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Almost two decades after discovering the game, poker professional André Akkari is an all-time great of the Brazilian game and a longstanding member of the PokerStars Team Pro. Born in Sao Paulo, André previously worked for a software company, specializing in creating Flash animation for a number of corporate websites. André was asked to write an e-commerce proposal for a poker website and decided to download the software for research. Before long, he was playing at one of the play money tables. Realizing he found his new hobby, André purchased a poker book and set about learning the game properly. He began playing for real money at PokerStars, and slowly but surely started to turn a profit. The years since have seen Akkari rack up millions in live cashes, and wins at the Brazilian Series of Poker (BSOP) and Latin American Poker Tour (LAPT), and a prestigious World Series of Poker (WSOP) bracelet. His first-place finish at WSOP 2011 saw him walk away with an incredible US\$675,117 cash, becoming the second-ever Brazilian player to earn the much-coveted gold bracelet. Akkari's success has established him as the godfather of poker across Latin America, and has inspired a generation of Brazilian poker players, including teammate Rafael Moraes. His fanbase also includes footballing icon Neymar Jr, who told André that he plans to join him at the tables after retiring from football. Neymar keeps saying that after he quits football he's going to play poker for real, become a professional, André said. He's really smart guy he keeps asking me about hands and techniques every day. He'll send me on WhatsApp a hand that he played in his home game, he'll play that like I'm playing the World Series or the EPT. André also likes to spend time working on his FURIA Esports franchise, a team he co-founded and built with the same ambition and community.