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With the entire American casino industry shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, casino workers are hitting the unemployment line in droves.

In response to this trend, the American Gaming Association penned a letter to President Trump asking for his administration to get involved and use federal tax money to help gaming companies keep its workers on the payroll.

“We share your overriding interest in employees retaining their jobs so they can get back to work quickly once this situation has subsided,” said AGA CEO Bill Miller in the letter. “Individuals who are laid off will otherwise be pushed into unemployment assistance and Medicaid.”

According to Miller, there are 1.8 million people working in the gaming industry that are at risk of losing jobs and the benefits related to their employment status unless the federal government steps in.

Ultimately, the AGA is asking the administration to alter requirements in the Paycheck Protection Program’s interim rules established by the Small Business Administration. These rules do not allow gaming companies to receive loan assistance that would help keep employees on salary.

Other casino lobbyists began asking Congress for federal bailout money at the start of the casino shutdowns.

More than 22 million Americans filed for unemployment over a four week period.

Caesars Entertainment announced that it would be furloughing 90 percent of its nationwide workforce. The gaming giant owns 53 properties in 14 states, none of which are currently open for business.

Caesars employees will be eligible to use two weeks of paid vacation after their final two weeks of salary runs out. They will also keep their health benefits through June 30.

“Given the closure of our properties, we are taking difficult but necessary steps to protect the company’s financial position and its ability to recover when circumstances allow us to reopen and begin welcoming our guests and employees back to our properties,” said CEO Tony Rodio in a statement. “The company entered this crisis with strong operating performance, which, combined with the steps we are taking now, are critical to the future of our company.”

Its competitors are also laying off massive amounts of workers. MGM Resorts furloughed 60,000 of its 69,000 employees, according to acting CEO Bill Hornbuckle, while Boyd Gaming, owners of eight off-strip casinos and 21 additional properties nationwide, announced that it would furlough “most” of its 25,000-person workforce.

Wynn Resorts and Las Vegas Sands will both continue to pay its employees for two months. For tipped employees at Wynn properties, they will receive pay that includes the average amount earned through gratuity.

Both companies have most of its American properties on the Las Vegas Strip, which will be closed through at least the end of April after Gov. Steve Sisolak extended his 30-day shutdown to last until at least May 1.

Operators in Europe are also letting go of workers as the French gaming company Partouche group furloughed 95 percent of its staff.
Phil Galfond has won the first of seven confirmed high-stakes online poker cash game ‘Galfond Challenges’ in dramatic fashion, securing a last-second, come-from-behind victory against his first opponent, known only by his screen name ‘VeniVidi1993.’

The three-time World Series of Poker bracelet winner just eked out the victory, ending with €1,472.08 in profit after the 25,000-hand showdown. The narrow margin was still enough for him to secure the €100,000 side bet that his opponent posted. If Galfond had lost, he would have had to pay out €200,000, making for a dramatic final session with a €300,000 swing hanging over both competitors.

“I did not think we were going to get under 300 hands with it still being anybody’s game. It was ridiculous,” said Galfond after securing the win. He later added on Twitter, “Over the past 15 years, I’ve played poker in a number of high-pressure situations. Nothing came close to feeling as intense as today did. I’m overwhelmed, exhausted, and most of all, grateful.”

The two played their final session of €100-€200 pot-limit Omaha at two heads-up tables while as many as 23,500 viewers watched the live streaming broadcast on the Twitch channel of Run It Once Poker, the online poker site owned by Galfond that will host all of the Galfond Challenge matches.

While he ultimately came out on top, Galfond was behind for the vast majority of the challenge. In fact, he was down more than €900,000 after an extended break for several weeks, playing just the first 15 sessions. /T_he three-time World Series of Poker chip leader winner just eked out the victory, ending with a €30,910 lead with 243 hands remaining. At that time VeniVidi1993 held a €30,910 lead and was incredibly close to sealing the deal, as a €36,450 advantage at that point would make it possible to fold to victory.

The two players took a short break with 243 hands remaining. At that time VeniVidi1993 held a €30,910 lead and was incredibly close to sealing the deal, as a €36,450 advantage at that point would make it possible to fold to victory.

VeniVidi1993 appeared to adopt a defensive strategy as the end of the challenge drew nearer, trying to protect the lead with the end in sight. The shift in approach for the normally aggressive player opened the door for Galfond to methodically claw his way back into contention.

By the time the two took a short break with just 97 hands remaining, Galfond was down only €6,307.92. Play resumed with just one table in action as opposed to the typical two, a shift that was agreed upon ahead of time by the competitors for the final hundred or so hands.

In the first 24 hands of single-table action, Galfond was able to string together a few hands, winning enough small pots to take a slight lead before the decisive hand of the challenge was dealt.

The 24,927th hand of the challenge began with Galfond raising to €600. VeniVidi1993 called from the big blind and the two saw a flop of ♣ 9♦ 4♠. VeniVidi1993 checked and Galfond made a pot-sized bet of €1,199. VeniVidi1993 made the call and the 4♠ paired the board and made a flush possible. VeniVidi1993 checked again and Galfond fired a half-pot bet of €1,798.50. VeniVidi1993 called again and the 10♣ completed the board.

VeniVidi1993 checked a third time and Galfond made a pot-sized bet of €7,194. VeniVidi1993 thought it over for a while before making the call, only to muck when Galfond showed Q♠ 10♣ 10♦ 8♦ for a rivered full house, tens over fours.

Galfond had flopped a wrap draw and an open-ended straight-flush draw, and made a flush on the turn. While VeniVidi1993’s hole cards were not shown on the broadcast, Galfond said that he had rivered the best hand against VeniVidi1993, who also had a full house.

With that pot Galfond took a lead of more than €12,300 and was able to run out his victory by folding each and every hand for the remainder of the challenge. VeniVidi1993 won the last 73 hands, but ultimately ended up losing by just over seven big blinds after 25,000 hands played.

With this match now in the books, Galfond will begin to prepare for the next of the seven challenges that have been confirmed. ♠
STONES CLAIMS “NO DUTY TO GAMBLERS” IN SECOND MOTION TO DISMISS CHEATING LAWSUIT

By Steve Schult

Stones Gambling Hall, the Sacramento-area casino that was home to one of the biggest cheating scandals in recent poker history, filed a second motion to dismiss the multi-million dollar lawsuit against the property, its tournament director Justin Kuraitis and Mike Postle, the man alleged to have cheated low-stakes live-streamed cash games out of roughly $250,000.

In its first motion to dismiss, filed in early March, the legal team for the casino argued that the casino “found no evidence that indicates there was cheating in the games in question.”

Its second filing takes the argument away from whether cheating took place and claimed that the casino doesn’t have a responsibility to ensure safe games for the players.

“Casinos do not owe a general duty of care to gamblers,” Stones’ legal team argued in the motion. “Their failure to include adequate facts establishes they cannot support their claims… Plaintiffs can neither prove negligence nor fraud, they rely on innuendos and insinuations that are not substitutes for facts or law.”

Not only is Stones doubling down on the idea that the accusations are without proof, but it is also distancing itself from Postle in a sense. Its argument is that even if cheating did take place, it wasn’t the casino’s fault. Thus, it shouldn’t be held liable for any damages.

It raises the question, if casinos are not legally required to provide games that are on a level playing field, what are they required to do? What exact responsibilities do casinos have to players, if providing straight games aren’t one of them?

After Stones filed its first motion to dismiss, the plaintiffs had a chance to amend their complaint. Mac VerStandig, the veteran gaming attorney representing the now 89 plaintiffs in the suit, filed an amended suit that added plaintiffs and specific details to the case.

“The latest motion to dismiss is in response to the amended suit. And with it brings arguably the most controversial topic to the cheating allegations.

In a statement released by VerStandig to another media outlet, he expressed his dismay at the defense tactics.

“We are in the process of reviewing and analyzing Stones’ motion, which appears to be a well-drafted document prepared by a group of excellent attorneys,” said VerStandig. “It is disappointing to see Stones continue to characterize my clients as essentially being sore losers, and it is disheartening to see a card room proclaim that it does not have a duty to its consumers even in a situation as egregious as this.”

Ebon Kenney Tops Matt Damon, Kevin Pollak In Celebrity Online Charity Poker Tournament

By Card Player News Team

Some of the biggest names in sports and entertainment gathered online in April for a $10,000 buy-in charity poker tournament.

Online poker site Americas Cardroom hosted All In For Feeding America, which drew a field of 65 entrants, including many notable poker-playing celebrities such as Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Tom Brady, Sarah Silverman, Adam Sandler, Adam Levine, Jason Bateman, Jon Hamm, Cheryl Hines, Jason Mewes, Aaron Paul, Scoot McNairy, and John Krasinski.

The field also featured poker pros like Doyle Brunson, Jason Koon, Alex Foxen, Todd Brunson, Jeff Gross, Jamie Staples, Jon Pardy, Luke Schwartz, Mike McDonald, and Jeff Boski.

In the end, the title went to poker pro Ebony Kenney, who made fans by streaming the event and talking trash as she knocked out both poker players and celebrities en route to victory. Kenney eliminated Matt Damon, Phil Hellmuth, and Kevin Smith on her way to the final table, which also included the likes of Tobey Maguire, Bryan Cranston and poker pro Tom Cannuli.

Comedian and avid poker player Andy Milonakis took third place, while impression king Kevin Pollak finished runner-up. Pollak can be seen nearly every summer at the World Series of Poker and has cashed in the main event twice.

Although Kenney came away with the win, she did not take home any of the prize pool, which was all donated to charity. After an additional donation from ACR, it is estimated that the tournament raised $2 million to benefit hunger-relief efforts in the United States.

“The tournament raised $2 million to benefit hunger-relief efforts in the United States.”
FanDuel briefly offered betting odds on the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election in mid-April before quickly taking them down from the site. These bets were only available for about 15 minutes before the entire Politics tab was removed from the book. While gamblers can’t bet on the upcoming election just yet, it seems as if the West Virginia Lottery is ready to become the first state to allow its citizens to gamble on the political process.

“While the markets were approved, the West Virginia Lottery has asked FanDuel to refrain from offering the markets until they have time to fully work through the implications of this new market offering,” said FanDuel in a statement.

During that brief period where odds were posted and bets were being taken, President Donald Trump opened as the betting favorite with -110 odds on the moneyline, meaning a $110 bet would profit $100.

Former Vice President and presumptive Democratic nominee, Joe Biden, went out as a +125 underdog, meaning a $100 bet would profit $125.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who is not currently running a campaign, was on the board with odds at +2,200.

Other Republicans on the board included Vice President Mike Pence at +3,500 and former South Carolina Governor and current diplomat Nikki Haley at +5,000.

A spokesperson for the West Virginia Lottery had a slightly different understanding of the mishap, indicating that the political betting markets were not yet approved by the regulators.

“It is my understanding that we were asked by the sportsbooks to allow betting on the presidential election and it is being reviewed,” the spokesperson told another media outlet. “I think possibly someone jumped before given an approval.”

FanDuel also offered bets on the eventual 2020 Democratic nominee, the 2020 Democratic Vice Presidential nominee and the winning party of the 2020 Presidential Election. At least one bet was made before the odds were deleted. FanDuel has refunded any wagers that were placed.

Betting on the U.S. Presidential Election has been legal for quite some time in Europe, but never in the U.S. Vegas oddsmaker John Murray commented that if sportsbooks were allowed to accept wagers on political races, “The handle would be astronomical.”

“President Donald Trump opened as the betting favorite with -110 odds on the moneyline meaning a $110 bet would profit $100.”
POKER CHEAT CHRONICLES MILLION DOLLAR SWINGS IN HOLLYWOOD HOME GAMES

By Card Player News Team

The 2018 film Molly’s Game documented the private high-stakes poker game in New York filled with celebrities and business tycoons run by Molly Bloom.

Before that game took off in the country’s largest city, Bloom got her start as a waitress in Tobey Maguire’s private game in Los Angeles.

According to an interview in the New York Post by former Card Player columnist Michael Kaplan, Maguire’s game got started thanks to a partnership between a former poker cheat and the now 44-year-old actor.

Houston Curtis, a sleight of hand expert that cheated high-stakes private games in Los Angeles for years, met Maguire at another private game in 2004. The two became friendly and Curtis received an invite to Maguire’s own home for a private game.

In his recently published book Billion Dollar Hollywood Heist, Curtis details the experience of fleecing Hollywood stars out of millions at private poker games.

According to Curtis, the game was filled with some of Hollywood’s most famous actors and producers. Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, and Leonardo DiCaprio were all regulars in the game. Curtis said he never cheated at these games and made sure not to win too much.

The game played so big that Curtis told the New York Post that “winning $20,000 felt like losing."

During the early years, the game was hosted at Maguire’s private residence with his then-wife Jen Meyer serving as the dealer, but quickly moved to Sunset Strip nightclub The Viper Room or the Beverly Hills Four Seasons after Maguire grew tired of having people in his house.

“Kevin Washington chewed tobacco and spit into a cup; Tobey hated that,” said Curtis. “And, since Tobey was a vegan, it really bothered him when people ordered pepperoni pizzas. He said to me ‘Dude. I have to get these scumbags out of my house.’”

When the game changed locations, so did the stakes. Curtis said that the normal game was $200-$400 no-limit hold’em, where players would routinely experience six-figure swings.

“Not everybody was comfortable playing that big, regardless of their wealth. DiCaprio, for example, wouldn’t play that big and requested a stake from Maguire and Curtis. Maguire accepted the deal.

“[DiCaprio] is a guy worth $80 million and he didn’t want to put up a $5,000 buy-in. But Tobey said, ‘Don’t worry. He only plays aces and kings.’ And he did. Leo was tighter than a gnat’s ass.”

As the game got bigger, wealthy businessmen ventured into the game, including Cirque Du Soleil founder Guy Laliberte.

“The first time I won a quarter-million dollars was Guy’s first night in the game,” said Curtis.

Curtis claimed to have won roughly $15 million during the four years that the game ran. Curtis bought a $3 million home for his wife and two daughters, a house for his mother, and other large purchases for people that were close to him.

But the housing market took a turn for the worse, which wiped out a good chunk of Curtis’ wealth. Following his first seven-figure loss in Maguire’s game and a six-figure loss in Vegas, Curtis was broke. He owed Rick Salomon and a few others $500,000 which prompted him to take a staking deal and $600,000 loan from Maguire.

With the deal done, Curtis writes, Maguire joyfully shouted, “I own you now! And I’m gonna make sooo much f—king money this year at poker!”

Unfortunately for Maguire, his game stopped running shortly after he made his deal with Curtis because a hedge fund owner in the game was found guilty of running his business as a Ponzi scheme. Once lawyers came after players for money won off the owner, the game couldn’t get off the ground. ☹
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## 2020 Card Player Player of the Year
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Colombian poker pro Farid Jattin has moved into second place in the Card Player Player of the Year race as the result of winning three titles in the opening months of 2020. Jattin took down a $25,000 AUD no-limit hold’em event at the Aussie Millions and then backed that up with a victory in a $25,000 AUD pot-limit Omaha event at the Australian Poker Open. His third title came in a $10,300 buy-in no-limit hold’em event at the MILLIONS South America festival. With those three wins, three additional final-table finishes and more than $1.2 million in year-to-date earnings, Jattin now sits within striking distance of the top spot.

Cary Katz made his eighth final table of 2020 by finishing runner-up in a $100,000 buy-in short deck event held toward the end of the partypoker MILLIONS Super High Roller Sochi series. Katz earned $780,000 and 300 POY points for his latest deep run in a high-stakes tournament. This was the seventh-largest cash on the 50-year-old American’s tournament resume. It was topped only by the six seven-figure paydays he has earned over the past six years. Katz has accumulated more than $2.4 million in earnings already this year, with one title won in a $10,000 high roller event held at Aria Las Vegas in late February. As a result of his impressive start to 2020, Katz has climbed into fourth place in the overall standings, with his 2,095 points being just 185 points shy of current leader Vincent Wan.
At just 31 years of age, Kahle Burns was inducted into the Australian Poker Hall of Fame in January of 2020. With nearly $10.8 million in career live tournament earnings, Burns sits in second place on the country’s all-time money list behind only 2005 World Series of Poker main event champion Joe Hachem ($12.3 million). Burns looks to have maintained his momentum from a breakout 2019 campaign that saw him win his first two WSOP gold bracelets and finish fifth in the POY race. He has already won two titles and made six final tables in the early months of 2020. He made a pair of cashes in high stakes events in Sochi to add $376,000 and 370 points to his year-to-date totals, which was enough to move him into fifth place on the POY leaderboard heading into April.

Canadian poker pro Sam Greenwood secured his sixth final-table finish of 2020 with a fourth-place showing in the final event of the high roller series in Sochi: a $50,000 buy-in no-limit hold’em high roller. It was Greenwood’s fourth final table in the span of a week. He earned $155,000 and 204 points, bringing his total for the series to $845,510 and 927 POY points. In January of this year Greenwood earned two fourth-place finishes in high-stakes events at the Aussie Millions. With over $1.3 million in earnings and 1,881 points accrued so far in 2020, Greenwood currently occupies the eighth-place spot in the rankings.

Brian Altman secured his second live tournament title of the year by taking down a $1,100 buy-in no-limit hold’em side event at the World Poker Tour Rolling Thunder series held at Thunder Valley Casino resort near Sacramento, California. Altman earned $36,490 and 240 points as the champion. In January he made poker history by winning the WPT Lucky Hearts Poker Open main event for the second time, becoming the first player to ever capture the same WPT title twice. As a result of those two victories, Altman has moved inside the top ten in the standings.

Defending Card Player Player of the Year award winner Stephen Chidwick has finished inside the top 50 in the POY race for five straight years, closing out that run with a second-place finish in 2018 and, of course, a win in 2019. The 30-year-old poker pro from Deal, England recently secured a pair of high stakes tournament final-table finishes that have seen him join the top 20 on the POY leaderboard. He placed sixth in a $25,000 short deck event in Sochi for $63,000 and 140 points, and later finished third in a $50,000 no-limit hold’em event at the same series for another $248,000 and 272 points. With a title, six final tables and $1,043,973 in year-to-date earnings, Chidwick has moved into 19th place.
POKER STRATEGY

Badeucey Fundamentals with Randy Ohel

By Steve Schult

The World Series of Poker is the one time of the year where all of poker’s variants, not just no-limit hold’em, are on display at the highest level. Randy Ohel is a fixture in those other games. He is a successful regular in the high-stakes mixed game scene, both in tournaments and in cash games.

Ohel has a WSOP bracelet from his victory in the $2,500 2-7 triple draw in 2012, and has cashed in several other variants, including runner-up finishes in the 2018 $10,000 2-7 triple draw, the 2016 $10,000 seven card stud eight-or-better championship, and the 2014 $10,000 H.O.R.S.E. championship.

The Florida native and Las Vegas resident has more than $2 million in live tournament earnings, almost exclusively in mixed events. Ohel has delved into the coaching realm of poker and is currently taking students to learn non-hold’em games. He can be found on Twitter @RandyOhel.

In an effort to provide readers with a solid fundamental strategy of mixed games, Card Player sat down with Ohel to break down a badeucey hand from the 2019 World Series of Poker.

For those that may not be familiar with the game, Badeucey is a split-pot triple draw game that combines badugi and 2-7 lowball. Half the pot will be awarded to the best badugi hand and the other half is given to the best 2-7 low hand. In this game, the nuts would be 7-5-4-3-2 with the 5-4-3-2 being different suits. For the badugi half, if neither player can make a four-card badugi, the best three-card badugi will win the hand, just as in a normal badugi hand.

Steve Schult: Since this is a 2-7 variant, how important is it to start with both a 7 and a 2 in your hand? Mike’s badugi is strong, but his five-card draw is somewhat weak since he can make a straight. How important is it to have a strong two-way draw?

Randy Ohel: It’s always important to start with a deuce, but even in regular triple draw, the 7 isn’t super important.

SS: I thought you wanted to be drawing at both ends of the low.

RO: I mean, it’s nice. But it’s not like “Oh, you can’t play the hand because it doesn’t have a 7 in it.” But it is kind of like “Oh, you can’t play that hand because it doesn’t have
a 2 in it.”

**SS:** Is a deuce a necessary requirement for starting hand selection?

RO: You have a much weaker hand. You likely have a hand that you can open in late position or defend the blind or something. You wouldn’t have a hand from upfront that doesn’t have a 2 in it. Unless you have a pat hand or something like a strong four-card hand.

**SS:** What are playable hands from up front then, if we assume a full six-handed game?

RO: You’re looking for similar starting hands to triple draw, but with three different suits. But you can play something like 2-5-8, which you wouldn’t play in regular triple draw. Basically, you’re looking for three cards to an eight or better with three different suits. You’d like to have a deuce in there, but you can play like 3-4-5 because it’s a very smooth three-card. There are different types of hands that you can play, but for the most part, fairly similar hands.

