



Warnie puts his cards on the table in new gamble

Michael Davis

SHANE Warne likes a punt. "It's as simple as that," the legendary former Australian cricketer said yesterday as he embarked on his latest gamble: professional poker.

And in announcing a new sponsorship with the world's biggest on-line gambling site 888.com, Warne — who will captain 888's team — reckons there are plenty of similarities between cricket and poker.

"You have to be very patient playing poker just as you do in a Test match. There are times when you've got to press hard and other times when you have to sit back.

"Poker is actually known as a game of skill. It's about how much you bet at a certain time to maximise your hand. You do need a little bit of luck but it's also about knowing how to read your opponent," he said. "That's what attracts me about it. Most Australians like a punt, whether it's a dollar on the golf course or which is the fastest ant on the wall.

"I like a punt. It's as simple as that. I think it's held me in good stead in my cricket. When the game was in the balance, I wanted the ball in my hand."

Warne, who retired from Test cricket last summer, said that he had developed a real passion for poker over the past couple of years.

He had traded in his cricket spin doctor, Terry Jenner, for the poker doctor, Australia's world champion, Joe Hachem. So far, Hachem is impressed. "Out of all the celebrities I have played with, Shane has the most potential because he's so bloody competitive," he said.



He loves chips, too: Shane Warne at Crown casino in Melbourne yesterday

Warne, who will play five or six big poker tournaments a year, recently tasted big-time gambling in Las Vegas and will return there in the middle of the year for the World Series of Poker.

Things are good for Warne in retirement. He's about to sign a big contract to play in the newly-formed Indian Professional League; the Shane Warne Foundation for charity is going well and the sponsorships are rolling in.

Looking tanned and fit after spending 10 days in Fiji with his children, Warne was happy to offer his thoughts on most things.

He was not taking too seriously the perceived tension between the Indian and Australian cricket teams after the second Test in Sydney. He said the two captains would have sat down with their players and "sorted things out" before the third Test began in Perth yesterday.