IS JOE MCKEEHEN POKER’S BEST MODERN WSOP MAIN EVENT CHAMPION?

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## Event Schedule

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<th>Day</th>
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CBS SPORTS ANNOUNCED AS THE NEW TELEVISION HOME OF THE WORLD SERIES OF POKER

By Erik Fast

The world’s largest poker series will no longer be broadcast on ‘the worldwide leader in sports.’

The World Series of Poker announced that CBS Sports will be its new television partner for the immediate future. The multi-year agreement reached between the network and PokerGO begins with this year’s 2021 WSOP.

CBS will replace ESPN as the official television broadcasting partner for the series, bringing an end to 19 consecutive years of the WSOP main event broadcast over the ESPN airwaves. CBS is set to air 15 hours of WSOP main event coverage and 36 additional hours from 18 different gold bracelet events this year. WSOP coverage is also expected to be available on ViacomCBS’s Paramount+ streaming platform.

"CBS Sports has long been a pioneer in covering a broad range of championship sports,” said WSOP Executive Director Ty Stewart. "We couldn’t be more excited to see increased television coverage of the WSOP in the coming years and benefit from their growing media platforms.”

CBS Sports was the first TV network to show the WSOP main event, with its CBS Sports Spectacular program offering coverage during the 1970s. It also worked with PokerGo in recent years, broadcasting some of their exclusive events such as the Super High Roller Bowl, the Poker Masters, and select bracelet events from the 2019 WSOP.

"Following our past success with PokerGO, we are excited to expand our relationship with the highest-profile and richest event in competitive tournament poker featuring the best players in the world,” said Dan Weinberg, CBS Sports Executive Vice President of Programming. "This deal fits perfectly in our strategy to combine best-in-class events with our CBS Sports brand.”

More information about the broadcast schedule is expected after the WSOP’s full schedule is announced. The press release did not include any information about how this move to CBS might impact the commentary team for the WSOP moving forward, however Lon McEachern assured fans that the usual duo of himself and Norman Chad would return.

"Regarding the WSOP on CBS Sports, as far as I know, the announcer team is intact,” McEachern wrote on Twitter.

McEachern has been covering the WSOP since 2002, when he worked alongside Gabe Kaplan. Chad replaced Kaplan the following year for Chris Moneymaker’s historic main event win, coverage of which helped to spark the poker boom. In 2011, Kara Scott was added as a sideline reporter.

Chad was sidelined for last year’s broadcast, still recovering from the effects of contracting coronavirus. He was replaced by Jamie Kerstetter and Jeff Platt. The four hours of coverage, which aired on Sunday, Feb. 28, focused on the hybrid live and online main event won by Argentina’s Damian Salas for a total of $2,550,969.

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KHLOE KARDASHIAN GETS A POKER LESSON FROM 15-TIME BRACELET WINNER PHIL HELLMUTH
By Card Player News Team

Poker legend and 15-time World Series of Poker bracelet winner Phil Hellmuth gave some poker knowledge to a pair of Hollywood celebrities recently.

The Poker Hall of Famer tweeted photos of himself with stars of Keeping Up With The Kardashians, Khloe Kardashian and Scott Disick, at a poker table with the caption “poker lesson.”

Hellmuth is no stranger to playing poker with celebrities. He is playfully criticized by some of his high-stakes peers for his name-dropping habits. In fact, just a few hours after his tweet featuring some of the Kardashian family, Hellmuth posted a photo with famous music producer Benny Blanco. In the tweet, Hellmuth said Blanco’s brother plays in his online home game. “The Wisconsin native has also emceed several high-profile charity poker events. As recently as 2018, Hellmuth hosted the City of Hope charity tournament in Los Angeles. The $5,000 buy-in featured nearly the entire Kardashian family, as well as Los Angeles Lakers Kyle Kuzma, fighter Tito Ortiz, and actors Kevin Pollak and David Arquette. He’s also played with several Silicon Valley CEOs, as well as various members of the Golden State Warriors NBA organization. His book Play Poker Like The Pros even includes a review from Academy Award winner and Rounders star Matt Damon, who said, “Hellmuth gave me the best poker lesson I’ve ever received.”

Hellmuth is fresh off a victory over Daniel Negreanu in their high-stakes heads-up match on PokerGO’s High Stakes Duel. Dating back to his three-match sweep of Antonio Esfandiari, Hellmuth is on a four-match winning streak in heads-up battles. The 56-year-old will have to play Negreanu at least twice more with doubled stakes each time before the challenge is complete.

NEW LAS VEGAS STRIP CASINO TO OPEN JUNE 24
By Steve Schult

A brand-new casino on the Las Vegas Strip will be unveiled this summer as Resorts World Las Vegas has announced that it will officially open its doors to the public on June 24. It is one of the biggest casino projects in the history of the Strip. The resort will have 3,500 rooms in its three Hilton-branded hotel towers, more than 40 restaurants and eateries, retail shops, a 117,000-square-foot casino, 250,000 square feet of meeting space, seven swimming pools, and a 5,000-person capacity theater.

Perhaps the most important amenity to our readers, the casino will also have a poker room.

The $4.3 billion resort began construction in May 2015 on the north end of the Strip, across the street from Wynn and Encore Las Vegas. At the end of 2018, as one of the property’s towers was beginning to take shape, Wynn Resorts sued the Genting Group-owned casino for copyright infringement, claiming that the architecture of the building was too similar to its own Las Vegas casinos.

“The architectural design embodied in defendant’s Resorts World Las Vegas hotel and casino is substantially similar to plaintiff’s registered copyrighted architectural work, and therefore defendant is violating plaintiff’s copyrights in addition to plaintiff’s registered and common law trade dress,” stated the lawsuit.

The lawsuit was settled a month later when Genting Group agreed to change several aspects of the building’s appearance.

Resorts World will open at the same location as the former Stardust Casino, an iconic Las Vegas casino that closed in 2006 and was imploded in 2007. Boyd Gaming, owner of the Stardust, sold the land to the Malaysian gaming giant in 2013 for $350 million.

While there have been several re-brandings on the Las Vegas Strip, such as the Imperial Palace turning into the LINQ in 2014, Resorts World Las Vegas will be the first new ground-up casino in the city since the Cosmopolitan opened in 2010. The new casino is opening shortly after Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak stated that he expects casinos to be operating at 100% capacity for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in the U.S.
Three States Legalize Or Expand Sports Betting Options

By Steve Schult

Arizona and Wyoming legalized sports betting in April, while New York approved mobile and online betting.

In New York, sports betting was already legal, but only at its upstate casinos. Legislators began pushing Gov. Andrew Cuomo to allow for online betting towards the end of 2020, but it appeared that he wouldn't budge.

In January, Cuomo changed his tune and said that he would include online betting in his budget. However, there was a lack of communication between the governor and lawmakers as the deadline approached, leaving some confusion as to whether it would actually be included.

The only question remaining is how the government will shape the market. Several lawmakers want to allow private companies to apply for a license, pay taxes, and run their own sportsbooks, while Cuomo wants to give the state lottery a monopoly on the industry, saying that the state “has a different model for sports betting.”

Meanwhile, Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey both signed legislation that legalized sports betting in their respective states. They became the second and third states to legalize the betting activity in 2021 after South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem signed a bill earlier this year, approving the activity through a ballot referendum last November.

Wyoming’s legislation gave the state an online-only framework. The Cowboy State joins Tennessee as the only other exclusively online sports betting market in the country.

The bill that Ducey signed in Arizona did slightly more than legalize sports betting. It also allowed gambling outside of tribal entities for the first time in state history, and gives the tribes an opportunity to renegotiate gaming compacts with the state, which will lead to expanded offerings like craps and roulette in those casinos.

As far as the sports betting part of the legislation, the bill will award 10 sports betting licenses to Arizona’s professional sports franchises and other major athletic operators like NASCAR and the PGA tour. Those entities will be allowed to offer sports betting both on-site and on a mobile or online platform.

The state will also award another 10 licenses to the tribes, who will be allowed to offer sports betting as well. It also created the regulatory framework for fantasy sports and a new state lottery-operated Keno game.

LAS VEGAS SANDS CORP. RUNS EXPANDED GAMBLING ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN IN TEXAS

By Steve Schult

The Las Vegas Sands Corp. is taking its lobbying efforts for expanded gambling in Texas to the next level.

According to a report from The Texas Tribune, the company is “launching a multimillion-dollar advertising blitz” to build support for its mission to bring casinos to the Lone Star State. The blitz includes radio and television ads that tell its listeners that the state is losing out on billions of dollars as Texans head to neighboring states with more favorable gambling laws to spend their money.

The ads highlight legislation currently circulating through the legislature that is backed by the gaming company. The bill would allow the issue to be voted on by the citizens of the state through a ballot initiative this November.

If passed at the ballot box, it would create an amendment to the state constitution that would overturn the state’s gambling ban. The proposal, HJR 133, was filed last month by Republican Rep. John Kuempel. A similar version of the bill, SJR 49, was submitted in the Senate by Democratic Sen. Carol Alvarado.

The legislation would allow the state to award four casino licenses for companies to build four “destination resorts” in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and Austin. Given the efforts put forth by Sands, which started last November when the company hired eight lobbyists in Austin, its likely they would be one of the front runners to be one of the licensees.

The company sold both of its Las Vegas Strip properties at the start of March for $6.25 billion, which currently leaves it with a bunch of excess cash and without an American casino.

It appears the company, which now only has properties in Macau and Singapore, will be using the cash from the Las Vegas sale to get a casino in Texas. A representative from Sands said in March that the company would be focusing its efforts on the Dallas market.

Despite bipartisan support, it won’t be an easy path to get the bills through the legislature. Both are still pending and several prominent figures are staunchly against bringing gambling to the state. In February, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said that gambling bills “won’t see the light of day” during the current legislative session.
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**QING LIU EXTENDS HIS LEAD WITH THIRD TITLE OF 2021**

Qing Liu has been the hottest player on the live tournament circuit in 2021. He has already made nine final tables in events that qualify for the 2021 Card Player Player of the Year race through the middle of April, cashing for $1,089,449 and winning three titles in the process.

The Venetian Poker Room has become Liu’s unofficial home field, as 10 of his 12 live tournament cashes made so far in 2021 have taken place at the venue. Over $986,000 of his earnings this year have come from events held at Venetian.

Liu’s most recent victory came in the $400 buy-in ‘MonsterStack’ no-limit hold’em event at the Venetian DeepStack Extravaganza II series. He outlasted a field of 827 total entries in the tournament to secure the trophy and the top payout of $51,442. He also earned 365 POY points as the champion, further extending his lead in the 2021 POY race standings.

All three of Liu’s titles this year have come at The Venetian, including a victory in a $600 buy-in ‘UltimateStack’ no-limit hold’em event during the DeepStack Extravaganza II back in February for $110,890 and his run to the title in the World Poker Tour Venetian $5,000 buy-in main event in March. Liu outlasted a massive field of 937 entries in that event, the largest in WPT history at the price point, to earn $752,880 and 1,824 POY points. With 3,636 total points, Liu now sits 1,464 ahead of the nearest competitor, Sung Joo Hyun, who has 2,172 points.
Tuan Mai Secures Two Wins to Climb into Fourth Place

Tuan Mai joins Qing Liu as the only two players to make nine POY-qualified final tables so far in 2021. He had made six final tables through the first two months of the year, and then added two more big scores in March. First, he finished as the runner-up in a $1,100 buy-in no-limit hold’em ‘DoubleStack’ event at the Venetian DeepStack Showdown, navigating his way through a field of 336 entries to earn $55,066 and 400 POY points.

Just 10 days later he came out on top of a 507-entry field in the $400 buy-in no-limit hold’em event during the DeepStack Extravaganza II to add another $37,315 and 336 points to his totals. That was his first title of the year, and he didn’t have to wait long to secure his second. In early April, Mai overcame a field of 130 entries in a $600 buy-in ‘MonsterStack’ event at the same series, earning an additional $13,048 and 132 POY points.

The California-based poker pro now sits in fourth place in the standings, with 1,668 points and $197,261 in cashes so far.

Adam Walton Joins the Top 20

The top 20 on the POY leaderboard welcomed a new member in April. Adam Walton surged up the standings and into 18th place as the result of a big win during the Venetian DeepStack Extravaganza II series.

Walton beat out a sizable field of 813 entries in the $1,100 ‘UltimateStack’ no-limit hold’em event that wrapped up on April 4, after striking a deal with four players remaining that saw him earn the largest payday and the title.

Walton was also awarded a hefty bounty of 912 POY points for the win. This was his fourth POY-qualified final table of the year. With 1,083 points and $120,983 in year-to-date earnings, Walton has joined a tightly-packed bunch of players who are in contention in this year’s race.

Teun Mulder and Joao Vieira Earn Spring Championship of Online Poker High Roller Titles

The 2021 PokerStars Spring Championship of Online Poker (SCOOP) series featured over 300 events held during the month of April. Among the early tournaments on the schedule were a pair of high stakes events that were won by Teun Mulder and Joao Vieira.

Teun ‘tinnoemulder’ Mulder defeated a field 257 entries in the $5,200 buy-in no-limit hold’em high roller event to earn $247,089 and his second SCOOP title. He earned his first last year by taking down the $10,300 no-limit hold’em progressive knockout (PKO) high roller. The Dutch poker pro has made a number of deep runs in huge online events in recent years, including a pair of seven-figure scores in September of 2020 for podium finishes in the World Poker Tour World Online Championships main event and the World Championship of Online Poker main event.

Joao ‘Naza114’ Vieira emerged victorious in the SCOOP $25,000 buy-in no-limit hold’em high roller event, securing the fifth SCOOP title of his career and the top prize of $469,987. The World Series of Poker bracelet winner from Portugal outlasted a field of 71 entries in the event, including a final table stacked with many of the best live and online high stakes tournament players in the world, including Mikita Badziakouski (2nd - $352,019), 2020 WSOP Online high roller winner Christian Rudolph (3rd - $263,662) and two-time bracelet winner Michael Addamo (4th - $197,483).

The win capped off a successful stretch for Vieira that saw him take over the top spot on the PocketFives.com all-time money list, which tracks online tournament results. He now has more than $22.9 million in recorded cashes to his name, which accounts for a narrow lead over Niklas “lena900’ Astedt. Sami ‘LarzLuzak’ Kelopuro has since surged into the no. 3 spot with a flurry of high-stakes results.
HEAD GAMES

Withstanding The Variance Of Tournament Poker

By Craig Tapscott

The Pros: Landon Tice, Shannon Shorr, and Niall Farrell

Craig Tapscott: Variance and downswings will hit every poker player at one time or another. Can you please share a few times you have crashed and burned and how you recovered to become a better player?

Landon Tice: The first time I had a substantial downswing was about three months in, playing $1-$2 online. I was breaking even in dollars, but up around 30 buy-ins in EV (Expected Value). That was a pretty brutal experience, when I didn’t necessarily have anything to show for my work other than a yellow EV line that was increasing, while my bottom line stayed the same.

I’m pretty close with poker vlogger Joey Ingram. I called him to talk about it, just because it was such a new feeling. I had realized that someone could actually make some decent money playing those stakes. He just told me not to worry about it too much and just grind through it and everything would work itself out. I trusted his advice wholeheartedly, and just kept playing and learning. This was about 18 months ago now, but I still remember the feelings of despair like it was yesterday. Now, downswings still happen of course, but the dollar amount is much, much different than it was back then. Poker just sort of does that to you when you move up in stakes, where the one below it just gets to a point of being numb, and the stake above becomes the new normal.

The first time I went through a near six-figure downswing was when I started playing higher stakes live and online. I was playing $20-$40 at the Bellagio in Las Vegas, and $25-$50 and $50-$100 online. That’s when I first experienced a significant downswing in terms of money. I felt like I was playing better than I ever had been at the time, through studying a lot and working on my game. But sometimes the deck has other ideas, and I just couldn’t win an all-in at those stakes to save my life for about a month straight. That was definitely frustrating.

I just grinded some MTTs and studied every day to give myself the best chance of recovering, and I ended up winning a lot of MTTs online and recovered those dollars in a quick fashion. I remember thinking it was going to take me a year to get out of the hole I was in. But I kept putting one foot in front of the other and continued to learn and improve, and I was out of it in 45 days. Shortly after getting out of that hole, I ended up winning the $1,100 buy-in MSPT main event at Venetian for $201,000.

Shannon Shorr: There have been multiple periods in my career of playing tournaments where I’ve felt like I couldn’t get any footing and watched in a state of panic as my net worth plummeted. A huge key is making sure one is playing within his or her bankroll and to accept the reality of how much variance is involved in playing MTTs. I’ve found that during
those downswings in the past, I had a difficult time separating my identity as a person from my poker results, and often found that I beat myself up badly. At times I found myself with tunnel vision and in a mindset that I had to “get out” of a downswing. I’ve had a decade-long meditation practice, regular fitness training, and a healthy eating routine for some time now. And I have found all of that to be super helpful for long-term sustainability in this tough business.

Niall Farrell: When I’m downswinging, I like to try and take a step back and get another few pairs of eyes on my game. I want to make sure that negative variance isn’t affecting how I play. It’s super easy and very human for a run of bad luck to start to change your play for the worse. For instance, you don’t pull the trigger on a good bluff because you’ve been running into it for weeks, you don’t make a good bluff because you’ve been running into it for weeks, you don’t pull the trigger on a good bluff because you’ve been running into it for weeks, you don’t pull the trigger on a good bluff because you’ve been running into it for weeks, you don’t pull the trigger on a good bluff because you’ve been running into it for weeks, you don’t pull the trigger on a good bluff because you’ve been running into it for weeks.

To start, I’ll admit that I’m definitely an extremely emotional person when it comes to poker. I care about the game a lot. It’s what I gave up college and other conventional jobs for. I really understand having attachment and pain when results don’t go my way, and still do to this day.

I think that at the start of my poker career (which includes now), I still have the same, if not greater drive to reach my best possible self. I still really love clocking in the hours, going through the ups and downs that poker has to offer, and making the most of every day. I have a bunch of very successful friends who’ve been around for decades now. They tell me all the time that as I get older, my relationship with poker is going to change in some ways. It takes being in the game longer and going through the day ins and day outs for a longer period of time. While I think there’s a benefit to having an emotionless attitude towards playing and seeing poker as a game of one hand into the next, there’s also a personal enjoyment I feel through experiencing the game as it goes moment to moment.

I think what’s helped me a great deal is the ability to forgive myself for mistakes I make, and realize that poker is a long game, and I’m never going to be able to play perfectly in every situation possible. The best thing I can do for myself is accept the consequences of my actions, good or bad, and keep moving forward.

I remember running pretty deep in the $1,600 Venetian event right after my big win, where I had piles of chips on the stone bubble and went for an extremely aggressive all-in bluff after facing a bet. I ended up getting tank-called where I lost a bunch of chips. Rather than feeling sad and upset at myself for losing the pot, I was happy with the fact that I trusted myself and took an action that I thought was winning a good amount of EV. Sometimes, you don’t get the result you want, but the real pain is not taking the chance if you think something is going to net a positive result.

The way I deal with some tough spots after the fact is just spending time with my friends, talking about the hands after and trying to learn as much as I can. Then I focus on the next opportunity that I have to improve, whether it’s MTTs or cash games. Spending time away from the computer is something that I’ve been doing more now after tough days and having a community that...
truly supports me is unbelievably amazing. I’m very thankful for it.

Shannon Shorr: Being mentally tough is everything in terms of staying focused in a game where you are constantly going to experience disappointment or have yourself tested. I’ve found that doing deep breathing at the table from time to time is great for bringing oneself back to the moment. It’s super important not to get caught up in previous hands as mistakes can be very costly, especially when playing no-limit hold’em.

I think that making an attempt to take care of yourself in your personal life goes a long way in terms of helping you deal with emotional control issues that will be costly in poker. Something that I cannot recommend more highly is that poker players should force themselves to sit with their emotions, sometimes after poker sessions, rather than trying to always escape them with alcohol, sex, weed, etc. It’s even better if you can journal your thoughts. An individual will experience such a wide range of emotions on any given day. It’s nice to know where you are with things and what you can do differently to improve your game.

Niall Farrell: For me it’s super important to be comfortable at the stakes you’re playing. If everything is chill with your bankroll, then running bad for a bit isn’t the end of the world. I think this comes with experience, mostly, once you’ve come out the other end of downswings a few times. Mainly because you become a bit more chill knowing that you’ve done it before and will do it again. I might take a bit of time off and go hang out with friends and stuff, and also return hungry and ready to go.

Making poor decisions is basically the only thing that gets me on tilt nowadays. Sure, I’ll have a 15-minute tantrum if I get two-outed for a lot of equity, but after a little self-pity party (and a few beers) I’m fine again. You can only control what you can control, so getting tilted over stuff like that is pretty pointless. If I bust a big tourney from making a mistake, I usually go straight to the pub and won’t think about it for a bit. The next day I’ll dissect the hand and hopefully become a better player for it. Nothing trains the mind to play better than hungover lab work. ♦️

Landon Tice started playing professionally in early 2019, making the jump from the micro-stakes to mid- and high-stakes cash games and tournaments. In November of 2020, the Florida native won the MSPT main event at the Venetian for $201,529. He is also a coach for Matt Berkey’s Solve For Why.

Shannon Shorr broke out on the tournament circuit in 2006, final tabling the Aussie Millions main event and winning the Bellagio Cup main event for another $960,690. The University of Alabama graduate has numerous other final tables including a runner-up showing at the 2019 WPT Gardens Poker Championship. He now has more than $8.2 million in career earnings.

Niall Farrell was the eighth person to win poker’s Triple Crown, having earned a WSOP bracelet, WPT title and EPT main event championship. The Scottish poker pro took down the 2015 EPT Malta main event, the 2016 WPT Caribbean Poker Party, and the £25,000 buy-in high roller at the 2017 WSOP Europe. He has just over $6 million in career earnings.
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POKER STRATEGY

Shifts In Poker Strategy With David Paredes
Poker Pros Revisit Hands From The Past To Show How The Game Has Changed

By Steve Schult

In the nearly two decades since poker experienced a boom thanks to Chris Moneymaker’s historic World Series of Poker main event victory in 2003, the strategy surrounding the game has evolved at a pace never seen before. With online poker, the game’s best players were able to see more hands quickly and develop more complex strategies to win. Bet sizing, aggression levels, and even something as basic as preflop hand selection has changed drastically since the game went mainstream.

Few players have experienced as much success on the felt as David Paredes, and even fewer have lived such an interesting life off it. The New York native was a child actor, appearing in commercials and even a few movies before becoming somewhat of a chess and video game prodigy.

He found poker while in high school, and continued to play while at Harvard University. After graduating from NYU Law School, he pursued a career in finance, but ultimately came back to poker, and wound up playing a major role in helping to uncover the UltimateBet cheating scandal. He has more than $2.5 million in live tournament earnings, including a World Poker Tour title from his victory in the 2015 Borgata Poker Open for $723,227. He is currently an ambassador for Chasers Poker Room and Casino in Salem, New Hampshire.

Paredes sat down with Card Player to break down a hand from season 5 of High Stakes Poker (filmed in December of 2008) featuring Eli Elezra, Daniel Negreanu, and Doyle Brunson.

The Hand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eli Elezra</th>
<th>$200,000</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doyle Brunson</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Negreanu</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
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Blinds - $400-$800

The Action: Eli Elezra put a $1,600 sleeper straddle on in middle position and Daniel Negreanu raised to $5,600 from the cutoff. Doyle Brunson called from the small blind and Elezra defended his straddle. On the flop, Brunson checked, Elezra checked, and Negreanu made a continuation bet of $8,500.

