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JONATHAN LITTLE HOISTS THE POKERGO CUP

Poker Coach Puts On A Clinic With Clutch Win In Series Finale



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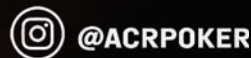
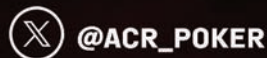
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NEWS FROM THE GAMBLING WORLD

REPORT PREDICTS MAJOR GROWTH FOR ONLINE POKER

Industry Expected To Grow By 11 Percent Annually Through 2030

By Sean Chaffin



Despite some recent security scares, a new study paints a rosy outlook for global online poker over the next several years, with the industry growing from \$59.4 billion in 2022 to \$155.4 billion by 2030.

The study was conducted by the firm *Research and Markets* and predicts that over that time online poker will see an annual growth rate of 11.1%. The report makes note of market trends and forecasts that the industry will continue to see major growth as technological advancements add significantly to the products offered by various operator platforms.

A Look At Some Trends

The study points to a maturing industry with a keen insight on attracting players. Operators' focus on bonuses, promotions, and loyalty programs remain a successful means of player retention and market expansion.

Since the pandemic, online poker has seen another boom and the report notes that tournament play continues to drive many players to the game because of the opportunity of winning a large amount with minimal buy-ins.

More jurisdictions also continue legalizing online gaming and poker, offering additional opportunities for industry growth with one particular market standing out.

"Europe emerges as a standout market, propelled by the sanctioning of online betting activities, bolstered by high disposable incomes and a penchant for leisure pursuits amongst its citizenry," *Research and Markets* reports.

High-Tech Additions Drive Industry

On the technology side, playing while on the go remains a positive for the industry. More platforms are focusing on their mobile offerings, making getting in the action even easier and propelling user engagement.

Also, according to the study, other opportunities for continued growth include blockchain technology, allowing for enhanced security and transactional efficiency. Improved payment methods also make the entire process easier as well. Seamless integration across traditional PCs, tablets, smartphones, gaming consoles, and arcade games also continue adding to gaming companies' bottom lines.

Most players are probably not surprised to learn that the study points to the popularity of Texas hold'em and its grip on the industry as poker's most popular variant.

"The continuous reign of Texas hold'em poker, lauded for its simplicity and array of variants, such as no-limit and pot-limit, maintains a significant market share due to its enduring popularity among both novices and seasoned players."

The news comes as the overall gaming industry continues to grow, according to recent statistics from the American Gaming Association. The commercial gaming industry saw \$16.3 billion in revenue for the third quarter of 2023.

Those numbers are also in line with recent projections for the continued growth of the casino equipment industry as well. ♠

BILL FILED FOR NEW YORK ONLINE GAMING, LOTTERY, AND POKER

By Sean Chaffin

Those hoping to see legalized online poker in New York received some positive news in January with the introduction of a bill authorizing online casino gaming.

The move comes after the Empire State faces a potential budget shortfall as high as \$7 billion for fiscal year 2025. Longtime iGaming proponent Sen. Joseph Addabbo (D-Queens) brought the bill to the state senate and some project that the industry could bring in \$1 billion annually for the state.

“It’s a good bill,” Addabbo told NY1. “We got a lot of input from a lot of individuals, but it’s a starting point. It’s a starting point where I’m hoping that we can have these kinds of discussions during the budget process.”

State representatives have made efforts in the past to legalize online poker and iGaming, but that hasn’t been successful. The budget demands and success of online sports betting in the state, however, may now offer a chance for the bill to reach the finish line.

The proposal includes a 30.5% tax rate and \$2 million licensing fee. The bill would legalize online lottery play as well.

Addabbo pointed to the success of online gaming in states like New Jersey and Pennsylvania as an example for New York. The industry saw some state records for revenue set in 2023. Along with those states, online gaming is also legal in Delaware, Michigan, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and West Virginia. Nevada also allows for legal online



poker.

A potential addition of New York’s 20 million people to the country’s Multi-State Internet Gaming Agreement (MSIGA) could offer major boosts to online poker player fields and prize pools. The agreement allows shared liquidity among poker operators in Nevada, