



While poker on television has been relegated to broadcasts of tournaments, other outlets have provided some dramatic element that has been lacking. The upcoming film *Runner Runner* is drumming up some interest and the poker documentaries

[*Bet Raise Fold: The Story of Online Poker*](#)

and

[*All In – The Poker Movie*](#)

have blazed trails. The pilot of what is looking like an ongoing series is currently making the rounds on YouTube and is drawing some interest from the poker community also.

[*The Grind*](#), produced by Hometown Hero Productions and AutenNotDolt Productions, was released on August 18 and it shows some promise with its premise. The series follows a group of poker players as they go through what they feel are their “mundane” lives before wrapping up its 20 minute pilot episode with what was a shock to the entire poker world.

As the pilot begins, we meet Chris, who is sitting in a math class playing online poker instead of listening to the professor’s droning. We are also introduced to his poker partners, handling their daily duties, before hearing about the next big game that they will gather for through texts on their smartphones. “It’s (poker) given me a reason to push through the daily grind,” Chris comments as the pilot moves forward.

The pilot moves into a restaurant, where one of Chris’ friends is approached by a couple of businessmen whom he has been waiting on. After being asked what there is to do in the town, the waiter entices them to come to the poker game that the group has set up and, as we move to the apartment where the game is held, the action begins to heat up.

Over the course of the next few minutes, the pilot moves through the evening's play. Chris is the focal point as he demonstrates his thought process in a hand against one of the businessmen. Although he loses the hand (even though he catches a set on the river on a straight heavy board and correctly deduces what his opponent holds), he files the information away as the game moves on.

The game ends with one of those nearly impossible hands that you often see in dramatic productions. Our hero battles again against his nemesis and wakes up with pocket Aces (his opponent sits on A-K). After intently studying him, they go to a flop of 5-A-K. "This is the moment I've been waiting for," Chris states, "now time to set the trap." He bets, is raised and calls the raise with his top set. Another King comes on the turn, where Chris traps the businessman into moving all in and relieves him of his stake in the game.

Perhaps the slowest moment of the pilot follows the game when the players adjourn to a local diner for some food. After they finish the meal (where they low-card for the tip), we are introduced to a potential love interest for Chris, which he seems oblivious of except in analyzing the waitress as if she was a poker opponent before concluding "she's interested in me." The pilot concludes with Chris warming up his computer the next morning after being informed by his father that "the rent is due." As he looks at the computers, the ominous seizure screen that many saw on "Black Friday" appears and, with an expletive, the pilot concludes.

The Grind does some things tremendously well with its pilot episode. Taking the situation of "Black Friday" and making it into a drama about how it affected poker players is an interesting twist, although the pilot doesn't leave you with any clue about how it is going to unfold. The actors are excellent in their roles and it is shot very well, with production qualities you might find in a top-notch television series.

There are some down sides to *The Grind*, however. There are way too many poker clichés bandied about; one of the characters is a dye-job away from being "Hollywood" Dave Stann and another uses Teddy KGB's "Let's play some cards" (with attempted Russian accent) line from *Rounders*

. There are way too many poker shirts being worn by the actors (there could be a potential tie-in to cause that, however, after viewing the opening). The female member of the group is not given much to do other than look good and the final hand with the businessman was about as cliché as you can get.

Even with all of this said, *The Grind* is still intriguing to me and I will be interested in seeing where it goes from here. Hopefully some of the more trite moments can be cleared out of future episodes and a truly dramatic series about poker, the activities of its players and how they are affected by the twists and turns of life will be the end result.