Brunson called, and Elezra check-raised to $25,000. Negreanu folded, and Brunson called. On the turn, Brunson checked and Elezra bet $55,000. Brunson called. Brunson checked again on the river, and Elezra finally gave up his bluff, checking behind. “You should have pulled the trigger,” Brunson joked, turning over his kings and scooping the $187,700 pot.

Steve Schult: There was a $1,600 sleeper straddle put on by Eli Elezra in middle position. Can you explain what a sleeper straddle is?

David Paredes: Sleeper straddles were very common in the late 2000s, especially in high-stakes private games. What a sleeper straddle means is that if someone acts before you, then the straddle is off. However, if the action is folded to you, then it functions as a normal straddle and you get the last option preflop.

Steve Schult: What about his preflop hand selection? Is 9-6 suited too loose to be opening from the cutoff?

David Paredes: Yes. Daniel is known, at least back in those days, for having an affinity for suited connectors. But this hand is so gapped that I think it’s just too loose.

Steve Schult: Doyle calls from the small blind with pocket kings. What is the reason to just call with such a big hand?

David Paredes: First of all, let me state that Doyle has played poker at the highest levels for so long. He is pretty much universally respected as one of the greatest players of all-time. He understands that pocket kings are a three-bet preflop. In
fact, I would think that if he were playing nowadays, this would be three-bet about 100% of the time. And I think that even in those days, kings would be three-bet if not 100% of the time, maybe 90% of the time.

This is a very specific scenario, however, where Eli is in the sleeper straddle and Daniel is the one raising. Doyle is perceived as a tight player. He is exploiting two things. One is that Daniel likely c-bets (continuation bets), in Doyle’s mind, too often, and he may put in too much money with a weaker hand. But he’s also exploiting that since people perceive Doyle to be so tight, if he three-bets, he’s not going to get any action. Even if he does, his hand will be too face-up.

At the same time, if he does three-bet, he almost certainly gets Eli out of the hand. This is a pure exploit of those two factors. The other opponents in the hand, and his own image. I’ve heard the famous “Kentucky” Len [Ashby] say that understanding your own image is one of the most important criteria to be a winning live cash game player. And I think Doyle is acutely aware of his image.

SS: You can’t take this hand in a vacuum then. You’re saying that these guys have played so many hands together that they are just starting an old school leveling war?

DP: Exactly. There are so many metas. It’s almost impossible to analyze in a vacuum. Eli and Doyle are great friends and competitors, as are Daniel and Doyle. And they all know each other so well. When you’re playing against opponents that you play with all the time and know each other’s tendencies, you have to throw them for a loop once in a while.

It could blow up in your face, but I think Doyle has the self-belief to not lose an enormous pot with one pair, and has enough confidence in his reads post-flop that he’s willing to take the gamble [of just calling preflop] here.

SS: The leveling wars were big back in those days, but people don’t talk like that anymore. The game has become more math and solver-oriented among today’s best players. Given that the high-stakes player pool is trying to standardize a winning approach to the game, how do they deal with that dynamic and still play something close to optimal?

DP: I would say that for the most part, they don’t. They have pre-defined ranges preflop where, sure, certain hands that are a mix, they’ll randomize. But for the most part, they’ll always three-bet kings because they have enough of a flattening range and they have a balanced three-bet range.

So kings just won’t be necessary to throw into a flat range because they have enough hands. But I don’t think Doyle’s strategy incorporated enough bluffs, and he was also aware of that.

SS: Eli defends his straddle with A-6. Are the reverse implied odds just too great to call here?

DP: It’s just too loose. Yeah, you’re getting a good price, but there is a lot of reverse implied odds. If he had A-5 compared to A-6, that would be better since he could make a straight, but A-6 is just such a bad hand that it’s simply not worth defending.

SS: They go three-ways to J-5-5 with two diamonds. Action checks to Negreanu, who bets $8,500. I wanted to touch on his half-pot sizing. I feel like I remember half-pot was kind of the standard. Was this just sort of a crutch since strategy hadn’t evolved enough yet to incorporate different sizes?

DP: It was a little bit less than half-pot, but you’re right that smaller size flop c-bets were not as common as they are now. For example, nowadays, this flop might be bet with a quarter-pot sizing. That’s because the flop is pretty dry and there is no reason to bet more with your entire range.

It was almost like a fallback, catch-all sizing, whereas now, the fallback sizing would be much smaller. It was almost a little bit more loosey-goosey back then, and there is just more precision in today’s game.

SS: Doyle calls. Is he still trapping or is he just pot-controlling because of Negreanu’s affinity for suited connectors that you mentioned earlier? That love of connectors would make it more likely that Negreanu could have a five.

DP: It doesn’t make a lot of sense for Doyle to have a check-raising range there. It could, but when he calls from the small blind, he is extraordinarily unlikely to have a five in his hand. Therefore, when he raises, what type of range is he exactly representing?

From that standpoint, his call is correct. I think the vast majority of his continues should be flats. In fact, you could argue that you shouldn’t really have a raising range.

Now, there is another factor in play here, and that is that Eli is still in the pot. If [Doyle] decides to raise, you’re actually negating what you were trying to accomplish preflop by trapping Eli. By flaring, he actually gives Eli the chance to spazz out.

SS: And Eli does end up doing something creative. He check-raises to $25,000.

DP: It’s such a small raise. It’s too small.

SS: I assume that since you think he should’ve folded the hand preflop, that Eli should’ve dumped it on the flop as well. But what should his sizing be and what type of hands should he be check-raising?

DP: I think it makes sense to raise in that Eli clearly has the 5-X advantage. By defending the straddle, he’ll have the most fives in his range and he can balance those with flush draws, or even a hand like 10♥ 9♥ where he could turn some backdoors.

So Eli could have a pretty balanced range with 5-X, flush draws, and bluffs. But he should probably make it somewhere in the neighborhood of $35,000 if he wants to raise, just because he is giving too good of a price to the flush draws otherwise.

It’s only $16,500 more to call for either of the players with so much in the middle already. There is some effect where he is squeezing Daniel because Doyle is still behind him, so that could make an argument for a smaller raise size.
on the flop. But at the same time, I think he’s just giving too good of a price for hands that could want to continue.

SS: I wanted to get your opinion on his zero-equity bluff. It’s just a random ace-high hand without any real draw or hope of making a hand, so he’s just hoping to get his opponent to fold. You don’t see this anymore, and today players are generally choosing hands with some equity and/or some blocker effect to turn into bluffs.

DP: I think what happened is that with solvers, we realized that there are enough bluffs that have backdoor equity that you don’t need to run a pure ‘zero-equity bluff,’ as you can call it. There are enough hands like K♥ Q♥ or 10♥ 9♥ that will turn enough backdoor equity and allow you to continue betting on the turn.

Whereas a hand like A-6 offsuit just doesn’t have that type of equity. Yes, you have the ace as sort of emergency equity, which makes it better than something like Q-6 offsuit, but you just don’t see that play anymore because people have just sort of figured it out.

SS: Negreanu folds to the check-raise and Doyle calls. The 4♣ comes on the turn and Doyle check-calls again, this time it’s $55,000. Do you have any thoughts on the turn play?

DP: Realistically, when it goes check, check, bet, call, raise, fold, call, what hand are you putting Doyle on if you’re in Eli’s shoes? A pure flush draw? Is Doyle just calling a check-raise on the flop out of position with like a ten-high flush draw? I would argue that he isn’t.

I think this turn bet shows that Eli is underestimating the strength of Doyle’s range. Which, by the way, goes back to the fact that by Doyle just flatting preflop, in Eli’s mind, he doesn’t have those overpairs. This is where Doyle’s caginess kind of tricked Eli into thinking that Doyle’s best hand is J-X because he knows that Doyle isn’t likely to have a five. Eli probably thinks A-J or K-J is the best hand Doyle has here.

SS: With a check-raise on the flop, Eli isn’t necessarily representing something like J-10. So from a hand strength perspective, aren’t pocket kings and A-J still beating the same sorts of hands?

DP: I agree with that, which is a flaw in Eli’s logic for sure. It’s almost like with this turn sizing, I’m not sure what he’s targeting.

SS: I guess this is the hard part of breaking down this specific hand. It goes back to what you were talking about preflop, where these guys have so much history, and they are trying to mix up their play without the use of solvers. They could just be trying to level each other on every street.

DP: Yes and no. Yes, they know each other well, so it’s much harder to try and figure out what’s in their head. But you can safely assume that Eli perceives Doyle to be a tight player, as does Daniel. And Doyle shouldn’t have much 5-X in his range. So effectively, Eli is targeting Doyle’s strong flush draws, which kind of makes this turn sizing a little bit on the larger side. I don’t think you need to bet $55,000 to get a flush draw to fold.

And at the same time, he is trying to get Doyle to fold a jack. I think you can safely assume that Eli is hoping that Doyle will fold J-X, knowing that Eli will have many fives in his range.

SS: From a game theory perspective, if Eli is hoping to not be exploited by Eli, he will have to fold some of his weaker J-X hands because otherwise he’ll just be calling down too much.

DP: I agree with that as well. Eli comes from a limit background so there will be times where he could be check-raising A-J. Doyle and Eli primarily played mixed limit games, so it’s not out of the question that Eli would raise J-X for value. Now, will he bet $55,000 on the turn with A-J? That I’m not sure of. But I think it’s reasonable that Doyle will fold his worst J-X hands in this spot.

SS: Doyle calls and they both check the river. With ace-high and no real showdown value, should Eli just fire that last barrel?

DP: This is what makes live poker. I’ll give you a list of four guys that it just takes balls to bluff. Doyle, Phil Ivey, Antonio Esfandiari, and Phil Hellmuth. Nowadays, people say that live cash game reads aren’t really a thing. However, as someone who has played a ton of live cash for the last 14 years, I would strongly disagree with that.

If you want to bluff Doyle on the river, you’re going to have to endure the stare down. And it’s not like this hand went check-check immediately. Eli thought about bluffing, but I think he just got shook by Doyle watching his every move. (Gabe Kaplan even pointed out in the commentary that it looked like Brunson was daring Elezra to bet.)

Good luck bluffing him on the river. And by the way, good luck betting him on the river. That man is paying attention to every single thing that Eli is doing and he’s incorporating the thousands of hours that they’ve played together and everything that is in his memory bank. All of that is going into his decision as he’s watching Eli’s body language and counting his chips. From Eli’s perspective, that makes it very difficult to bluff there.

Some of these guys just have a huge database of information in their head. They know your tells, they know your tendencies, and also they have their instincts. I was in this scenario in a $25-$50-$100 cash game at Bellagio against Esfandiari where I found myself bluffing the river with a missed flush draw and straight draw. And I got soul read and called down by just ace-high. It’s not easy.
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IS JOE MCKEEHEN POKER’S BEST MODERN WSOP MAIN EVENT CHAMPION?

“I’m Playing To Make A Living, Not Trying To Be Famous,” Says 29-Year-Old Tournament Crusher

By Erik Fast

Joe McKeehen has arguably built the strongest tournament résumé of any World Series of Poker main event champion in the modern era.

McKeehen’s crowning poker achievement, of course, is still when he outlasted a field of 6,420 entries, closing out the biggest and most prestigious poker event in the world in dominant fashion at just 24 years old. He eliminated six of his eight opponents at the final table, leading wire-to-wire to secure the championship bracelet and the $7,683,346 top prize.

But of the 17 players to win the big dance since it first drew over a thousand entries in 2004, McKeehen has accumulated the most live tournament earnings outside of that main event payday. The Philadelphia, Pennsylvania native has cashed for more than $10 million in other events, adding two WSOP bracelets and numerous other impressive victories to his list of accomplishments.

McKeehen is not one to put too much stock in cherry-picked statistics and media-crafted narratives, however. He notoriously avoided the spotlight after his big win, and even today, would rather his achievements fly under the radar.

When asked what it meant to stand out among the list of modern world champions, he simply replied, “I don’t care.”

“I think it’s pretty stupid to compare myself to other people that won a specific tournament,” McKeehen said. “I’m just trying to make money and have fun along the way. Lots of people can be successful in different ways in this industry based on what they want to accomplish, and it’s ultimately up to them on how they want to base their success.”

(Composer’s Note: Joe may not care to compare himself to other WSOP main event champions, but that won’t stop us on pg. 25)

No matter how you look at McKeehen’s body of work, it’s impressive. With more than $17.7 million in recorded tournament scores, he is currently the 37th ranked player on poker’s all-time money list, despite not turning 30 until this coming summer.

McKeehen has already added to his career totals considerably in the early months of 2021, with $725,443 earned across just five cashes. His hot start to the year includes a win in a $10,500 buy-in high roller event at the Wynn and a runner-up finish in a record-setting $5,000 buy-in World Poker Tour main event held at Venetian.

The upshot of those two big scores is that McKeehen has climbed into the top five in the Card Player Player of the Year race heading into the second quarter of 2021. We recently caught up with McKeehen to discuss his strong start to the year, his road from a grinder to becoming poker’s world champion, and much more.

Joe Goes Pro

McKeehen now has over 190 tournament scores to his name. His first live tournament cash came at just 19 years old, making the final two tables of the 2010 Empire State Hold ’em Championships $2,500 main event at Turning Stone Resort Casino.

Like many top players of the past decade, McKeehen first discovered poker on TV. Online poker’s Black Friday took place when he was just 21, which led him to largely focus on playing the game live while working on a degree in mathematics at Arcadia University. He accumulated just shy of $185,000 in cashes before his 21st birthday, including winning a $2,000
buy-in preliminary event at the 2012 PokerStars Caribbean Adventure for $116,230. This early success led McKeehen to more seriously consider poker as a career as graduation approached.

“I didn’t feel like working a cashier job during college, and I didn’t feel like actually pursuing a real job afterward. I was way too lazy,” admitted McKeehen. “I won five figures a few times in eight hours, and compared to working months for that kind of money, that seemed like a better hourly.”

Of course, poker wasn’t helping his schooling either.

“I failed my first actuarial exam in college because I spent the week before it at Turning Stone playing live MTTs instead of studying,” he recalled. “I kind of knew I didn’t want to really be an actuary when I could fling chips instead.”

During spring break of his senior year, McKeehen won the 2013 WSOP Circuit Atlantic City main event for $174,147. The win also came with a $10,000 seat into that year’s WSOP Circuit National Championship. The poker tournament conflicted with his upcoming graduation later that spring, but there was no question in McKeehen’s mind as to which event he would attend.

“My parents couldn’t even argue with it, since $10,000 is a lot of money to give up for a small-time celebration that’s meaningless in the long run,” he stated. “I got destroyed in the National Championship, for the record.”

When he first told his family and friends that he decided to go pro, McKeehen didn’t find much support.

“They didn’t get it. Who would? It doesn’t really matter, and that’s all in the past. They gave me the [freedom to play] and that’s all I could ask for. I proved myself to them and they aren’t questioning it anymore.”

The early stages of his pro career saw McKeehen establish himself as a winning, mid-stakes live tournament player, focusing largely on $500-$1,500 buy-in events. He was initially backed or sold pieces, but he was able to build enough of a bankroll to eventually take on 100 percent of his action at those stakes, which he preferred to “traveling the world to play $10,000 buy-ins where I had just 25 percent of myself.”

McKeehen first played at the WSOP in 2012, having turned 21 toward the end of the series, logging a single cash that year in a smaller bracelet event. He doubled the mark in 2013, including an in-the-money finish in his second ever main event.

McKeehen followed that up with his best year yet on the live scene in 2014, winning four side event titles in the first six months of the year and then placing second in a $1,500 buy-in event at the WSOP for $820,863. By the end of the year, he had racked up more than $1.9 million in live tournament earnings, but he was far from satisfied.

“I wanted to win something instead of finishing second,” he admitted. “I had a little more money in my pocket to play more buy-ins, so that was cool. I traveled and felt a little more comfortable in some bigger buy-ins like World Poker Tour events.”

When asked if his achievements that year helped him feel like he belonged on the game’s biggest stages, he remained indifferent.

“There might be a sense that I belonged, in the fact that I was a winner, and I did it before so I can do it again, but all that is mental stuff that I never really struggled with.”

Crushing The WSOP Main Event

The first half of 2015 was more of a struggle, with less than $40,000 in total cashes through the first six months of the year. That slow start, however, was more than made up for when McKeehen blasted his way through the field of 6,420 entries to win that year’s WSOP main event for just shy of $7.7 million and his first gold bracelet.

McKeehen took his seat in only his fourth attempt at the main event. According to his recollections, day 1 of the big dance was filled with a lot of folding. He started day 2 with essentially the same stack, but finished the day in a much different manner.

“Day 2 I had really tough tables full of people putting pressure on me, and I just didn’t fold too many of them. I was fortunate they were bluffing every time,” said McKeehen, who was in 336th place among the 1,796 who survived. “Day 3 I bad beat my good pal Mark Herm for a massive pile, and then Craig Varnell tried to bluff it off to me, but again, I wasn’t really in the mood to fold.”

McKeehen called his way up to second place on the leaderboard heading into day 4 with just over ten percent of the field remaining. By the end of that night, he was in sole possession of the top spot.

“I tried to punt it [away] at the end of the day 5. Day 6 I struggled, then bad beat [Joshua] Beckley for my tournament life,” said McKeehen, who riveder a straight with A-Q when at risk against A-K. “Then I just won every hand after the fact. The deck chose me afterward.”

While many other players in the field were just trying to hang on, McKeehen went on the offensive, knowing that many of his opponents would put a lot of pressure on themselves to survive to the November Nine.

“Playing off the fact that everyone is dying to make the final table won me a lot of low-risk chips, especially with less than 18 players in the tournament,” said McKeehen.

Daniel Negreanu was the biggest name left in the field and had survived to within a couple of spots of the final table, but was ultimately sent packing by McKeehen. Negreanu called off his tournament life with top pair facing a flush and straight draw. The river completed McKeehen’s straight to eliminate ‘Kid Poker’ in 11th place, and the shock of the outcome literally sent Negreanu to the floor.

2015 was the second-to-last year that the main event used the November Nine format, which delayed the final table nearly four months in order to let the ESPN television coverage of the event catch fans up in time for a live final table.

“It was stupid at the time, but it all worked out. I didn’t realize that the opportunity you had in the months in between wasn’t what it used to be in say, 2010,” said McKeehen of the now-discontinued delayed final table. “It allowed me to get more sponsorships and do a small amount of studying. In the

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moment, I thought the break could only hurt me since I was running everyone over. I was likely wrong. Everyone got better and realized that folding up to make a few hundred thousand dollars and still have a shot to win is actually a really good strategy, instead of battling the guy who can end those chances on any given hand.”

McKeehen entered the final table with nearly one-third of the total chips in play, and scored the first three knockouts to enter six-handed action with nearly half of the chips. By the time the field was down to three, he had more than two-thirds of the chips in play. He secured the final two eliminations to close out an authoritative victory, marking one of the most dominant title runs in the modern era of the WSOP main event.

“That’s not for me to decide. I just showed up and took care of business. The deck helped a lot and made it easier on me. If a player doesn’t lose an all-in, they are going to be impossible to beat,” offered McKeehen.

The poker boom that followed Chris Moneymaker’s run to the main event title put an even brighter spotlight on the WSOP world champion. There is a notion that the winner of the big dance should be poker’s ambassador, responsible for being the face of the game to the public. McKeehen has never agreed with the idea.

“It’s probably the actual dumbest thing in an industry full of incredibly dumb things,” he said bluntly.

It’s not quite Charles Barkley’s infamous, “I am not a role model,” but it carries a similar sentiment.

McKeehen has always been forthright on matters like this. In the years that have followed his main event victory, he has often spoken out on issues regarding the intersection of poker industry, media, and professional players. His often-deadpan demeanor in interviews and irreverent social media presence don’t fit the mold of a stereotypical ‘ambassador of the game.’

That’s not to say that he hasn’t experienced any external pressure to play along. “I’ve told them all to go f**k themselves. Feel free to paraphrase this if you want in the article.” (Editor’s Note: No paraphrase needed.)

No One-Hit Wonder

McKeehen backed up his win with a number of scores that neither players would be proud to flaunt as their best. He finished as the runner-up in the $100,000 super high roller at the 2016 PokerStars Caribbean Adventure for another $1.2 million payday. He also final tabled the $111,111 One Drop High Roller later that year, cashing for $829,792 in yet another strong performance facing high roller regulars.

“I wouldn’t have jumped in $100k events months later if I didn’t win the tournament. It was more the start of the journey, but I now had the financial freedom to path my journey exactly how I wanted to without any real restrictions. I also wasn’t pressured to go everywhere and grind to make money. I could pick and choose when, where, and what I wanted to play.”

By the end of 2016, McKeehen had accumulated more than $3 million in live tournament earnings. He backed up that top-20 POY finish with a 22nd-place showing in the 2017 race, adding another $900,000 and three titles to his record. One of those wins was for his second WSOP gold bracelet, which came in the $10,000 limit hold’em championship.

McKeehen kept up the consistency in 2018, as well, adding nine final-table finishes and over $1.6 million in earnings to finish 21st in the POY rankings for the year.

2019 brought another $750,000 in earnings, and 2020 saw him win his third gold bracelet during the WSOP Online series that filled the void left by the live tournament shutdown during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. He defeated a field of 496 entries in a $3,200 buy-in no-limit hold’em event to become just the third main event winner from the post-Moneymaker era to win multiple bracelets after taking down the big one, joining Joe Cada and Jonathan Duhamel.

Has all of this post-main event success cemented McKeehen’s legacy as a top player? In the eyes of the poker community, the answer is likely yes. For McKeehen himself?

“My legacy is something I don’t give a shit about at all,” he said. “I’m here playing for myself to make a living. I’m not trying to be famous. I got my small circle of friends and people I enjoy being with and that’s enough for me.”

Live tournament poker began to return in the latter half of 2020, and the early months of this year have seen many large-field main events beat expectations due to the pent up demand for action.

McKeehen managed two huge scores in the month of March, starting with a second-place finish in the $5,000 buy-in World Poker Tour Venetian main event. The tournament drew 937 entries to become the largest ever WPT field at that price point. McKeehen entered his fifth career WPT final table with the chip lead and secured three of the first four eliminations to take a 2:1 chip lead into heads-up play. Qing Liu ultimately turned the tide and closed out the title, continuing the impressive run that has seen him build a strong lead in this year’s POY race.

McKeehen earned $491,960 as the runner-up, but didn’t have to wait long to get a second chance at closing out a big event. Just two days later, he battled his way through a tough field of 83 entries in the $10,000 high roller event at the Wynn Spring Classic. This time around he sealed the deal, earning $224,100 and his 21st recorded tournament title.

As a result of these two big scores, McKeehen now sits in third place on the POY race leaderboard. The strong start to 2021 doesn’t change too much for McKeehen and his plans for the year, though.

“I need more [tax] write offs,” he explained. “Winning earlier in the year is better than winning later for this fact alone. I got more time to do it and I’ll be showing up at places looking to play the highest tournament stakes offered now since I will have limited opportunities.”

In addition to playing, McKeehen has also been working with training site Chip Leader Coaching in recent years. That role likely helped McKeehen during the slower period that resulted from the live circuit shutdown in 2020.