**SS:** What are hands that are considered good enough to three-bet?

RO: People play that spot differently. Some people three-bet with a lot more draw two than other people do. Any time you are going to draw one, you are going to want to three-bet. A lot of people have a lot of different strategies as to whether to three-bet their smoother hands.

**SS:** You mentioned during one of our interviews about 2-7 triple draw that since everybody was looking for the same cards, it’s not advisable to steal from late position with trash because those cards are likely to be loaded up in the blinds. Does the same principle apply here or does the different suits aspect of the badugi portion of the hand change the strategy?

RO: It’s not as quite as strong of an effect, but there are similar principles in play. You would never defend your big blind with 3-4 in regular triple draw, but you would in badeucey. In badeucey, there is some importance to have smooth prospects for badugi side. You will have possibilities of making a smooth badugi without having that great of a chance at the low.

**SS:** How would you approach a one-way low hand like 7-5-3-2 with three clubs?

RO: Those are some of the hardest hands to play. First of all, it matters which three clubs you have. If your lowest two-card is a 2-7 versus your lowest two-card being a 2-3, it will affect whether or not the hand will be at all playable or maybe if you want to draw two with it. Maybe you would defend the big blind and draw two or three.

As a more general statement, the smoother the two-card hand, the more playable it is going to be from more positions and stuff like that. If you get dealt 7♠ 5♦ 3♣ 2♠ X under the gun, you just have to fold.

But you would open that hand from the button, and you might draw two or three. You would never draw one. Maybe if someone opens and there is four- or five-way action or something like that and you’re closing the action, then you could just call and draw one to try and get half of a big multiway pot.

**SS:** That’s kind of what I’m getting at. You’re never drawing one and going for half.

RO: Not unless you get a super weird spot. Spots that really aren’t supposed to come up where there are a ton of people in already. Then do it.

As a rule, you’re not looking to do that.

**SS:** Back to the hand in question. They both take two on the first draw and Jim immediately makes a 9-low and a 9-badugi. I realize this is a general question, but how strong of a hand is that? Are you ever breaking this?

RO: Unless it’s one of the strongest versions of that hand, which would be 2-3-4 offsuit, 7, and the right 9. That might be the hand where you end up drawing one because the three-card is so strong, and the three-card has showdown value. There is a lot of importance in this game in the three-card having showdown value.

**SS:** He has the 2-3-5 three-card.

RO: You could potentially end up breaking that. Or you can pat it. The way the hand is actually played out; he was clearly up against an opponent who had a strong badugi. And he’s not going to scoop the pot even by breaking, really. He has one or two outs or something. And he is ahead for the other side, so in that type of spot, he’s not going to break it. It might have been an interesting decision if his opponent had patted at some stage. But against someone who is not pat, you’re not looking to break that.

**SS:** Just for clarification’s sake, if he were playing a cash game where he would have to play all the streets, he’s not going to check-raise and pile money in, right?

RO: You could still check-raise the flop. Either check-raise or lead. You can do them each some portion of the time. But once he gets three-bet and it goes pat-one, you’re never going to put in another bet if you don’t have to. And even here, I think he made a tremendous mistake by betting on the turn.

There’s no reason not to save the extra 9,000 or whatever it was. Even though 8,000 is nothing, it’s also not nothing. It’s literally not nothing and that matters more than it being figuratively nothing. You can at least try and double that 9,000 because you’re always trying to escape. You can just check and call the rest of the way down.

His opponent also would have the option in a cash game to just call on the flop and get in a raise on the turn. Which is less relevant here when the players are nearly all in. That’s a play very much in consideration for the player in position with the six badugi.

Badeucey is a split pot triple draw game that combines badugi and 2-7. Half the pot will be awarded to the best badugi hand and the other half is given to the best 2-7 low hand. In this game, the nuts would be 2-3-4-5-7 with the 2-3-4-5 being different suits.
### Tournament Hand Matchup

**2020 Super High Roller Bowl Russia**

**$250,000 No-Limit Hold’em High Roller**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Chips</th>
<th>Winning Percentage Before Flop</th>
<th>Winning Percentage After Flop</th>
<th>Winning Percentage After Turn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tim Adams</td>
<td>1,370,000</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christoph Vogelsang</td>
<td>2,300,000</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Heath</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PREFLOP**

With seven players remaining and blinds of 15,000-30,000 with a 30,000 big blind ante, Ben Heath raised to 60,000 from early position. Tim Adams called from the button. Christoph Vogelsang called from the small blind.

**FLOP**


**TURN**

Vogelsang checked. Adams bet 190,000. Vogelsang called.

**RIVER**

Vogelsang checked. Adams bet 450,000. Vogelsang called.

### Analysis

The final day of the $250,000 buy-in Super High Roller Bowl Russia began with seven players remaining and only the top six set to make the money. Reigning Card Player Player of the Year award winner Stephen Chidwick started the day as the short stack with 14 big blinds, a fact that likely informed the play of every other player at the table, all of whom had at least 25 big blinds. Chip leader Ben Heath opened A-6 suited from early position, a move that is backed up by the theory that medium stacks would be ill inclined to take a stand with Chidwick in the danger zone. To that end, Tim Adams elected to just call with pocket jacks, which helps control the pot size while also under-representing the strength of his hand. Christoph Vogelsang also just called with K-Q from the big blind. Adams flopped middle set on a draw-heavy board and sprung into action when checked to, firing a small bet of one-fourth the size of the pot. Vogelsang called with his top pair and Heath bowed out. The turn put a second flush draw on the board and Vogelsang went for another check-call, this time to the tune of 190,000. The river missed both flush draws and completed no new straights. Vogelsang checked a third time, and Adams made a healthy value bet of 450,000 into a 740,000 pot. Vogelsang must have felt that his top pair with a king kicker was too strong to fold given all of the draws that had bricked out. He made the call and was shown Adams’ set. With that Adams moved into a virtual tie for the chip lead while Vogelsang fell to the middle of the pack.

**NOTE:** WINNING PERCENTAGES DO NOT INCLUDE TIES. ODDS PROVIDED BY CARDPLAYER.COM/POKER-TOOLS/ODDS-CALCULATOR/TEXAS-HOLDEM
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Aaron Van Blarcum had just six recorded live tournament cashes to his name leading into the 2019 World Series of Poker main event, totaling $21,406 in earnings. Since that tournament kicked off last July, Van Blarcum has cashed for more than $4.1 million dollars, making 13 final tables and winning two titles along the way.

The 44-year-old CBD business owner and former nightclub investor from Dallas, Texas started his incredible run with a strong showing in the previously mentioned WSOP main event. Van Blarcum finished in 212th place out of a field of 8,569 entries to earn $50,855.

Just seven weeks later he won the World Poker Tour Legends of Poker $5,000 buy-in no-limit hold’em main event at The Bicycle Hotel & Casino, topping a field of 520 entries to secure his first major title and the top prize of $474,390. A few months after that, he made a trip to the Bahamas for the 2019 Caribbean Poker Party, where he finished as the runner-up from a field of 948 entries in the $10,000,000 guaranteed $10,300 buy-in main event for $970,000.

With multiple six-figure scores under his belt after just a few months of playing an increased tournament schedule, Van Blarcum decided to try his hand at the super high roller scene in the final weeks of 2019. In the five months that have followed, he secured 10 final-table finishes playing at the highest stakes in the world, including the $250,000 buy-in Super High Roller Bowl events held in Australia and Russia.

Card Player recently caught up with Van Blarcum to discuss his meteoric rise up the tournament ranks, how he first got into the game, why he prefers high roller events and more.

Card Player: You went from hardly having any tournament results on your resume to playing in the highest stakes events in the world in less than a year, with millions in cashes along the way. Can you tell me about how you burst onto the scene and made your way to the top of the game so quickly?

Aaron Van Blarcum: Well, I had a couple of buddies that
were playing some tournaments, and they were trying to get me to play for a long time. And I’d always just been playing cash games. So I decided to jump into the WSOP main event last year, just for fun, just to see what happened. And I did pretty well, and it was fun. I had a good time with it.

After that, I decided to play all the World Poker Tour events and then I just happened to smash the first one and win that one, and it kind of just went from there. I started having more fun playing in tournaments than I did at cash games, so I just decided to do that and try to spin it up and roll it towards where it’s at now.

CP: What’s your background in poker? When did you first start playing the game, and can you tell me a little bit about how you got into cash games?

AVB: I used to have games out in Dallas, private games. We used to play those, since I was probably about 18 years old, back there. Every once in a while I’d play out in Vegas, but for the most part it was just only games in Dallas, Texas that we used to play.

CP: Was that something that you picked up when you were involved in nightclub businesses?

AVB: No, it was before that. I used to actually skateboard for a living, and I had some buddies from that used to play. I went and played with them one day, and then it just became a thing. My friend was playing in some of the private games, and he was like, ‘Hey, let’s go play in this little small $1-$2 game.’ So we started playing that back then, and then it just kind of just grew from there. The games got pretty big back about 10 years ago, the games were pretty big back then.

CP: How big? Can you tell me what kind of stakes you were playing?

AVB: At that time in the Dallas area, there was a lot of $25-$50, $50-$100, and a lot of $100-$200 pot-limit Omaha.

CP: So you紧 up the stakes in tournaments over the past year may have been quick, but you’re not a stranger to playing big. It had just been in cash games prior to 2019.

AVB: Right, yeah. It was just cash games. I never really played the tournaments just because of... well, because of how much time gets wrapped up into each event. Each game takes you, if you make a deep run, it takes you three, four, or five days to play out. I just never really wanted to spend that much time sitting at a table just playing one tournament. But now that they’ve kind of shortened up, is why I like the high rollers. So you don’t have to sit there for four days. You can play those in a day, day and a half usually, sometimes two at the most. So that’s why I enjoy those a little bit more.

CP: Speaking of the high rollers, I wondered if you could walk through your mindset after going on a run in a few larger field tournaments. You placed 212th in the WSOP main event, then won a WPT title just a few months later. A couple months after that you had a runner-up finish in another large field main event. After having multiple big results, did you just feel comfortable taking a shot at an even bigger buy-in?

