have things like nursery fees to pay for now, but I could provide better if I stopped gambling.”

Two years ago, Roy – who now lives in Dublin with his partner and two young children – struck lucky when he won £300,000 on an accumulator bet. Just a few days later he clinched the biggest win of his poker career so far, picking up \$120,000 at the Betfair Poker Masters of Europe.

“I knew I had to invest the money or I would gamble it,” he explains. “I’m not the sort of person who could take out a pension scheme or watch it make three per cent a year in a bank account, so I invested in a few companies which have since gone to the wall.”

The six-figure nest egg he invested has dropped in value by 95 per cent.

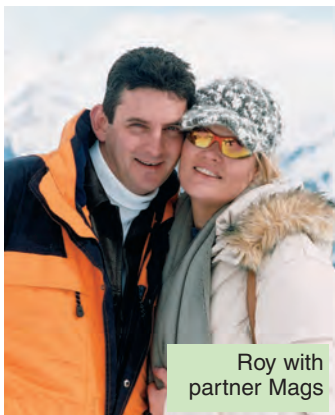
“I have still got a couple of nice cars but you could argue that I’m back to square one,” he admits.

Luckily for Roy, he makes a steady income writing for several poker publications, commenting regularly on Sky Sports and playing online as well as in tournaments.

He may be

gambling less but he knows the temptation to risk everything will never leave him.

If he does get that payday to end all paydays once again, he might want to avoid the stock market.



Roy with partner Mags

Roy knew if he could win some of those, he could make his name.

It worked and today he is the first European poker professional to be commercially sponsored and has travelled the world.

Known as ‘Roy The Boy’, he has claimed over a dozen ranking tournaments



Life’s a Gamble will be available from February 26.