“On these longer breaks, it can keep me thinking about the game and spots, even temporarily,” he said of his work with CLC. “It can’t hurt to see or hear other players and what they do and why they do it, either. Sometimes I think I have a way to do something, and they can present me with another one that I wouldn’t have thought about before, which is probably what I’m usually doing for my students as a coach. It’s good for everyone involved.”

Through playing and coaching, McKeehen feels that his game is currently at its highest level yet. “I’m better now than I was in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019. The more experience I get, the better I think I play.”

McKeehen is still just 29 years old, and has already accomplished many of the major feats available to tournament poker players. When it comes to goals he sets for himself in the game moving forward, he keeps things simple.

“I would like to play and win the most money I can.” And even though he doesn’t care, when McKeehen wins, we’ll take notice. ✭
McKeehen may find it a fruitless exercise, but there is no doubt that the WSOP main event has produced some polarizing winners in the modern era, ranging from one-tournament wonders who are rarely seen again, to high roller crushers who continue to dominate the circuit even after securing their life-changing payday.

McKeehen’s eight-figures in earnings outside of his main event win tops the list, and displays a consistency that is missing with some of the other winners. He’s done well in the high rollers he has played, as evidenced by his runner-up finish in the $100,000 buy-in PokerStars Caribbean Adventure High Roller for $1,220,480 and his final table at the 2016 $111 High Roller For One Drop. But he’s also continued to do well in mid-stakes events, with his win in the 2017 $10,000 limit hold’em event, a third-place showing in the 2018 $1,500 Millionaire Maker, and his $3,200 WSOP Online victory in 2020. He’s also done quite well on the World Poker Tour, with five final tables including his most recent runner-up finish at The Venetian.

He is followed on the list by 2010 champion Jonathan Duhamel. The Canadian pro won nearly half of his additional $9 million when he took down the $111,111 buy-in High Roller For One Drop in 2015 for his second bracelet and $3,989,985. Later that year, he won his third bracelet, topping a tough field in the $25,000 buy-in WSOP Europe High Roller.

Martin Jacobson was the most accomplished player prior to his main event win, having already banked $5 million on the tournament circuit before taking home another $10 million in 2014. The Swedish pro has twice final tabled the $111,111 High Roller For One Drop, and also has numerous final tables on the European Poker Tour, including Deauville, Vilamoura, Berlin, Venice, Budapest, Monte Carlo, and London.

Both main event winners from Michigan, Ryan Riess and Joe Cada, have had continued success after their massive scores. Riess, who won it all in 2013, also took down the WPT Hard Rock Poker Showdown in 2017 and has many high roller final tables including scores at the US Poker Open, and EPT stops in Barcelona, Monte Carlo, and Prague. 2009 champ Cada not only added to his bracelet count in 2014, but in 2018 he came out on top in another two WSOP events, and nearly won the main event for a second time, settling for fifth place and $2.15 million.

Most of 2005 champion Joe Hachem’s other winnings come from his victory in the WPT Five Diamond World Poker Classic a year later for $2,207,575. Hossein Ensan already had a WSOP Circuit title and EPT Prague title under his belt before winning it all in 2019. 2004 winner and Card Player columnist Greg Raymer won his record fifth Heartland Poker Tour title in early 2020. Greg Merson won more than $1.1 million and his first bracelet just a couple weeks before the main event in 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Main Event Year</th>
<th>Payout</th>
<th>Other Winnings</th>
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<td>Joe McKeehen</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>Jonathan Duhamel</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$8,944,136</td>
<td>$9,067,972</td>
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<td>Martin Jacobson</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$10,000,000</td>
<td>$7,040,135</td>
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<td>Ryan Riess</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$8,359,531</td>
<td>$6,640,130</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joe Cada</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$8,574,649</td>
<td>$5,680,747</td>
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<td>Joe Hachem</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$7,500,000</td>
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<td>Hossein Ensan</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>$10,000,000</td>
<td>$3,060,467</td>
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<td>Greg Raymer</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
<td>$3,027,286</td>
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<td>Greg Merson</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$8,531,853</td>
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<td>Peter Eastgate</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$9,152,416</td>
<td>$1,797,034</td>
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<td>John Cynn</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>$8,800,000</td>
<td>$1,368,621</td>
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<td>Damian Salas*</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>$2,550,969</td>
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<td>Jamie Gold</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$12,000,000</td>
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<td>Scott Blumstein</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$8,150,000</td>
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<td>Pius Heinz</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$8,715,638</td>
<td>$355,729</td>
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<td>Jerry Yang</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$8,250,000</td>
<td>$193,795</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qui Nguyen</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$8,005,310</td>
<td>$100,858</td>
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</table>

*Won the 2020 Hybrid Online/Live Main Event
If you happen to have an overly aggressive image, either due to running lots of bluffs or just being dealt a lot of premium hands, you may look across the table and see one of your opponents glaring at you. When you spot someone giving you “the look,” you can be fairly confident they are going to make a play at you sometime in the near future, either because they assume you are playing ranges that are much too wide, or perhaps they are trying to “get even” against you.

Knowing they are going to attack you ahead of time can turn normally easy folds into easy calls. But you also need to be sure to give that particular opponent the opportunity to bluff you. If you pile the money in against them, they will be forced to fold their marginal hands and bluffs, so if you make any sort of made hand, you should instead be confident going into check-call mode.

In a recent $1,000 buy-in tournament, I was playing my standard loose, aggressive strategy, although I was never too far out of line. A young player across the table was giving me “the look” even though we had not played a hand together. I raised with a random hand, made a continuation bet, and took down a small pot.

On the very next hand, with the blinds at 300-600 with 34,000 effective stacks, I raised to 1,400 with J♣ 9♣ from the button. The kid, who was in the small blind, three-bet to 3,400. Seeing how I was getting decent odds to call and thought my opponent easily could be making a play, I called with the intention of calling down if I hit a decent flop. It is worth noting that if I thought my opponent was playing sanely, I would have easily folded.

The flop came J♥ 6♣ 2♣, giving me top pair. My opponent bet 4,600 and I called.

At this point, I could be either way ahead or way behind, but I am never folding top pair when I think my opponent’s range is wide open. Raising does not make much sense because he will fold most of his junk (which should be a large portion of his range) and call with all better hands that beat me.

The turn was the 6♦, pairing the board. He bet 7,000 and I called.

The same logic on the flop applies on the turn. If he has a better hand, he will always call a raise. If I raise, I will force him to fold all of his bluffs, which I keep in his range by calling. Whenever you have a strong, but non-nut hand, your main concern is keeping your opponent’s range as wide as possible.

The river was the 8♣, and he quickly bet 7,600 out of his 18,000 remaining stack.

When players throw out a really fast bet on the river, it usually means that they had planned on betting regardless of what card came up. Since his range should be made up of mostly bluffs, plus a few nut hands, I made the call and beat his A♠ 3♠.

Notice that if I raised the flop or turn, he would have most likely folded (unless he was an absolute maniac). The optimal line in these situations is to simply call down. If I had a stronger hand like pocket aces, I still would have taken the call down line. I would not raise the river, because again, he will usually only call when I am beat.

By playing your marginal, made hands passively, you keep all the bluffs in your opponent’s range while making it impossible for him to bluff you. You also make it tough for your opponent to get a lot of value when he actually makes a premium hand because you never put in a raise.

By Jonathan Little

CALLING DOWN WITH MARGINAL MADE HANDS

By playing your marginal, made hands passively, you keep all the bluffs in your opponent’s range while making it impossible for him to bluff you. You also make it tough for your opponent to get a lot of value when he actually makes a premium hand because you never put in a raise.

Jonathan Little is a two-time WPT champion with more than $7 million in live tournament earnings, best-selling author of 15 educational poker books, and 2019 GPI Poker Personality of the Year. If you want to increase your poker skills and learn to crush the games, check out his training site at PokerCoaching.com/cardplayer.
BADUGI: MAKING MOVES

By Kevin Haney

Thus far in our discussions on badugi post-flop play we have either assumed that we hold the best hand and are betting for value and protection, or we are somewhat confident that we don’t and are content to simply call and chase when the price is right.

However, badugi does allow for an abundance of creativity, and in some situations making a move at the pot may have a higher expectation than either calling or folding. Sometimes we should get aggressive and pat without a made hand in an attempt to get an opponent to fold. In draw games, this is called a snow.

We can also raise a pat hand when we have a drawing hand. If our opponent breaks their hand, we can go from a large underdog to a big favorite. On your good days, an opponent may even fold immediately, which is a huge win.

Raising On The Draw

Suppose you are on the button with $\text{A\spadesuit} \ 2\spadesuit \ 5\spadesuit \ X$ and three-bet a cutoff opener who then four-bets the action and stands pat. The majority of the opponents you will encounter will open with any badugi from the cutoff and then cap the betting after getting re-raised. This is an important read because when an entire badugi range is in play, the median holding is either a jack or a queen badugi. If your opponent will break with a reasonable draw underneath, the median is a jack, and if he is somewhat sticky it will be a queen.

Regardless, in this bloated pot we have the correct odds to chase the entire way, especially since we have position and mostly implied odds on our side. If we fail to improve on the first two draws, continuing on the turn is clear since we are getting 6.75:1 pot odds and on average have between seven and nine outs.

While we can profit by calling, we should also occasionally put in a raise to test our opponent in an attempt to get him to break or possibly fold immediately. When raising the turn, we are putting in two big bets with a chance to instantly win the 6.75 big bets in the middle.

An opponent will occasionally fold, but probably not quite at the 23% rate we require for the play to be immediately profitable, especially if we are playing in an aggressive online game. However, when our opponent calls and stands pat, we still have an opportunity to out-draw him on the final draw. Thus, the play does not need

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2021 Spring Championship of Online Poker
$5,200 No-Limit Hold’em High Roller

Pablo Brito 7,239,666 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 35.0%
After Flop: 94.0%
After Turn: 98.0%

Christopher Vogelsang 4,801,156 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 65.0%
After Flop: 6.0%
After Turn: 2.0%

PREFLOP

With four players remaining and blinds of 80,00-160,000 with a 20,000 ante, Pablo Brito raised to $560,000 from the small blind. Christoph Vogelsang called from the big blind.

FLOP

Brito bet 600,000, and Vogelsang called.

TURN

Brito checked, and Vogelsang checked.

RIVER

Brito checked, and Vogelsang bet 1,280,000. Brito check-raised all-in for 6,079,666, and Vogelsang folded.

NOTE: WINNING PERCENTAGES DO NOT INCLUDE TIES. ODDS PROVIDED BY CARDPLAYER.COM/POKER-TOOLS/ODDS-CALCULATOR/TEXAS-HOLDEM
to work as often in order to be successful in the long run. (In addition, when the play initially fails but then you
outdraw him on the last draw you also have potential “tilt equity” on your side.)

If we raise the turn and our opponent calls and stands pat, we will usually draw. However, we can choose to pat
behind and continue the bluff if we have noticed that our opponent has the ability to fold in this situation on the
river. In fact, if our opponent has a tendency to do this at too
great of a frequency, the expectation of patting would
probably exceed that of drawing.

Getting re-raised on the turn is a risk, but not a
huge one if our opponent is only three-betting when he
was lucky enough to be dealt a monster pat hand from
the onset. From the villain’s perspective, if we made a
badugi from drawing it will often be quite strong, thus
he requires a rare premium initial pat badugi to put in
this action. If our opponent is initially playing his entire
badugi range he will only hold an eight or better hand
around 10% of the time.

It’s very important that when making this play that we
have a very strong three-card badugi to fall back upon in
case our opponent decides to break. If we are successful in
getting our opponent to break a king or a queen badugi,
we aren’t in a much better position if our opponent has a
better three card underneath and are still an approximate
4:1 favorite in the hand.

We should not expect our opponent to fold on the
turn very often, especially if we tend to overuse the play.
However, since we clearly have the pot odds to call, put-
ting in one extra bet every now and then when the time
seems right is extremely effective as it doesn’t cost that
much and balances the times you make a real hand. It puts
your opponent in a position where he has the potential to
make a big mistake, and that’s what solid poker is about.