AVB: It was after my Bahamas trip to the Caribbean Poker Party. When I was out there they had all the high roller events going on, and I was watching all the action in those. And then after I got second in the $10,300 buy-in there for $970,000, that’s when I decided I wanted to try to go and see what I could do in the bigger buy-ins. I think I first jumped into them at the Bellagio’s Five Diamond series in December. And then the first few I played, I got first and second place in $25,000 and $50,000 buy-in events. So then after that, I started just looking up where the high roller series were at, and just started trying to follow the circuit around, playing all of them from there on, basically. I think the next month was Australia, I think we went to.

CP: Was that first shot you took in a $25,000 buy-in at all stressful or did you feel confident and comfortable right away?

AVB: I felt comfortable right away. I may have played a little bit differently, a little tighter than I would normally. And obviously, that helped and I had a good result, but I did tighten up a bit just because of the level of play, the competition… I just hadn’t ever played with a lot of those guys before, though I knew who all of them were, obviously. It was fun for me to be able to play with all those guys, and I wouldn’t say that I was intimidated at all.

CP: As a fresh face on the scene, what has been your overall experience interacting and playing with all of the high-roller regulars?

AVB: I wasn’t sure how everybody was going to be, but after traveling around with everybody, they’ve all been pretty cool. There are only about 50 to 80 people that play in these things around the world on a consistent basis, and everybody’s pretty friendly with each other. I’m not going to say like a home game, but whenever you’re sitting down with everybody, everybody has played with each other for so long, they kind of all know how each other plays. Everybody’s talking, nobody’s just sitting there for the most

AARON VAN BLARCUM’S TOP 10 TOURNAMENT SCORES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Buy-In</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Finish</th>
<th>Winnings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2019</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>Caribbean Poker Party</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>$970,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2020</td>
<td>AUD$100,000</td>
<td>Australian Poker Open</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>$540,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2020</td>
<td>AUD$100,000</td>
<td>Aussie Millions</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>$511,207</td>
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<td>Sept. 2019</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>WPT Legends Of Poker</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>$474,390</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dec. 2019</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Five Diamond World Poker Classic</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>$333,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 2019</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>Five Diamond World Poker Classic</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>$225,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Millions Super High Roller Sochi</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>Millions Super High Roller Sochi</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>$168,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>Millions Super High Roller Sochi</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>$91,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If I’m going to be playing it, obviously you want to win as much as possible, right? So the only way to win the most money is to play the higher stakes. I’d rather play five tournaments a week where you have a chance to at least cash or win. And you can still win something like $1.2 million instead of being in one tournament where you got to get first place to win $350,000.

part. I like being able to be a part of all that too. It’s cool. It’s like its own little community, basically.

CP: In a way, do you think that being a new player that high-stakes regulars haven’t really faced before played to your advantage, at least early on?

AVB: I think it probably did early on, but I think then after the first few times they probably picked up on everything. Obviously, all those guys are the best in the world, right? So it doesn’t take them long to pick up on how somebody’s playing.

CP: You mentioned earlier that you enjoy that these high rollers are designed to be fewer days to take to play down to a winner. And you also said that you appreciate the challenge of going up against the toughest competition. Are there any other reasons why you just decided to quickly move up and just target playing these super high rollers?

AVB: Not really. That’s pretty much it. Just that, and then the high stakes. If I’m going to be playing it, obviously you want to win as much as possible, right? So the only way to win the most money is to play the higher stakes. I’d rather play five tournaments in a week where you have a chance to at least cash or win. And you can still win something like $1.2 million instead of being in one tournament where you got to get first place to win $350,000, like a WPT. I would just rather do those tournaments.

CP: So, you took a shot at high roller events and had success right away in $25k and $50k buy-ins. Just a month after making that leap up in stakes, you went down to Australia and played the $250,000 buy-in Super High Roller Bowl down there. Can you tell me about that experience?

AVB: It was fun. It’s something that I just wanted to do, just to take a shot at it because I was doing well when I was down in Australia. So I figured while I was down in Australia, since I’d done well in the two $100,000 buy-ins that I played in and a couple of the other events down there, I figured I would try to roll it up at that point and just see what I could do for the trip since I was up.

It was a good time. It’s something that I’m going to do as much as I can. I won’t play all the $250,000 buy-in events, but going up to $100,000 is a comfortable level for me. The $250,000 level is a little bit in the un-comfort zone, for me, but if I’m at that series and I’m up, then I don’t mind putting the $250,000 up. So, that’s kind of where I’m sitting with that.

CP: Since you’ve been on the scene, has there been any particular player that you’ve come up against who’s been the hardest for you to deal with?

AVB: Probably going to be… I mean, obviously all of them, right? But if I had to pick the main one, it would probably be Alex Foxen. Him and Kahle Burns. I’ve played with those guys at a lot of final tables. If I get deep, it seems like one of those two guys is there with me just about every time.

CP: With two titles and five final-table finishes in really just the second half of the year, you fell just shy of finishing inside the top 20 and Card Player’s Player of the Year race in 2019. Now this year you have already made eight final tables and are currently inside the top ten. Is an award like the POY, which looks to measure consistency on the tournament circuit over an entire year, is that the kind of thing that you might chase if you continue to be among the top contenders towards the end of 2020?

AVB: Oh, of course, 100 percent that is something that I do want to chase. I’m very competitive and always want to be the best at anything I do, no matter what. I definitely want to try to see what I can do in that arena for sure. It’s a big deal to me.

CP: You mentioned your competitiveness. Would you say that is the trait that has most helped you find success so quickly on the live tournament scene?

AVB: The competitive nature helps you study, right? It helps you keep up on people, how they play, study the game a lot more than what maybe a normal person would, because you don’t want to lose it. And whenever I do make mistakes, I’m always going back and checking and seeing what I did and playing over the hands. Maybe the hand I got knocked out on wasn’t the hand that I played bad, but I didn’t have enough chips to withstand whatever it is that made me lose right there. So I go back and try to see where it is that I lost chips, to see what I can do differently in the next tournament so that I can get a little bit further. So being competitive just helps me probably just work on it a lot harder than a lot of other people, I think.

CP: Do you plan on continuing to play a lot of live tournaments once the action picks back up after the coronavirus outbreak is under control? Will how much you play be limited at all by your responsibilities to your CBD business?

AVB: That is my plan, yeah. Fitting poker in with the business obviously slows things down. We’re trying to get a whole bunch of more locations opened up out here in Florida, so it slows it down a little bit. But I’ve got people that help me to run things, so I plan on traveling around and playing high rollers for at least the next probably two years, and doing all the tournaments at the WSOP whenever it does go. But at least the next 24 months, that’s the plan.

It’s not just the poker, it has to do with traveling, being able to go to the different spots and see different places and all that stuff. It’s something I’ve wanted to do, anyway, and this approach accomplishes both goals. I love doing both travel and poker.
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THIS WEEK’S BIG WINNER

Tony Tran Beats Jake Schwartz Again To Win His Second World Poker Tour Title

By Card Player News Team

Tony Tran emerged victorious from a field of 250 entries to win the 2020 World Poker Tour Rolling Thunder $5,000 buy-in no-limit hold’em main event, earning his second WPT title and the top prize of $279,270. Incredibly, Tran’s heads-up opponent in this tournament was none other than Jake Schwartz, who also finished runner-up to Tran in his previous title run at the 2018 WPT bestbet Bounty Scramble.

The final table also featured reigning WPT Player of the Year and the tournament’s defending champion Erkut Yilmaz, World Series of Poker bracelet winner Shankar Pillai, and Germany’s Robert Heidorn, who bubbled the 2019 WSOP main event final table.

“I feel really good that I’m actually a champion again. It just shows that the first one was not a fluke,” Tran told WPT reporters after securing the win. “I don’t think it compares to the first one, but the second one is definitely good because I think there are only a few that actually have [at least two] WPT titles.”

In fact, the 32-year-old real estate investor from Philadelphia became just the 25th player in tour history to secure two or more wins.

Here are the five hands that propelled Tran to the title.

**Tournament – WPT Rolling Thunder**

Buy-In: $5,000 • No. of Entries: 250 • Prize Pool: $1,162,500 • 1st Place Prize: $279,270

**HAND NO. 1 Tran Doubles Through Yilmaz In A Cooler**

Tony Tran

Erkut Yilmaz

Blinds – 20,000-40,000 with a 40,000 big blind ante

The Action

Rabichow raised to 80,000 from under the gun, and Tran called from the button. Yilmaz then three-bet to 345,000 from the small blind, forcing Rabichow to fold. Tran responded with a shove, and Yilmaz made a quick call with pocket jacks. Tran held pocket queens, however, and they held as the board fell A♠ 6♦ 4♠ Q♣ 7♠.

**HAND NO. 2 Defending Champion Eliminated In Fifth Place**

Tony Tran

Erkut Yilmaz

Blinds – 20,000-40,000 with a 40,000 big blind ante

The Action

After doubling up Schwartz, Yilmaz was left with less than nine big blinds and decided to commit them with 9♣ 5♣ after a shove from Tran in the small blind. Tran was behind with 8♥ 7♥, but was able to connect as the board ran out 6♥ 6♦ 3♣ 7♣ K♣. Yilmaz, who won this very same event in 2019 for $303,920 en route to winning WPT POY.
honors, had to settle for a $61,685 consolation prize for fifth place.

**HAND NO. 3**

**Tran Takes Out Rabichow In Fourth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tony Tran</th>
<th>Kevin Rabichow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6,300,000</td>
<td>1,175,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Action**

Rabichow moved all in from the button for his last 1,175,000, and Tran made the call from the big blind with A♣ J♣. Rabichow had his suits covered, but was at least drawing live with K♣ 4♣. Unfortunately for him, the flop fell Q♣ Q♦ J♥ to leave him drawing to three outs. They never came, and Tran went on to improve to a full house. Rabichow, who has been on a heater in the last year with a runner-up finish at the partypoker Millions North America main event, picked up another $85,800 for his deep run.

**HAND NO. 4**

**Heidorn Out In Third Place**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tony Tran</th>
<th>Robert Heidorn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6,300,000</td>
<td>1,625,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Action**

Heidorn moved all in from the button for his last 1,625,000 on the button and Tran woke up with pocket tens in the big blind to make the easy call. Heidorn was a 4:1 underdog with his pocket deuces, and the German poker pro couldn’t catch up as the dealer produced a board of A♥ 9♣ 8♣ 3♥ 4♦. Heidorn banked $122,105 for his third-place finish, while Tran took a big lead into his rematch with Schwartz.

