

## Poker's Newest Face

Professional life began typically enough for **Jonathan Dimmig** '05, '06S (MBA). After earning two degrees at Rochester, he returned to his native Buffalo to take a job as a financial analyst. For 10 years he worked in the field, while pursuing a hobby he'd been introduced to by one of his roommates at Rochester: poker.

In 2012, Dimmig took a dramatic step. He left his job and moved to Las Vegas to make a go of it as a professional poker player.

"It was obviously a big risk," he says.

And a worthwhile one, apparently. In June, he prevailed over nearly 8,000 competitors around the world to win the six-week-long 2014 World Series of Poker—and take home more than \$1 million in winnings.

A lifelong hockey enthusiast and diehard fan of the Buffalo Sabres, Dimmig says the World Series of Poker is "like the Stanley Cup"—except in this contest, a Buffalonian came out on top. About 15 of Dimmig's friends traveled to Vegas to watch him play at the final table, where he wore a Buffalo Sabres shirt with pride.

According to Alex Weldon, a game designer and poker player writing on the website [pokerforums.org](http://pokerforums.org), "Dimmig came out on top of the second largest field in live poker history." Yet, "Dimmig would not have been anyone's pick when the final table first kicked off."


He began the final table in sixth place. Moreover, while the final table is called the "Millionaire Maker," Dimmig, a relatively young player, had never won more than five figures.

Dimmig says his poker prowess comes down to math.

"It's a heavily math-based profession. So if you don't have a background in math, you're at a slight disadvantage. At Simon, they definitely teach you a math-based approach to solving problems. So that approach has given me a leg up on the competition."

Las Vegas is the world's center of professional poker. But London is another hot spot, and Dimmig hopes to travel there and elsewhere in Europe to play.

"Looking forward from a poker perspective," he says, "I definitely want to play in some more tourneys. But one of the things I'm most looking forward to is, I'm actually writing a book."

"I have no background in writing whatsoever," he says. But he had an unusually vivid dream, and it became an idea for a novel. He's completed several chapters. "I think it can be very successful," he says.  —KAREN MCCALLY '02 (PHD)


analyses to the coaches, who will then make the delicate decisions about whether and how they're applied on the field.

"Rather than using simple observations, we're able to quantify characteristics," he says. "It's just a better way to understand likelihoods."

Lyons, who earned a bachelor's degree in molecular engineering at MIT before pursuing an MBA at Simon, hasn't missed a Bills home game since 1989. And while the team last made the playoffs in 1999, he remains an undaunted optimist. Unlike that lonesome halftime two decades ago, these days he's hearing the cheers of his friends and family, including his wife, **Christine** '93 (MS), '99S (MBA), daughter, Chelsea, and sons, Nate, Rochester freshman Zach, and Luke.

"Their eyes lit up," Lyons says, remembering the moment he told his boys what their dad would be doing for a living.

Squad system analyst Peter Linton, who makes up the other half of the team's analytics department, says his new colleague's kids have good reason to be proud: Lyons's addition to the roster strikes a robust balance for the Bills of brains and brawn.

"Mike knows how to get out of the data what nobody has before," Linton says. "It's just a great thing to do what you love and to see it manifest on the field."  —MELISSA LANG



**WORLD CHAMPION:** Dimmig won the World Series of Poker, the ultimate poker competition, in Las Vegas in June.