The Check-Raise Pat Bluff

Now let’s assume we open from the cutoff position
with 5♥ 6♦ 8♣ X and get three-bet by a tight aggressive
opponent on the button. We call and both players take
one on the first draw.

The villain could easily have a premium three-card
badugi such as A-2-4, however, you have some experience
against this particular opponent and have noted that he
ever smooth-calls on the button against a cutoff open
with any one-card draw. Therefore, it seems highly likely
that he is playing a re-raise or fold strategy before the
first draw, meaning six- or seven-high tri holdings such as
3-5-6 and A-3-7 would also be in his three-betting range.

We check-call the flop and both players are still draw-
ing one on the second draw. Unfortunately, we fail to
improve on the second draw, we check, and our opponent
bets. Even though the pot is sizeable, we cannot profitably
call with our rough draw since our overall equity is quite
bad and we have reverse implied odds.

There is, however, an alternative to folding, and that
is check-raising and turning our weak draw into a snow.
Most often we are going to be risking three big bets in
an attempt to win 6.75. Two big bets are going in on
the turn and in most situations we will follow-up with
another bet on the river. We are always going to bet the
river if our opponent was still drawing, and with some
small frequency we should continue with the bluff even
when the villain calls and pits behind.

This risk/reward relationship indicates that the play
only needs to work around 31% of the time in order to
be profitable, meaning the villain needs to defend at a
minimum 69% of the time. This places our opponent
in a somewhat difficult position because over the course
of the last two draws he will only complete a badugi
approximately 38% of the time. (This 38% also includes
the times he makes weaker badugis (e.g. kings or queens)
on the second draw that he may choose to break.)

If an opponent will only call down when he makes
a badugi, he will not come close to defending enough.
Many players will also look you up with premium three-
card badugis, however, in this cutoff versus button sce-
nario our opponent will usually have enough hands that
he will fold.

Be forewarned that some opponents are very sticky,
and since three-card sixes can beat bluffs, some players
will just make you show them the best hand. It’s your job
to figure out how people play and to choose your targets
wisely.

The play becomes stronger if you have seen any pairs
along the way, which reduces the probability of our oppo-
nent completing his hand. It’s also important to consider
the positions from which you and your opponent origi-
nated from as that has a big impact on the play of a hand.

For example, if we had instead opened from early
position and got re-raised by an opponent one seat over,
check-raise pat bluff later in the hand is almost never
correct. In this situation we are often holding a hand
of much greater value where our expectation of calling
and drawing would generally exceed that of turning
our hand into a bluff. Secondly, villain will more often
hold a premium three-card badugi that they probably
intend to take to showdown no matter what happens
in the hand.

This check-raise pat snow is just one example where
turning our hand into a bluff can have a higher expecta-
tion than either calling or folding. Snowing plays a very
large role in badugi and in the next article we will discuss
this topic in more depth.

Kevin Haney is a former actuary of MetLife but
left the corporate job to focus on his passions
for poker and fitness. He is co-owner of Elite
Fitness Club in Oceanport, NJ and is a certified
personal trainer. With regards to poker he got
his start way back in 2003 and particularly
enjoys taking new players interested in mixed games under his wing
and quickly making them proficient in all variants. If interested in
learning more, playing mixed games online, or just saying hello he
can be reached at haneyk612@gmail.com.

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**TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP**

2021 Spring Championship of Online Poker
$5,200 No-Limit Hold’em High Roller

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<tr>
<th>'a_new_hope13'</th>
<th>5,968,888 Chips</th>
<th>Winning Percentage Before Flop: 63.0%</th>
<th>After Flop: 64.0%</th>
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<td>'a_new_hope13' checked, and Mulder checked.</td>
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<td>'a_new_hope13' bet 700,000, and Mulder called.</td>
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**PREFLOP**

With four players remaining and blinds of 100,000-200,000 with a 25,000 ante, 'a_new_hope13' raised to 400,000 from under the gun. Teun Mulder three-bet to 1,000,000 from the button, and 'a_new_hope13' called.

**FLOP**

Q-10-Q-9

'a_new_hope13' checked, and Mulder checked.

**TURN**

8-8-Q-9

'a_new_hope13' bet 700,000, and Mulder called.

**RIVER**

8-8-Q-9

'a_new_hope13' checked.

Mulder moved all-in for 5,130,000, and 'a_new_hope13' folded.

**ANALYSIS**

The chip leader made an interesting check-back on the flop in this hand, despite having flopped an open-ended straight flush draw in a three-bet pot. The lone player among the final four of this event who was known only by their screen name, 'a_new_hope13,' raised with pocket nines from under the gun. Teun Mulder, who sat atop the leaderboard with nearly twice as many chips as the initial raiser, opted to make a smallish three-bet of 2.5 times the initial raise with J-9 suited from the button. 'a_new_hope13' made the call and the flop gave Mulder the aforementioned draw. His opponent checked to him, and Mulder clicked the check button as well. Mulder was nearly a 2:1 favorite over a hand like the one his opponent held despite having only queen high for showdown value. Despite having a big draw, Mulder should be happy to draw folds from hands like underpairs and unimproved ace-higns that could win at showdown if he doesn't force them out. Mulder perhaps didn't want to continuation bet the flop and find himself in a sticky situation if his opponent unleashed a check raise. 'a_new_hope13' only had two times the size of the pot in his stack heading into the flop, making it hard for him to check-call. His opponent could be more likely to check-fold or check-raise all-in given their stack-to-pot situation. While Mulder would be happy to bet and draw a fold, he might not have been so keen to bet and then call off a huge percentage of his stack, even with a draw as strong as the one he held. Mulder made his straight on the turn after his interesting flop check. 'a_new_hope13' took a stab, betting 700,000 into the pot of 2,400,000. Mulder called and the board paired on the river. 'a_new_hope13' checked, with the pot having swelled to 3.8 million. Mulder moved all-in and 'a_new_hope13' folded, preserving his remaining 4,243,888 chips. Mulder took down the chunky pot and took more than a 2:1 lead over the next biggest stack at the table, belonging to Pablo Brito.

**NOTE:** WINNING PERCENTAGES DO NOT INCLUDE TIES. ODDS PROVIDED BY CARDPLAYER.COM/POKER-TOOLS/ODDS-CALCULATOR/Texas-Holdem
tives who worked for me, or even my wife would dare to disrupt me during game time. After all, this wasn’t just any game. For me, it was pure business. And when handled properly, it would result in a six-figure win for the evening.

Having said that, on this particular night, I scheduled a quick business meeting down in the lounge of the Four Seasons. At that time, I had been producing a reality TV pilot for A&E starring rock star Fred Durst, who had also just finished directing his second feature film. Fred had read a script I owned and was very interested in being attached as the director.

The other person attending the meeting was Nick Cassavetes, who had directed several films, including The Notebook. Nick liked the script as well and agreed to meet with myself and Fred to discuss the possibility of us all working together to get it set up. If you don’t know Cassavetes from his movies, which also include Alpha Dog, My Sisters Keeper, and John Q, then you may recognize his face from appearances on High Stakes Poker. Nick was also a semi-regular player in our game and I was a semi-regular player at his home game, which happened on a different night of the week.

I knew I couldn’t blow this meeting off, but when Leonardo DiCaprio arrived at the game, it created a small conundrum for me. Tobey, half joking, half serious, pointed out to me that since the game was full, my absence would leave a seat open should the Titanic when I told him he could come, Leo came up and stood right behind me. Tobey started smiling, probably taking enjoyment from my pain, and then Bob Safi slowly pushed over a giant stack of chips in front of me and everyone in the room started laughing.

I turned back to Leo, one of the best actors on the planet, and he just gave me a look that said, ‘I just fooled your ass!’

Not only did I have my bankroll back, but I walked away from the evening winning over $300,000 and having a great story to tell. Truth be told, Leo and Tobey had done this same scam to me a few years prior when the game was at Tobey’s house… so I should have been wise to it. But I think that just made Leo decide to sell it even harder.

Thanks for reading, and as always, stay sharp! Stay Kardsharp! ♠

As I sat down, waiting for the chips to come, Leo came up and stood right behind me. Tobey started smiling, probably taking enjoyment from my pain, and then Bob Safi slowly pushed over a giant stack of chips in front of me and everyone in the room started laughing.

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Thanks for reading, and as always, stay sharp! Stay Kardsharp! ♠
I remember returning to college much like any kid after Spring Break: tired, hungover, and sunburned. The only real difference was the virtual wad of bills that were burning a hole in my online poker account.

I went to bed in the same crummy student housing as everyone else, I woke up on the same blue-creaky mass-produced mattress as everyone else, and I had the same weird roommate problems as everyone else. My first roommate woke me up one morning at 5 am asking if I knew how to shave. (He had made it his entire life without ever learning and decided that was the right time to try.)

I later walked into our room and found him staring blankly at the mirror before turning very slowly to me and asking if I “heard the voices” also. It wasn’t so much the voices that got to me but rather the expressionless look that he pierced my soul with.

I needed to get out of there as quickly as possible, which meant that I needed to up my online play in order to make enough money to move off campus.

The quest for online dominance started off slowly, taking my laptop with me to class with the white lie dancing around in my head that it was there for notes. Inevitably, getting caught up in the Moneymaker boom and dabbling in the computer lab, and I would regularly squeeze in as early as possible to claim one of the last rows and pull open a platform were open and I was fully immersed in cash games and sit-n-go’s.

Probability and Statistics class was held once a week in the computer lab, and I would regularly squeeze in as early as possible to claim one of the last rows and pull open a couple browsers. My professor rarely ventured into the back rows as he lectured so I was safe to play without the fear of getting caught.

One such day, I was fully immersed in three, nine-max SNGs on Full Tilt Poker. I was focused intensely on the cards, distributions, bet sizing, and position. I was NOT focused on my professor, who showed up beside me and inquisitively asked what I was doing.

Caught off guard, I gave him the only answer that came to my head. “Probability and statistics,” I answered.

The response made him laugh, and he said to see him after class. I then discovered that my professor had also been caught up in the Moneymaker boom and dabbled in poker from time to time. (I hope my endeavors in the poker

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### Tournament Hand Matchup

#### 2021 Spring Championship of Online Poker

**$5,200 No-Limit Hold’em High Roller**

**Winning Percentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preflop</th>
<th>Flop</th>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>River</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vogelsang checked, and 'a_new_hope13' checked.</td>
<td>Vogelsang checked, and 'a_new_hope13' bet 700,000. Vogelsang called.</td>
<td>Vogelsang checked, and 'a_new_hope13' bet 2,000,000. Vogelsang called all-in for 1,819,624.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Winning Percentage**

| Before Flop: 60.0% | After Flop: 70.0% | After Turn: 49.0% |

**Winning Percentage**

| Before Flop: 40.0% | After Flop: 70.0% | After Turn: 11.0% |

**Analysis**

Christoph Vogelsang is one of the most successful high stakes tournament players in the world, with more than $25 million in live tournament cashes and millions more won online. The German player exploded from the online scene into the live high-stakes world, jumping right into the biggest events in the world and finding great success. He currently sits in 18th on poker’s all-time money list despite having fewer than 60 live tournament cashes. In this hand, Vogelsang displayed his willingness to make a hero call in a big spot, looking his opponent up with just bottom pair on the river. Vogelsang picked up 9-3 suited and defended his big blind, facing an under-the-gun mini-raise from 'a_new_hope13.'