**HAND NO. 5**

**Schwartz Falls Short Once Again, Tran Takes It Down**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tony Tran</th>
<th>Jake Schwartz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8,650,000</td>
<td>1,350,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Action**

Tran entered heads-up play with a 4:1 chip advantage and held onto it despite a double up from Schwartz during their 28-hand showdown. On the final hand, Tran raised the button to 250,000, and Schwartz moved in for his last thirteen big blinds with J♥ 10♥. Unfortunately for him, Tran called with a dominating Q♣ 10♣, making him a big favorite to take the title. The flop fell J♦ 9♦ 8♠, giving Schwartz one of his three needed outs, but it also gave Tran a straight, and a stranglehold on the pot. The turn and river fell 5♦ 7♠, and Schwartz was once again eliminated in second place, this time earning $177,680. Tran picked up his second win on the tour, the trophy, and the $279,270 first-place prize.

**Final Table Results**

1. Tony Tran  $279,270
2. Jake Schwartz  $177,680
3. Robert Heidorn  $122,105
4. Kevin Rabichow  $85,800
5. Erkut Yilmaz  $61,685
6. Shankar Pillai  $45,390
BACK WITH A BITE!
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GLOBAL POKER TRAFFIC SURGES AS PLAYERS COMPETE FOR HIGH STAKES AND BIG TOURNAMENT PRIZE POOLS

General Manager David Lyons Talks About What’s Next For The Fastest Growing Site In The U.S.

By Card Player News Team

If you have been listening to poker players in the United States in the last couple of years, then you have probably heard about Global Poker. Once considered the new kid on the block as far as online poker sites go, Global Poker has taken the industry by storm and has cemented itself among the top 10 sites worldwide for player volume and as the fastest growing site for US players.

Now, with live poker on hiatus and with many of us forced to stay at home, Global Poker is more popular than ever. The site has increased guarantees on their big Sunday events, and have still had no problem meeting them. Six months ago, the player-favorite Sunday Scrimmage drew a field of 237 entrants for its SC50,000 prize pool. Most recently, the very same tournament had 643 runners, easily crushing the new SC100,000 guarantee while awarding the first-place prize of SC23,533 to an online player from Alabama.

But Global Poker hasn’t rested on the success of their usual daily tournament schedule. With the increase in demand, the site has risen to the challenge by quickly launching the Global Poker Home Series, a schedule of events that includes 28 Sweeps Coins and 28 Gold Coins tournaments. This SC2 million series wraps up April 26 with a massive edition of the Sunday Scrimmage featuring a SC500,000 guarantee!

And if that wasn’t enough, Global Poker is already putting the finishing touches on the next leg of their Global Poker Championship Series, which will see the Rattlesnake Open run from May 4-25.

Card Player recently caught up with Global Poker General Manager David Lyons to find out more about the site that has everyone playing online poker again.

Card Player: For those of our readers who are unfamiliar,
or perhaps just dipping their toes back into online poker, can you explain what sets Global Poker apart from the other sites out there? Who can play on Global Poker?

David Lyons: Global Poker provides a social poker experience, but with the added twist that players can actually win prizes. Like other social poker games, players receive free Gold Coins (the primary virtual currency used to play Global Poker games for entertainment) on registration and may purchase more Gold Coins. Players can also be issued free promotional Sweeps Coins that can be played at the poker tables and provide an opportunity to redeem winnings for real prizes.

CP: The coronavirus has forced many poker players from the casinos back online and based on the numbers in your recent Sunday tournaments, it appears that traffic is booming! Can you talk about how Global Poker is the fastest growing cardroom around?

DL: It has been a rollercoaster few weeks. As people are staying at home, we have seen an influx of new players across all game formats, and this has been most visible in our high-stakes ring games (we are seeing GC10,000-20,000 and SC10-20 games running regularly) and of course tournaments, where the prize pools for several have more than doubled. This unexpected influx is a blessing and a challenge, as we need to ensure that our infrastructure is able to sustain it, and also that our player-facing staff are able to maintain great customer service.

CP: Global Poker seemed quick to respond to the growing demand for online action. Can you talk about the Home Series and how the idea came to fruition?

DL: The idea was a simple one: can we do something that will be attractive to the live poker community? Before the events of the last few weeks we were planning to rerun the aborted Sunday Scrimmages third anniversary special as an opener to the planned Rattlesnake Open, but then things changed fast. We added some high-stakes ring games, but we knew we wanted to have a big daily ‘event’ tournament to capture the interest and the imagination of poker players. It all came together within a few days and the only big decision was how much to push the guarantees. With SC2 million up for grabs including SC500,000 for the main event, and 28 trophies to be won in the championship events, we think we have something the poker community will love. To top things off we also added 28 trophy events with a GC70 million total Home Series guaranteed for our Gold Coin players.

CP: With the Hometown Heroes promotions and now the Home Series, it seems that Global Poker is very focused on listening to player feedback and the development of a community.

DL: We are extremely lucky to have the best community in poker. Our players engage with each other and with us across a variety of channels including social media, Discord and Twitch. Players share their experiences, help each other and provide feedback. This type of engaged community builds trust in Global Poker and that trust is not just a big asset but also a big responsibility. We take that responsibility seriously, and I believe our players recognize that.

CP: What can players expect from Global Poker in the future? Can you reveal or hint at any upcoming tournament series or promotion?

DL: Our players have not been shy about making their feelings clear about what they want to see in the future, so I have been pretty reluctant to make any promises that we might not be able to keep. However, I can say that we have a few exciting things planned for April and May.

Firstly, we will be piloting Surge, our fast-fold ring game format. Fast-fold is one of the great innovations in online poker and is something that benefits all players types. Casual players have less waiting time between hands which tends to make them more selective, which ultimately means they are playing better poker. Grinders get to play more hands in less time, which of course they love. We expect to see Surge piloted at some Gold Coin and Sweeps Coin stakes before the end of April.

Secondly, we are looking forward to the Rattlesnake Open in May. The GPC series has a loyal following and no doubt the regulars are excited about seeing what the new influx of players does to the prize pools. We expect that handsome Rattlesnake trophies may be a little harder to get hold of than in previous series.

In parallel with this we are working on Bounty Tournaments. These have become more and more popular among the online poker playing community and are a great way for new players to get acquainted with long-form tournaments as they don't have to wait until the final few tables to enjoy a winning moment. We expect to see our first Bounty Tournaments sometime in May.

If you haven’t yet tried Global Poker, now is the time to do so. The site is giving away SC1,000 every week for new players in a special Saturday freeroll tournament. Sign up today by visiting CardPlayer.com/link/GlobalPoker.
My name is Houston Curtis, and as a reader of Card Player magazine since the early 90’s, I was honored to be asked to become a contributor to this fine publication. Each column, I will share experiences from my life and times playing high-stakes poker in Hollywood both before, during, and after the poker boom of the early 2000’s.

Many of the outrageous moments I’ll be sharing are the true accounts of stories that were most recently piecemealed together for Aaron Sorkin’s Academy Award-nominated film Molly’s Game starring Jessica Chastain as Molly Bloom, Bill Camp as myself (with my name changed to Harland Eustice) and Michael Cera as “Player X” who was based on my old pal Tobey Maguire. I will be revealing the 100 percent accurate versions of these incredible stories, many of which have been culled directly from my book, Billion Dollar Hollywood Heist, which at the time of this writing, is an Amazon no. 1 Top New Seller.

Many people in the poker world scratched their heads while watching Molly Bloom’s story play out on the big screen. Why? Because anyone from the high-stakes poker scene who was even six degrees removed from our game knew that it was masterminded primarily by the guy Sorkin referred to as “Player X.” And anyone less than three degrees removed probably knew that I was intimately involved from its inception.

Furthermore, anyone two degrees removed, knew for a fact that Molly was planted by us to be the face of the game, but had no authority or decision-making privileges whatsoever. Her memoir, however, spun quite a different tale.

Right after journalist Dylan Howard’s book, the original story about our now infamous Hollywood Poker ring, I was offered a lot of money to write a tell-all book about the game. I chose to stay silent. (I guess I wasn’t broke enough at that point to do a money grab) However, after seeing how friends of mine were portrayed, and how facts were changed in the film, I finally decided to share the real story for those who care to read about it.

I took a page from Hangover director and poker buddy Todd Phillips’ playbook and told my publishing partners to keep the advance in exchange for a true backend and the ability to hold on to all ancillary rights to my story. In every column, I will be expanding on tales from my book and sharing stories that I’m willing to bet will be enjoyed by anyone who loves the game.

But that’s not all I will be sharing with you. For nearly 30 years, I lived a secret double life that makes me uniquely experienced in how a poker game in the modern era can still easily be cheated. This is information that could save you lots of money in your private games.

By profession, my day-to-day career has been that of a television producer for most of my life. But at night, I supplemented my income as a highly-skilled card mechanic who primarily targeted LA-area games filled with scumbags, wannabe gangsters, and would-be hustlers. I never expected my skills with a deck of playing cards or my love of gambling to take me all the way to a place at Hollywood’s most exclusive high-stakes poker game... or to see me concoct a high-stakes fishing expedition with Tobey Maguire to hook some of the richest and most famous fish in the ocean (a story for another day).

You see, for as long as I can remember, I knew I wanted to be a card sharp. That’s sharp with “p.” A card shark is someone who is good at playing cards... but a card sharp, or card mechanic is someone who can control the outcome of a card game using deceptive methods.

And I was a natural. I hustled my first hand of poker at age 10, and was bottom dealing, riffle stacking, and performing overhand run ups before I was 15. I could clean out anyone I knew by the age of 18, when I left the innocence of the Midwest for Los Angeles to make my fortune in the entertainment business.

It was a hell of a plan, and a hell of a ride. I saw things and did things most people could only dream about. There were A-list movie stars, sporting idols, billionaires,
gangsters, drink, drugs, Playboy playmates and thousand-dollar-a-night hookers... and millions in cash won and lost every week. And when it all came crashing down, I crashed hardest.

So, get ready for a roller coaster thrill ride of poker debauchery each month as I not only bring you some of the most star-studded true poker stories ever told, but as I show you firsthand how so-called games of chance can be manipulated at the highest level. I will teach you how to spot card manipulation, team play, and all sorts of injustices that are commonly and often imperceptibly executed at the card table right before your very eyes. It's gonna be a fun column. I guarantee it!

But to further introduce myself I would like to share words from the prologue of my new book, Billion Dollar Hollywood Heist, which sets up the environment I was living in. Let's enter a world of fame, wealth and excess as I describe what became a typical Tuesday or Thursday night for me starting back in 2005.

Prologue from Billion Dollar Hollywood Heist.

They call it the "Pink Palace." For a hundred years the Beverly Hills Hotel - a discrete oasis of pure opulence off Sunset Boulevard - has played host to the cream of Hollywood and some of the richest, most famous and most powerful men and women in the history of America, including luminaries such as the Rat Pack, Humphrey Bogart and Marlene Dietrich. Fred Astaire read Daily Variety poolside, John Lennon and Yoko Ono hid out in one of the hotel's 23 bungalows for a week, and Richard Nixon's chief of staff learned about Watergate while eating breakfast in the famed Polo Lounge. Paramount Pictures was sold over drinks to Gulf & Western at its tables. Clark Gable was talked into acting in The Misfits by Arthur Miller over a tropical cocktail.

If the walls of this kings castle could speak, they would whisper of a century of easy money, sex, scandal and excess. But it's rarely seen a night like this.

We are in a luxurious bungalow at the hotel, cloistered away from the other guests, wrapped in our own private world. And whatever we want, we're getting.

There's a private butler on standby and beautiful girls from the Ford modeling agency are giving shoulder massages for thousand-dollar tips. Nobody could agree on dinner so we had our hostess order in food from Los Angeles most exclusive eateries Spago, Mastro's, and of course, the Polo Lounge.

Leonardo DiCaprio is chilling on the couch watching a ball game and chatting up one of the models, while at a specially set-up table in the lounge Tobey Maguire, Ben Affleck, real estate mogul Bob Safi, Cirque du Soleil creator Guy Laliberte, technology billionaire Alec Gores, World Series of Poker champ Jamie Gold, Hangover director Todd Phillips, Notebook director Nick Cassavetes and myself are playing super high stakes no-limit Texas hold'em poker.
$500,000 for the night. Everyone but Jamie and I have folded and he’s just gone all-in. I watch as he pushes every chip he’s got into the center of the table.

Todd whistles softly and one of the girls gives a little gasp – whether in shock or excitement, I don’t know. The rest of the room goes quiet. Even Leo turns his attention away from the model who is sitting on his lap and leans forward. I don’t take my eyes off Jamie but next to me I can sense Tobey grinning like a schoolboy.

It is, as they say, a moment. Half a million on the turn of a card. Has life ever felt any better than this?

I call the bet. I had been picking off Jamie’s bluffs all night long but now he was tired of it. He yells, “I’ve got it this time, Houston!” and turns over two kings. Tobey almost did a spit take.

Yes, Jamie finally had a hand…but so did I. I snap called and turned over pocket aces. We ran the entire board three times and I scooped it all, winning nearly $500,000 for the night.

I gave Tobey a ride home after the game and I remember him saying with a devilish grin on his face, ‘If we keep this up we’ll eventually take this game for over a billion dollars!’ I replied saying, ‘Yeah…one day they’ll call it The Billion Dollar Hollywood Heist.’ We both laughed as my Mercedes CL 65AMG sped down Sunset Blvd.

If you think you know this story because you’ve read Molly’s book, or seen director Aaron Sorkin’s movie, think again. This is the real tale behind the richest, most outrageous and star-studded high-stakes poker sting in Hollywood History!

So there is my introduction. I hope your interest is peaked and look forward to taking you on a roller coaster thrill ride into the world of Tinseltown high-stakes poker and beyond in this column.

In the next column, I’m going to share a great story about the first time Ben Affleck showed up to play poker at Hollywood Park with myself, Amir Vahidi, Gabe Thaler, Antonio Esfandiari, and Huck Seed! Did Ben win? Did he go broke? And which of the aforementioned pros gave him one of the biggest poker lessons of his life that night? Find out next month!

Plus… I will also be revealing a classic card hustle that can empty your pockets faster than a gold digger in the men’s room at a retirement home! Learn what the hustle is, how the sharps do it, and how to avoid having it done to you.

Until then, good luck creating your own memorable stories at the tables and remember: Stay sharp… stay KardSharp!

Houston Curtis, founder of KardSharp.com and author of Billion Dollar Hollywood Heist has lived a successful double life as both a producer and card mechanic for nearly 30 years. His credits include executive producing gambling related TV shows such as The Ultimate Blackjack Tour on CBS, The Aruba Poker Classic on GSN and pioneering the poker instructional DVD genre with titles featuring poker champs Phil Hellmuth and Annie Duke. Barred for life from Las Vegas Golden Nugget for ‘excessive winning’ at blackjack, Houston is one of the world’s most successful card mechanics and sleight-of-hand artists of the modern era. Curtis, who rarely plays in tournaments, won a 2004 Legends of Poker no-limit hold’em championship event besting Scotty Nguyen heads-up at the final table before going on to co-found the elite Hollywood poker ring that inspired Aaron Sorkin’s Academy Award-nominated film Molly’s Game. Curtis resides in Phoenix, Arizona where in addition to running a production company and independent record label, he is also a private gaming/casino protection consultant to clients across the globe seeking insight into master level card cheating tactics via advanced sleight-of-hand technique. To reach Houston for a speaking engagement, consulting or production services send email to stacked@Kardsharp.com
First, I wish the best to all of you reading this, and hope that the impact of the pandemic has not gone beyond what you can deal with. The impact on poker is unimportant compared to all the other effects this is having, but please let’s not forget all our friends who work poker as a job, the dealers, floorstaff, administrative workers, custodians, cashiers, and all the others who work at our poker rooms, and who are currently without a job. As players, this has been an inconvenience. For them, it has interrupted their livelihood. I can’t wait until I can see all of them again, and play with all of you.

None of us can play live poker anymore. And most of us, at least in the U.S., do not have access to well regulated online poker. However, there has been a surge in real money private online games played on various apps and websites. These apps are technically play money games. The app or website does not handle money directly, if at all. Instead, as a player you are invited to join a private club that runs these play money games on the app, and you settle up in cash with the organizer of the games.

Many of these games consist entirely of players who know each other in the real world. I wish to provide some advice if you are now playing such games.

There are two main ways the money gets handled. Some of these games require that you deposit money up-front, before you can play, with the organizer. This is similar to how it works in the large, international online poker sites, such as PokerStars or Party Poker. You must pay in advance, depositing money on the site, and they hold it for you and let you play with that money. Whenever you wish, you can cash out all or some of your money, and it is sent to you. But if you want to play in the cash game that has a $100 minimum buyin, you must have $100 or more in your account.

Some of these private clubs work like this. However, many of them work on a credit model instead. You tell the organizer how many chips you want for a given game, and they put those chips on the table for you. They track your results, win or lose. At a given time, maybe once a week, they have all the players “settle up.” If you have lost over that week, you send that amount of money to the organizer, or they have you send it to you. But if you want to play in the cash game that has a $100 minimum buyin, you must have $100 or more in your account.

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another player who has won. If you are one of the winners, money gets sent to you.

My main advice is to be very careful if you are playing on a credit model. It is very easy to lose track of just how much you have lost. You keep texting the organizer to give you another $100, and then at the end of the week, you find out you lost much more than you realized. Just like buying stuff on a credit card, it is easy to lose track, and spend/lose more than you can easily afford. And that is the main point. Whether it is poker, some other form of gambling, or spending money on luxuries, you should never go beyond what you can easily afford. Going too far is a sign of addiction. If this happens to you, please seek professional help.

If you want to play in a game that uses the credit model, consider instead asking the organizer about pre-funding your play. If you can easily afford to lose $200 in a week, then transfer that much in advance. And then, if you lose that amount, tell the organizer that instead of giving you more chips, you wish to be cut off until you send in another advance payment. This way, you won’t accidentally go past your comfort point.

Also, remember, this is real money. Don’t play while also doing other things. Many of these apps work on mobile devices. But if you’re playing on your phone while also watching TV, or shopping at the grocery store, or whatever, you likely will play worse than if you were totally focused on the game. You will miss out on a lot of the information available to you, and will make more mistakes. If the results of this game matter to you at all, then only play when you can be fully focused on what you are doing, and playing your best possible game.

Most important of all, have fun!

This is a game; the entire point is to have fun. Even if you are playing for a living, if it’s not fun, you should quit. For a recreational player, find another hobby that is more fun. For a pro, quit and find a job that is more fulfilling. Focus on having fun first, and on playing your absolute best second. If you do that, it will likely work out well, and you will both have fun, and achieve your best result.

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**SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO GIVE UP**

By Jonathan Little

I was recently told about a hand by a recreational poker player that illustrates a costly mistake that many players make with their bluffs on a regular basis. Early in a $500 buy-in tournament with 30,000 effective stacks at 200-400 with a 400 big blind ante, a loose player raised to 1,000 from middle position and the hijack, cutoff, and button called. Our Hero looked down at J♣ 10♦ in the big blind. Calling is the only viable option in this situation. J♣ 10♦ flops amazingly well, so you don’t do anything to take away your potential to see the flop. If you three-bet, there is a chance that one of the opponents will four-bet, forcing you to fold, which would be a disaster.

Hero called. The flop came A♠ Q♣ 6♦, giving Hero a royal flush draw.

While there is often a bit of merit to leading with your draws that have a lot of equity but no showdown value, when the board contains two big cards, it is highly likely that at least one of the opponents has top pair or a better made hand that will not fold. When you lack fold equity with your draws, checking is better.

Hero checked, as did everyone else. The turn was the 3♠. The pot is 5,600.

Once the flop checks through, it is much more likely that no one has an ace, although some weak aces will occasionally check the flop. Now if Hero makes a substantial bet, he will be able to make his opponents fold most of their hands.

Notice that Hero would also like to bet large in this situation with his best made hands like A-6 and 3-3 for protection, given there are many potential draws available. A bet of 5,000 or so would be excellent. If Hero bets smaller, he will get called by weaker made hands such as a queen or six that may or may not fold to a river bet. It is much better to force those hands to fold immediately, and if they decide to make a loose call, Hero can then force them to fold with a substantial river bet.

Hero bet 3,000. The cutoff and button called. The river was the 6♠.

Had Hero bet larger on the turn, he would not need to fear his opponents having many combinations of rivered trips in their ranges, but since he used a medium-sized turn bet, it is somewhat likely that at least one of his opponents has either a slow played top pair or trips. If he was against only one opponent, he should make a river bluff, but against two opponents, it is way too likely one of the two opponents will call.

Hero bet 10,000 into the 14,600 pot. The cutoff folded and the button went all-in. Hero obviously folded.

While you should often go for a bluff with your busted draws that cannot win at the showdown, against multiple players who have the potential to have many effective nut hands in their range that will not fold to any bet, you must be disciplined and fold. Sometimes, you just have to give up.