While starting a hand with four high is less than desirable, Vogelsang was getting a great price on the call with 800,000 in the pot and just 200,000 required to continue. His small, suited connectors had 40 percent equity against the A-J of his opponent. Vogelsang flopped bottom pair and checked, and 'a_new_hope13' checked behind, figuring Vogelsang’s big blind defending range to be more likely to have improved on the 9-6-4 flop than his opening range as the first to act. The 10 on the turn gave 'a_new_hope13' the lead and he bet his top pair when Vogelsang, checked to him once again, looking to extract value in the instances where Vogelsang was pot-controlling a weak one pair hand. Vogelsang called the healthy bet of 700,000 into the pot of 1,000,000, and as a result, he was left with less than a pot-sized bet remaining in his stack. Vogelsang checked after the completed the board, and 'a_new_hope13' bet 2,000,000, which was enough to put Vogelsang all-in. After using up much of his time bank, Vogelsang made the call for his tournament life bank, and 'a_new_hope13' took down the pot with top pair, top kicker, while Vogelsang settled for $109,582 as the fourth-place finisher.

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**Strategies, Analysis & Commentary**

By Nathan Gamble

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industry reach Mr. Fitzpatrick one of these days and he gets a big smile on his face remembering that day.)

After a lot of ups and downs, winning and losing, I had finally withdrawn the bulk of my balance from Ultimate Bet and was ready to play in as large a game as I could muster. The game was Omaha eight-or-better. While $10-$20 limit may not sound like a lot, you can still win or lose over $1,000 in a session, especially with the speed of online poker.

I only had a $30,000 bankroll to my name and quickly progressed through the ranks, speed running from $10-$20 up to $30-$60. My bankroll hadn’t grown much, but the wins and losses had grown to between $3,000 and $5,000 a day. There was no rational reason to play that high, except for youthful exuberance and pride.

The $30-$60 limits, however, proved to be just the right fit for me as I cleared over $15,000 in a few short weeks to add to my bankroll. I use the term “bankroll” loosely, as it was all the money I had in the world and it was all in play. There was no separation between poker money and life money.

This didn’t hold me back from continuing my meteoric rise in stakes. In February I had started at $10-$20, and by April I was playing $100-$200. I would sit down regularly and play 3-6 handed with all the known crushers and not bat an eye. Some days it was plus $10,000, some days it was losses at least that big. It was like walking a tightrope and just hoping that I caught myself before the wind gusts and sends me plummeting to the pavement below.

One time I was playing a $50 tournament online while playing two tables of $100-$200. I came in second in the tournament for over $12,500, but somehow still lost $9,000 on the day. That should have wised me up to just how precarious a life I was living, but I was young and felt invincible.

Inevitably, the walls came crashing down on me. Looking back on it now, it was obvious my days were numbered. All the signs were there, I was a kid with card skills but still hadn’t learned the finer skills of being a professional. I hadn’t learned money management.

That day, it didn’t take the world’s best to beat me because I was already doing the job for them. I was short for the game, my case money was in play, and I slowly blinded it away by playing tight and scared. I didn’t belong there and instead of walking away with something to show for my journey I gave it all back and left it for the more deserving players.

Is there a lesson to be learned here? Of course. It’s one that is as old as time in the poker world, and one that will need repeating time after time. There is more to poker than just playing the cards. There are a variety of ‘soft’ skills that you must learn in order to make it in this world, bankroll management included. But there’s also table selection, tilt control, presence, knowing when you should and shouldn’t play, etc.

Professionals make it in poker not because we do something fancy, but because we do the common thing well. We try not to make mistakes, we try to study where others don’t, we try to treat the game like the business that it is. If you aren’t a professional and are just playing for fun, then there is no harm in enjoying your time at the table. But if you are looking to make it as a professional in this industry you may want to find yourself a mentor and open your ears, because there is a lot more to poker than just the cards between your fingertips.

Nathan Gamble is a native of Texas where he learned to play Texas hold’em from his father. He is a two-time WSOP bracelet winner, the first coming in the 2017 WSOP $1,500 pot limit Omaha Eight-Or-Better Event, the second in the 2020 Online WSOP $500 PLO8/b event. A fixture of the mid-stakes, mix game community, he can often be found playing $80-$160 mix games at the Wynn since moving to Las Vegas in 2019. He is active on Twitter under the username Surfbum4life and streams mixed game content regularly on Twitch under his username Surfbum4lyfe.
I
n 2008, I was invited to compete in a charity event called the Nick Lachey - Jimmy Johnson Skins Game, in Phoenix a few days before the Super Bowl. I had played in some previous charity golf events, but it turned out this one was structured very differently. I was told to let them know what my charity was before arriving, and that I could bring a guest to play with me.

Usually, these events raise money by soliciting funds from corporations. In return they get some marketing value, and some of their people play in the event with the celebrities. Here it seemed, instead of the charity being preselected, they would give some of the money to the charity of my choice. Awesome.

I arrived and they asked me about my guest. I had only been invited a few days before, so I didn’t have one. They told me to go to cart 7A, and that I would tee off on the seventh hole in a shotgun start. It was there that I met my scramble partners, the Judd brothers, who were Nick Lachey’s accountants. I also learned that for my charity to receive any money, we had to win it.

It was a four-player scramble, and whichever team had the lowest score on each hole would win money for their charity. It was expected that every hole would be birdied, and some holes would get eagled. The tie-breaker was closest to the pin. That is, if 12 of the teams got a birdie on the first hole, whoever was closest to the pin for their birdie putt would win the hole.

Well, I didn’t know any of this, and I’m not a very good golfer (at that time my handicap was about 14). The Judd brothers, while nice, fun guys to play with, were only a little better than me. No surprise, we did not win anything for my charity.

The next year I was invited back to the second Lachey-Johnson Skins Game. This time I understood, if I wanted to win for my charity, I needed to bring a guest who was a great golfer. I called the host golf course in Tampa, and spoke to the head pro. I asked him for help finding a great, local golfer to be my ringer. He hooked me up with a pro who had lost his playing card after an injury, and was working to get back onto the PGA tour. Moreover, he lived on the golf course, and knew it intimately. I contacted him, and he agreed to be my partner. Suddenly, we were going to win a LOT of money for my charity!!

However, just as we were about to tee off, some of the people running the event came to us with some unexpected news. They told me my guest was more than welcome to play on my team. Suddenly, we were going to win a LOT of money for my charity!!

IT PAYS TO KNOW THE RULES

By Greg Raymer

2021 Spring Championship of Online Poker
$5,200 No-Limit Hold’em High Roller

**‘a_new_hope13’** 5,918,262 Chips

Pablo Brito 7,319,896 Chips

‘a_new_hope13’ used most of his tournament life. ‘a_new_hope13’ still had nearly 30 big blinds to work with. He looked down at A-K offsuit on the button and min-raised. Brito made the call from the big blind with low connected cards and flopped an open-ended straight draw. Brito decided to unleash a check-raise, likely figuring that ‘a_new_hope13’ would continue betting with a lot of reasonable preflop starting hands that had not meaningfully improved on this particular flop. Brito likely hoped his aggressive gambit would take down the pot uncontested right there, but as it turned out, ‘a_new_hope13’ had flopped top pair, top kicker. Brito made his straight on the turn, and was now armed with the knowledge that his opponent’s hand was strong enough to withstand a check-raise on the previous street. He bet 900,000 into the pot of 2,775,000, a sizing that left ‘a_new_hope13’ with less than a pot-sized bet remaining in his stack heading into the river when he made the call. The board paired on the end, but that didn’t deter Brito from going for the homerun with his straight. He moved all-in, forcing ‘a_new_hope13’ to make a call for their tournament life. ‘a_new_hope13’ used most of his time bank before making the call and being shown the bad news. He was awarded $143,695 for his third-place showing. Brito went on to finish second for $188,429, while Teun Mulder scored $247,089 as the eventual champion of this event.

ANALYSIS

Teun Mulder held the chip lead when this hand arose, with Pablo Brito in second and ‘a_new_hope13’ at the bottom of the leaderboard. Despite being the shortest stack, ‘a_new_hope13’ still had connected cards and flopped an open-ended straight draw. Brito decided to unleash a check-raise, likely figuring that ‘a_new_hope13’ would continue betting with a lot of reasonable preflop starting hands that had not meaningfully improved on this particular flop. Brito likely hoped his aggressive gambit would take down the pot uncontested right there, but as it turned out, ‘a_new_hope13’ had flopped top pair, top kicker. Brito made his straight on the turn, and was now armed with the knowledge that his opponent’s hand was strong enough to withstand a check-raise on the previous street. He bet 900,000 into the pot of 2,775,000, a sizing that left ‘a_new_hope13’ with less than a pot-sized bet remaining in his stack heading into the river when he made the call. The board paired on the end, but that didn’t deter Brito from going for the homerun with his straight. He moved all-in, forcing ‘a_new_hope13’ to make a call for their tournament life. ‘a_new_hope13’ used most of his time bank before making the call and being shown the bad news. He was awarded $143,695 for his third-place showing. Brito went on to finish second for $188,429, while Teun Mulder scored $247,089 as the eventual champion of this event.

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2021 Spring Championship of Online Poker
$5,200 No-Limit Hold’em High Roller

**‘a_new_hope13’** 5,918,262 Chips

Pablo Brito 7,319,896 Chips

With three players remaining and blinds of 100,000-200,000 with a 25,000 ante, ‘a_new_hope13’ raised to 400,000 from the button. Pablo Brito called from the big blind.

FLOP

Brito checked, and ‘a_new_hope13’ bet 321,750. Brito check-raised to 900,000, and ‘a_new_hope13’ called.

TURN

Brito bet 900,000, and ‘a_new_hope13’ called.

RIVER

Brito moved all-in for 5,094,896, and ‘a_new_hope13’ called.

Brito moved all-in for 3,693,262. ‘a_new_hope13’ called.

Analysis

Teun Mulder held the chip lead when this hand arose, with Pablo Brito in second and ‘a_new_hope13’ at the bottom of the leaderboard. Despite being the shortest stack, ‘a_new_hope13’ still had nearly 30 big blinds to work with. He looked down at A-K offsuit on the button and min-raised. Brito made the call from the big blind with low connected cards and flopped an open-ended straight draw. Brito decided to unleash a check-raise, likely figuring that ‘a_new_hope13’ would continue betting with a lot of reasonable preflop starting hands that had not meaningfully improved on this particular flop. Brito likely hoped his aggressive gambit would take down the pot uncontested right there, but as it turned out, ‘a_new_hope13’ had flopped top pair, top kicker. Brito made his straight on the turn, and was now armed with the knowledge that his opponent’s hand was strong enough to withstand a check-raise on the previous street. He bet 900,000 into the pot of 2,775,000, a sizing that left ‘a_new_hope13’ with less than a pot-sized bet remaining in his stack heading into the river when he made the call. The board paired on the end, but that didn’t deter Brito from going for the homerun with his straight. He moved all-in, forcing ‘a_new_hope13’ to make a call for their tournament life. ‘a_new_hope13’ used most of his time bank before making the call and being shown the bad news. He was awarded $143,695 for his third-place showing. Brito went on to finish second for $188,429, while Teun Mulder scored $247,089 as the eventual champion of this event.

NOTE: WINNING PERCENTAGES DO NOT INCLUDE TIES. ODDS PROVIDED BY CARDPLAYER.COM/POKER-TOOLS/ODDS-CALCULATOR/TXAS-HOLDEM
team, but professional golfers weren’t permitted to compete for the prize money. So, if I wanted to win anything, he couldn’t play in the scramble. He said he would play his own ball, just for fun, and coach the rest of us (me and the Judd brothers again) through the round. He told us the best line for tee shots, and helped tremendously in reading putts. With his help, we managed to win a little money for my charity.

Same thing next year, just before the Super Bowl in Miami. Now, I had learned my lesson. Again, I called up the head pro of the golf course. This time, he helped me find a ringer who was not a pro. I invited the club champion to play as my guest. Not quite a tour pro, but he was the best amateur player of all the members in that private club, and knew the course well. Again, I was paired with the Judd brothers. Together, we managed to win two skins, although through an interesting twist.