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Jonathan Little is a two-time WPT champion with more than $6 million in tournament winnings. Each week, he posts an educational blog and podcast at JonathanLittlePoker.com, where you can get a FREE poker training video that details five things you must master if you want to win at tournament poker. You can also sign up for his FREE Excelling at No Limit Hold’em webinars at HoldemBook.com/signup.
Ghosts of Poker Past: Phil Ivey vs. Bill Chen

By Matt Matros

Trapped in our homes this spring, many of us have become more poker fan than poker player. But luckily, we fans are about to receive a much-needed gift straight from the Ghost of Poker Past.

In the summer of 2010, Dr. Bill Chen—math PhD, personal friend, and all-around genius (although he seems to lose his cash or his phone roughly every other day)—faced the great Phil Ivey heads-up for a bracelet in the $3k HORSE event at the World Series of Poker. Late in the match, the following hand came up during the limit hold’em round.

Bill raised from the small blind button and Phil called from the big blind. Phil led with a bet on the flop of A♠ 10♥ 2♥ and Bill called. Phil continued with a bet on the 9♥ turn, and then Bill raised. Phil called and checked the 7♥ river. Bill bet, Phil check-raised, and Bill folded. Action-packed hand, no? Don’t you wish you knew what they both had?

Well, now you can. All hole cards were magically revealed during Bill’s appearance on Jennifer Shahade’s The GRID podcast. You’re about to get a glimpse into the ten-year-old strategies of two of the top limit hold’em players at the time!

Before I listened to the podcast, I thought I’d do an analysis the usual way—without knowing the hands. Here’s what I came up with.

Preflop, Bill will be raising his button with around 90 percent of hands, and Phil will be defending his big blind with at least that many. About all we can say so far is that Bill cannot have the very worst starting hands (7-2 offsuit, 9-3 offsuit, etc.), and that Phil is unlikely to hold a premium hand. It was possible that Adams had flopped a set, but Mateos seemingly decided that enough of his opponent’s range would consist of draws that he opted to make the call to create the largest pot of the tournament thus far. Mateos lost a few crucial all-ins during five-handed action to finish in fifth place for $800,000. 

ANALYSIS

This hand features a blind-on-blind clash between two of the most successful young tournament players in the world. It folded to three-time World Series of Poker bracelet winner Adrian Mateos in the small blind and he made a sneaky flat call with pocket queens. Fellow bracelet winner Tim Adams looked down at K-10 suited and he elected to attack Mateos’ limp with a raise to four times the big blind. Mateos limp-raised to 410,000 with his pocket pair. With 560,000 already in the pot, Adams called 290,000 more with his suited broadway cards and flopped the second-nut flush draw. Mateos made a continuation bet of roughly one-third the size of the pot, betting 275,000 into 850,000. Adams decided to play his overcards and flush draw for maximum fold equity and moved all-in. Mateos quickly called off his remaining 1,340,000. Adams decided to play his overcards and flush draw for maximum fold equity and moved all-in. Mateos quickly called off his remaining 1,340,000. The young Spanish star likely discounted Adams’ chances of holding A-A or K-K given that he hadn’t four-bet preflop. While it was possible that Adams had flopped a set, Mateos seemingly decided that enough of his opponent’s range would consist of draws that he decided to make the call to create the largest pot of the tournament thus far. Mateos had eleven outs, but none of them materialized and the massive pot of more than 3.5 million in chips was pushed towards Mateos. Despite this big setback, Adams was able to ultimately comeback to win this event for his second Super High Roller Bowl title, having taken down the SHRB Australia earlier this year. Mateos lost a few crucial all-ins during five-handed action to finish in fifth place for $800,000.
hand like a big pair or a big ace.

Phil's lead on the $\spadesuit A \heartsuit 10 \clubsuit 2 \spadesuit$ gives a hint of just how ahead of his time Mr. Ivey was. Limit players in 2010 (and indeed, most players in the $40-$80 games I play in today) were extremely reluctant to lead out from the big blind into a raiser, especially on an ace-high board. We now know from seeing solver solutions that this play should be a fairly normal part of the arsenal, but in 2010 this was the bet of a confident, world-class player bucking “standard” lines. That said, it’s hard to narrow Phil’s range very much based on this bet. He’s probably weighted toward weak aces, flush draws, and other one-pair hands, but he could have just about anything with at least some frequency.

Bill’s call tells us nothing except that he doesn’t have total trash. Bill would likely slowplay his monsters here, as I know he subscribes to the (very solid) idea that it’s good to disguise information in the first two betting rounds before the bets double in a Limit game. Bill could have anything from queen-high to a set, and he could have any backdoor flush draw or gunshot straight draw or better draw.

The turn is where it gets interesting, and where we can finally start to narrow the ranges. Phil continues with another bet when the $9 \spadesuit$ falls, which means we can pretty much rule out his total bluffs. But he can probably still have any gunshot, open-ender, flush draw, or any of the made hands he led the flop with.

When Bill raises, suddenly his range goes from very wide to quite narrow. His minimum value hand is probably a strong ace—say A-Q— or better. With any worse one pair hands or hands with showdown value like king-high, Bill probably just calls. Any open-ender or flush draw could potentially be in his semibluff range (note that $J \clubsuit 8 \spadesuit$, a hand with which Bill would’ve peeled the flop, is now an open-ender, as is Q-J).

Phil calls the raise, which probably means we can rule out the very strongest hands from his range, as top two pair or better would like to three-bet for value on this draw-heavy board. How stubborn will Phil get with his calls? He is probably hanging on to almost any pair getting 6-1 on his money, but he can safely fold his weakest draws like the 54 or 43 gutshots. If he did bet the turn with any low pocket pairs, he can probably fold those as well, since they often have only two outs.

The $7 \spadesuit$ on the river completes the flush draw, and also completes two straight draws—8-6 (which is an unlikely holding for either player) and J8, which either player can plausibly have. After Phil checks, Bill will likely show down with his one pair hands, and maybe even with his weakest two pair hands on such a scary river. With a good two pair or better, though, he’ll be compelled to bet for value. And since all his flush draws have now converted to value bets, he can probably go ahead and bluff with any busted straight draws in his range, but the only one he could really have is Q-J. And yet, Bill did say on Twitter recently (with no memory of what he had, by the way!—we’re relying on his friend Matt Hawrilenko to remember Bill’s cards for us), that “with Q-J I may not bluff vs Ivey, just show down. That’s why it’s a little inconsistent.”

Indeed, if Bill would show down Q-J here, then it’s even harder to find his bluffs, which means that when Ivey check-raises the river and Bill folds, Bill is folding a value hand! It’s rare in limit hold’em that you bet for value and then fold to a raise, but it’s definitely correct to have this plan occasionally. Did Bill really make a thin value bet with something like A-Q, only to fold it to Ivey’s raise? It seems hard to believe, knowing how much Bill hates folding.

Phil has some obvious value hands in his raising range (namely flushes and straights), which means he can and should have some bluffs to go with them. Like Bill, Phil’s most likely bluffing hand is Q-J, but it’s at least possible to imagine him also holding Q-8 with some small frequency, stubbornly calling the turn with what he hopes are seven outs.

Having heard a rumor that the results were going to be “fun”, I took the risk of looking very silly and made a guess as to what they both had. Bill: Q-J, Phil: Q-8. I then listened to the podcast, and it turns out I was half right.

Bill did indeed have queen-jack, even if he wasn’t sure, ten years later, whether he would’ve played it that way. But Bill wasn’t the only one bluffing in the hand. Phil had Q-J too.

Badugi: Three-Card Badugis

By Kevin Haney

Three-card badugis, otherwise known as tri hands, are the bread and butter hands of badugi. It is very rare to be dealt a strong badugi, thus the majority of the profit to be made in badugi come from strong three-card badugis such as $A \spadesuit 3 \diamondsuit 4 \spadesuit$. These hands make very strong badugis offering implied odds and also have the ability to take down pots without improvement.

Weaker tri holdings such as $2 \heartsuit \spadesuit 8 \spadesuit$ also have value, perhaps more than many players realize. It can make a smooth eight badugi right away and the times your opponent started with a badugi this holding is almost certainly best and should be raised for value. In addition to making a badugi right away there are several other improving cards (the 4\spadesuit, 5\spadesuit, 6\spadesuit, and 7\spadesuit) that will “reduce your incomplete,” possibly giving you the best hand.

There is often a debate amongst badugi players who don’t consider the $2 \clubsuit 3 \heartsuit 5 \spadesuit$ to be a one-card draw (D1). They feel it is optimal to initially draw two (D2) to the $2 \spadesuit 3 \spadesuit$ in order to improve their odds of making a strong three-card holding.

The A28 versus A2 Debate

Suppose we are dealt $A \spadesuit 2 \heartsuit 8 \spadesuit$, is it best to play this holding as a D1 or a D2? To help guide us in our decision making we should compare the improvement distributions on the first draw and see if we can draw any conclusions:
Keeping the A28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probabilities</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
<th>Probabilities</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Badugi</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Badugi</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Badugi</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Badugi</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Badugi</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Badugi</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Badugi</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Badugi</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q Badugi</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K Badugi</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Tri</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Tri</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Tri</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Tri</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Tri</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Tri</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.4%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drawing to A2

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2020 Super High Roller Bowl Russia
$250,000 No-Limit Hold'em High Roller

Mikita Badziakouski 3,000,000 chips
Christoph Vogelsang 2,100,000 chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 75.0% After Flop: 66.0% After Turn: 93.0%

PREFLOP

With four players remaining and blinds of 30,000-60,000 with a 60,000 big blind ante, Mikita Badziakouski raised to 125,000 from under the gun. Christoph Vogelsang called from the big blind.

FLOP

Vogelsang checked.
Badziakouski bet 100,000.
Vogelsang called.

TURN

Vogelsang checked.
Badziakouski bet 360,000.
Vogelsang called.

RIVER

Vogelsang bet 825,000.
Badziakouski folded.

ANALYSIS

In this hand Christoph Vogelsang demonstrated his ability to adjust to an evolving board texture, making a major shift in approach on the river that earns him a key pot with four players remaining. Chip leader Mikita Badziakouski was dealt A-K off suit under the gun and opened for just over a min-raise. Christoph Vogelsang, who was essentially tied for the short stack with around 35 big blinds, picked up K-6 off suit and defended his big blind. Both players fl opped top pair, with Badziakouski having the far superior kicker. Vogelsang check-called the fl opp, seemingly adopting a bluff-catch strategy to the hand. Badziakouski, on the other hand, seemed to be willing to bet his hand for value on multiple streets with the additional confidence of having the best kicker available to accompany his pair of kings. The turn made a backdoor fl ush draw possible and completed a gutshot. Vogelsang check-called again and the 10 completed the board, giving a straight to any player with a jack in their hand. Vogelsang had previously seemed content to just make it to showdown with his top pair, controlling the size of the pot by check-calling while also allowing Badziakouski to continue with the bluffs in his range. With so many more hand combinations now making a straight on the river, Vogelsang might have now felt that his hand was no longer strong enough to use as a bluff catcher. He opted to turn his hand into a bluff, perhaps thinking that his perceived range as the big-blind defender was more likely to include hands like J-9 or K-J than Badziakouski’s, given prior action. He bet 825,000 into the pot of 1,260,000 and Badziakouski went into the tank before folding top pair.

With four players remaining and blinds of 30,000-60,000 with a 60,000 big blind ante, Mikita Badziakouski raised to 125,000 from under the gun. Christoph Vogelsang called from the big blind.

NOTE: WINNING PERCENTAGES DO NOT INCLUDE TIES. ODDS PROVIDED BY CARDPLAYER.COM/POKER-TOOLS/ODDS-CALCULATOR/Texas-Holdem
The most important takeaways appear to be the following:

When drawing to the A♣ 2♥ we will only improve to an eight tri or better around 50 percent of the time. This has implications regarding realization of equity as we may not be able to profitably continue on in the hand unimproved.

Comparing the distribution of A♣ 2♥ 8♠ against A♣ 2♥ it appears that we have roughly the same probability of making a four high tri or better. With A♣ 2♥ 8♠ there is an approximate 25 percent chance of making an A♣ 2♥ 4♣ (or better) while for A♣ 2♥ it is only a smidge higher at 26 percent.

However, given that we make an A-2-4 or better the A♣ 2♥ 8♠ will make a badugi more than twice as often and overall has a stronger distribution.

Drawing to the A♣ 2♥ allows us a greater chance to reduce to five, six, or seven high tris which is something to consider, however, this improvement may not put you in the lead.

It’s reasonably close, but in position against an opponent that is either a D1 or a D2, it appears better to draw to the A♣ 2♥ 8♠. We will more often realize our equity and in general have a stronger range when improving.

If we had gotten reraised and our opponent stood pat, then drawing one is clearly the better option. It is very rare for our opponent to have a premium badugi and we fare much better as a D1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Probability</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A♣ 2♥ 8♠ (41%)</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A♣ 2♥ 8♠ (25%)</td>
<td>0.95%</td>
<td>1.28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A♣ 2♥ 8♠ (2%)</td>
<td>1.78%</td>
<td>3.06%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A♣ 2♥ 8♠ (1%)</td>
<td>2.79%</td>
<td>5.85%</td>
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<td>A♣ 2♥ 8♠ (1%)</td>
<td>3.92%</td>
<td>9.77%</td>
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<td>A♣ 2♥ 8♠ (1%)</td>
<td>5.12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A♣ 2♥ 8♠ (1%)</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>28.72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A♣ 2♥ 8♠ (1%)</td>
<td>8.58%</td>
<td>37.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A♣ 2♥ 8♠ (1%)</td>
<td>9.51%</td>
<td>46.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A♣ 2♥ 8♠ (1%)</td>
<td>10.24%</td>
<td>57.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A seven tri or better is usually playable from any position at the table. Some players have advocated that a rougher seven like 4♣ 6♥ 7♠ should be folded from early position in six-handed game; however, if we did fold hands such as these we would either be playing too few hands from upfront or we would be filling the void with holdings that will often perform worse in a variety of situations.

For example, if we open and get reraised we would much rather have the 4♣ 6♥ 7♠ instead of either Q♥ 10♠ 8♠ 2♠ or A♣ 2♠. Holding the latter two hands we are in terrible shape against a pat hand such as 10♥ 9♠ 8♠ 4♠. The 4♣ 6♥ 7♠ is also an underdog to that holding; however, it has around 39 percent equity in addition to mostly implied odds. Q♥ 10♠ 8♠ 2♠ is drawing dead (unless broken) while A♣ 2♠ only has 21 percent equity and must improve early on the hand in order to realize it.

Against A♣ 3♠ 5♠ a pat Q♥ 10♠ 8♠ 2♠ has around 58 percent equity but as discussed in an earlier issue this situation has definite reverse implied odds. A♣ 2♠ has approximately 33 percent equity but generally needs to improve to call the turns. While this is also not a great development for 4♣ 6♥ 7♠ it does have a decent amount of equity (35 percent) and can make a strong badugi quickly which will result in a profitable check-raise.

Opening with 4♣ 6♥ 7♠ is somewhat akin to opening a hand A♣ 10♥ from UTG in six-max limit hold’em. Running into better hands happens in every game; however, when compared with badugi the situation is probably worse in hold’em. When running into dominating holdings such as A♠ J♠ or Q♠ Q♠ we usually have less than 30 percent equity and more than likely reverse implied odds due to the times we are “lucky” to pair and it’s no good.

Select three card eights are also playable from the first two positions, however, with these holdings it is very important that the first two cards are very smooth. We can play a hand such as 2♥ 3♥ 8♠ but should muck 2♥ 7♥ 8♠. The ability to reduce is very important; for example, against 3♠ 5♥ 6♠ the 2♥ 3♥ 8♠ has approximately 42 percent equity while 2♥ 7♥ 8♠ only has around 37 percent. Only from the cutoff position and later should we begin to open the rough eights.

On the button we can play rough nine high tris, for example if we have 5♥ 7♣ 9♣ we can bring it in for raise and see what happens in the hand. Plan A is to win the blinds uncontested; Plan B is to make a badugi on the first draw; and Plan C with this particularly bad draw would often entail turning it into a “snow.”

Snowing is the act of staying pat with a busted draw and betting the hand through in the hopes that the villain folds. There will be much more discussion on snowing in future articles, however, the most important principle is that we should turn only the very worst of our draws into these bluffs.

If instead we have a holding such as 2♥ 3♠ 9♣ on the button our plan should be to open the pot and almost always play it as a two card draw. The one exception would be the times we get reraised and our opponent is pat. In this situation our opponent will largely be playing his entire badugi range thus we should draw to the nine. In the next issue we will have a lot more to say on the topic of playing two-card draws. ♠
MOST WORLD SERIES OF POKER CIRCUIT RINGS WON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player(s)</th>
<th>WSOP Bracelets Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maurice Hawkins</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentin Vornicu, Joshua Reichard</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ari Engel, Daniel Lowery, Robert Hankins,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Trudeau Jr., Alexandru Masek, Martin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
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<td>Kyle Cartwright, Chris Reslock, Sean Yu,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Lech</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Joshua Turner, Vincent Moscati, Cory Waaland,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andrew Robinson</td>
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<td>Roland Israelshvili, John Holley, Blake</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whittington, Maxwell Young, Mark Smith,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve Foutty, Nicholas Verderamo</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Matt Stout, Ray Henson, Martin Kabrel, Loni</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harwood, Mike Leah, Arkadiy Tsinis, Blair</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hinkle, Scott Stweart, Kurt Jewell, Caufman</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Talley, Cody Pack, Kevin McColgan, Mark Fink</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brandon Fish, David Larson, Chris Leong,</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Austin Apicella</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Matt Stout won two events at the World Series of Poker Online Super Circuit, which ran from March 14-31 on WSOP.com. Playing under the screen name ‘RubberFist’, Stout first topped a field of 941 total entries to win $43,286 in a $215 buy-in no-limit hold’em event. Nine days later he emerged victorious in the $500 buy-in ‘Big $500’ no-limit hold’em tournament, outlasting a field of 531 entries to earn another $63,234 and his second WSOPC gold ring of the series.

The win gave Stout the fifth ring of his career, with four out of five coming in online events. His lone live circuit win came all the way back in 2008, when he took down a $500 buy-in event at the WSOPC Caesars Atlantic City series.

Stout is now one of only 41 players to ever win five or more gold rings on the Circuit. With his two titles and four more cashes earned during this latest online festival, Stout secured the ‘Casino Champion’ title. He cashed for $122,389 during the series.

CAREER TOURNAMENT EARNINGS FOR PLAYERS 40 AND OLDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Player (Age)</th>
<th>Career Live Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Daniel Negreanu (45)</td>
<td>$40.9 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Erik Seidel (60)</td>
<td>$37.8 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Phil Ivey (43)</td>
<td>$29.7 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Cary Katz (50)</td>
<td>$28.4 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Antonio Esfandiari (41)</td>
<td>$27.3 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>John Juanda (48)</td>
<td>$24.8 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Phil Hellmuth (55)</td>
<td>$22.8 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Paul Phua (56)</td>
<td>$19.5 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>Richard Yong (62)</td>
<td>$14.3 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>J.C. Tran (43)</td>
<td>$13.1 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Card Player’s 2019 poll of 61 of the best players in the game, the majority of respondents said that 28-31 was the peak performance age for poker players. This seems to be borne out by the data, as seven of the top ten highest earning tournament players in history are younger than 35 years old. That being said, there are still plenty of players 40 or older who are competing at the highest levels. This leaderboard gives a look at the top ten players, in terms of earnings, who are at least 40 years old. There are seven such players with more than $20 million in career cashes on their resume, led by 45-year old Daniel Negreanu with more than $40.9 million. While these players may have had more time to accumulate earnings than some of the younger guard, that doesn’t mean they’re resting on their laurels. Each and every player in this top ten has secured at least a five-figure tournament score in the past year, with most recording six-figure scores in that time span.

WSOP BRACELETS WON (BY COUNTRY)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Bracelets Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>1,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Russian Federation, Israel</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>Spain, Italy</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Denmark, Greece</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The United States of America certainly has home court advantage when it comes to the World Series of Poker. The largest and richest poker festival in the world is held on American soil and has been since its inception more than 50 years ago. With that being said, the USA has been an absolute powerhouse at the WSOP. American players have won more than four times as many bracelets as those won by players from all of the other countries inside the top 10 combined. In fact, the top four American players, in regards to bracelets won, Phil Hellmuth (15 bracelets), Phil Ivey (10 bracelets), Johnny Chan (10 bracelets) and Doyle Brunson (10 bracelets), would beat out all but two other countries on their own. Canadian players have the next most successful group when it comes to securing the gold at the series, having won 62 bracelets over the decades. The United Kingdom is the only other country with more than 50 bracelets won.
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