On our last hole of the day, I managed to hit my approach shot to inside three feet on a par 4. As it turned out, this was not a shot to brag about. I selected my 5-wood, and did manage to hit the ball solid and straight. We couldn’t see the ball land on the elevated green. However, the volunteers who measured the putts were jumping up-and-down and shouting, so we knew it was a good one.

We high-fived and cheered amongst ourselves. It was then I noticed my mistake. Instead of pulling my 5-wood, I had grabbed my 3-wood. As such, hitting the ball that close to the green (such that the volunteers didn’t even measure the putt), was not birdied by any of the other groups. An unexpected but wonderful result.

During the awards ceremony, we expected to win that hole, which would mean $15,000 for my charity. This was going to be a huge deal for them, since they are a stand-alone, no-kill cat shelter here in Raleigh (www.safehavenforcats.org). However, as they were reading off the names of the celebrities, and having them come up for their ceremonial over-sized checks, they called off all the $15K winners, but not me.

Oh no! Apparently, the group behind us, consisting of Marcus Allen, Jerry Rice, and their guests, must have beaten us. Then, a while later, my name does get called, and somehow we have won $30,000 for Safe Haven! Apparently, the first hole of the day, a super-tough par 4, a hole that we birdied from off the green (such that the volunteers didn’t even measure the putt), was not birdied by any of the other groups. An unexpected but wonderful result.

The point of all this is not that I won $30,000 that day for my local cat shelter. The point is how much more I might have won for my charity in the previous two years, if I had only known the rules.

We all know the basic rules of poker. A flush beats a straight, three-of-a-kind beats two pair, etc. But, do we know the full rules for the bad beat jackpot in our poker room? Or the high hand award? Do you know the detailed rules when it comes to things like string-bets, putting out the wrong number of chips, and so on?

If a scenario comes up, and the floor makes a bad ruling, would you know? And would you know what you should do next? Should you ask for the shift manager, or the room manager, or would that just be a waste of time? Knowing all these “minor” rules could save you a lot of headache, and possibly even save/make you a lot of money. It’s best to know all of the rules, since any one of them could have a big impact on your bottom line.

Have fun, and play smart! ♠

FACE UP FOR ALL-INS. All hands will be tabled without delay once a player is all-in and all betting action by all other players in the hand is complete. No player who is either all-in or has called all betting action may muck his or her hand without tabled. All hands in both the main and side pot(s) must be tabled and are live.

A little while later in the same tournament, I bet on the river and the villain called. This time I threw my cards face down into the muck. One of the other play-
ers looked surprised and asked for an explanation. “It’s called a bluff that didn’t work,” I responded. Could the other player have asked to see my cards?

The applicable rule is a bit complicated. TDA Rule 18 says that if a player bets and you call, then you have “paid to see the hand.” The rules say you then have an “inalienable right” to see the hand. You may recognize that phrase – it is used in the Declaration of Independence to describe rights that you are born with and that can’t be taken away.

Nevertheless, unlike the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the right to see the bettor’s cards can be easily taken away. If the bettor pushes his hand forward, the caller has a right to see it, but if the bettor throws it in the muck, then the caller has been effectively deprived of this right. Just to make sure there is no misunderstanding about how alienable this right is, the TDA added an Illustration:

Example 2: NLHE. 4 players remain in the hand. On the river A bets 1000, B calls, C raises to 5000, and D, A and B all call. No player is all-in. B tables his hand, showing trips. D instantly discards face down and the dealer kills his hand into the muck. C begins to push his cards forward face down. Both A and B have an inalienable right to see C’s hand on request because 1) they paid to see it as C was the last aggressor on the river and 2) both A and B retain their cards. D (who also called C) relinquished his right to see C’s hand when he discarded without tabling. All other requests in this situation are at TD’s discretion, such as B asking to see A’s cards (the cards of another caller).

Another situation that sometimes comes up is when players all check on the river. They then look around sheepishly because no one wants to be first to turn up his hand. Who has to go first? The rule, found in TDA Rule 17, is pretty simple. The last player who bet or raised must show first. If no one bet on the final round, then the player who would act first must show first.

Finally, if you don’t have to show your cards, but showing them is not prohibited, should you show them? Players sometimes egg you to show them, saying, “Show the bluff – it’s good for the game.” I have no idea what it means that it is good for the game, but it could be good for the other players. When players showed their cards on the World Poker Tour, Mike Sexton would often go crazy, shouting at them for giving away free information.

This is true, but sometimes it may be useful to give away misinformation. If you are a tight player, it might be useful to show your bluff to encourage other players to give you action. Similarly, if you are a loose player, you might show your premium hand to make the other players think you are not just running over them with nothing.

So in the situation at the beginning of this column, it would have been helpful if the dealer had just told me the villain called, instead of saying, “Show.” Then I could decide whether to show or to muck. Since it was not an all-in situation, I was free to do either.

Scott J. Burnham is Professor Emeritus at Gonzaga University School of Law in Spokane, Washington. He can be reached at profburnham@yahoo.com
# Schedules

**FOR COMPLETE TOURNAMENT RESULTS AND LISTINGS, VISIT CARDPLAYER.COM**

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AO - Add On  
B - Bonus  
CP - Crazy Pineapple  
H.O.R.S.E. - Hold’em, Omaha Eight-or-Better, Razz, Seven-Card Stud, Seven-Card Stud Eight-or-Better  
R.O.S.E. - Razz, Omaha Eight-or-Better, Seven-Card Stud, Seven-Card Stud Eight-or-Better  
KO - Knock Out or Bounty  
LH - Limit Hold’em  
MP - Mexican Poker  
NLH - No-Limit Hold’em  
O H/L - Omaha Eight-or-Better  
PLO - Pot-Limit Omaha  
RB - Rebuy  
SH/L - Seven-Card Stud Eight-or-Better  
SLH - Spread-Limit Hold’em

### ARIZONA

**TALKING STICK RESORT - SCOTTSDALE**  
**MONDAY-THURSDAY**  
10:15 a.m. NLH, $125  
10:15 a.m. NLH, $200  
**FRIDAY-SUNDAY**  
10:15 a.m. NLH, $200

### CALIFORNIA

**COMMERCE CASINO - COMMERCE**  
**MONDAY-THURSDAY**  
5:00 p.m. NLH, $125 AO $100  
1:00 p.m. NLH, $125 AO $100  
**FRIDAY-SUNDAY**  
10:00 a.m. NLH, $75 AO $5

### FLORIDA

**OCEAN’S ELEVEN - OCEANSIDE**  
**DAILY**  
10:00 a.m. NLH, $75 AO $5

**BESTBET - JACKSONVILLE**  
**MONDAY**  
7:00 p.m. NLH, $60  
12:00 p.m. NLH, $60  
**FRIDAY**  
12:00 p.m. NLH, $160  
**SUNDAY**  
12:00 p.m. NLH, $160

**PALM BEACH KENNEL CLUB - W. PALM BEACH**  
**MONDAY**  
12:15 p.m. NLH, $125 KO $25  
6:00 p.m. NLH, $70  
**TUESDAY**  
12:15 p.m. NLH, $70  
12:15 p.m. NLH, $100  
6:00 p.m. NLH, $125 KO $25  
**WEDNESDAY**  
12:15 p.m. NLH, $70  
12:15 p.m. NLH, $125  
6:00 p.m. NLH, $40  
**THURSDAY**  
12:15 p.m. NLH, $250 KO $50  
6:00 p.m. NLH, $100

### NEVADA

**SAHARA - LAS VEGAS**  
**DAILY**  
7:00 p.m. NLH, $55 RB $20 AO $20 ($500 Guarantee)  
1:00 p.m. H.O.R.S.E., $105 ($1K Guarantee)  
**SATURDAY**  
11:00 p.m. NLH, $100 RB $50 AO $20 ($3K Guarantee)

**VENETIAN HOTEL & CASINO - LAS VEGAS**  
**MONDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $140 ($5K Guarantee)  
6:10 p.m. NLH, $125 KO $25 ($2K Guarantee)  
**TUESDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $140 ($5K Guarantee)  
6:10 p.m. NLH, $200 KO $50 ($6K Guarantee)  
**WEDNESDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $140 ($5K Guarantee)  
6:10 p.m. NLH, $200 KO $50 ($6K Guarantee)  
**THURSDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $140 ($5K Guarantee)  
6:10 p.m. NLH, $125 KO $25 ($2K Guarantee)  
**FRIDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $200 AO $100 ($20K Guarantee)  
**SATURDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $340 ($20K Guarantee)  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $250 ($12K Guarantee)  
**SUNDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $125 ($4K Guarantee)

### NORTH CAROLINA

**HARRAH’S - CHEROKEE**  
**MONDAY-THURSDAY**  
7:00 p.m. NLH, $135

### MARYLAND

**MGM NATIONAL HARBOR - OXON HILL**  
**MONDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $140 ($5K Guarantee)  
**TUESDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $165 KO $25 ($5K Guarantee)  
**WEDNESDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $560 ($10K Guarantee)  
**THURSDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $140 ($5K Guarantee)  
**SUNDAY**  
11:15 a.m. NLH, $360 ($25K Guarantee)
Poker Stories is a long-form audio podcast series that features casual interviews with some of the game’s best players and personalities. Each episode highlights a well-known member of the poker world and dives deep into their favorite tales both on and off the felt.

Download it directly to your device from any number of mobile apps, such as Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Google Play, or Spotify. Catch up on past episodes featuring notables such as Doyle Brunson, Antonio Esfandiari, Daniel Negreanu, Jennifer Harman, Justin Bonomo, Nick Schulman, Barry Greenstein, Michael Mizrachi, Bryn Kenney, Mike Sexton, Maria Ho, and many more.

www.CardPlayer.com/poker-podcasts
POKER LEADERBOARDS

MOST POKER PRIZE MONEY AWARDED (BY CASINO)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Casino</th>
<th>Payouts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Rio All-Suite Hotel &amp; Casino</td>
<td>$3.05 Billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Bellagio Hotel Casino</td>
<td>$572 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Borgata Hotel Casino &amp; Spa</td>
<td>$440 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>The Venetian Resort Las Vegas</td>
<td>$410 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Casino Barcelona</td>
<td>$408 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Commerce Casino</td>
<td>$372 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Atlantis Resort &amp; Casino</td>
<td>$336 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>ARIA Resort &amp; Casino</td>
<td>$312 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>Crown Casino</td>
<td>$306 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Seminole Hard Rock Hotel &amp; Casino</td>
<td>$302 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite persistent rumors of impending relocation in recent years, the Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino has officially been announced as the site of the World Series of Poker in 2021. The Las Vegas venue is expected to undergo remodeling in the coming years as part of a rebranding under Hyatt Hotels, but the Rio name is likely to remain moving forward. The off-strip casino first hosted the WSOP in 2005.

In the decade and a half since the series moved from Binion’s to the Rio, the latter casino has become the runaway leader in terms of poker tournament prize money awarded, with more than $3 billion paid out to date. The massive summer series has been the major driving force behind this dominant performance, with hundreds of millions awarded at each WSOP. The last live version of the series, held in 2019, paid out a record $293,183,345, or more than all but the top 12 casinos have throughout their entire history.

The Bellagio Hotel Casino is the only other venue in the world to have awarded more than half a billion dollars in poker prize money, with over $572 million paid out since opening in 1998. Much of that prize money has come in World Poker Tour events, with four WPT series taking place on-site per year at the height of the poker boom. The Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa sits in third place with more than $440 million in tournament payouts made. It is the lone Atlantic City, New Jersey casino represented among the top 10.

Seven of the top 10 casinos on this leaderboard are located in the United States, with four being found in Las Vegas, including The Venetian Resort Las Vegas, which currently leads all casinos worldwide in 2021 prize money awarded with over $19 million so far. Casino Barcelona is the highest-ranking international casino with $408 million in lifetime poker tournament payouts. The venue has played host to massive events on both the European Poker Tour and the partypoker LIVE MILLIONS.
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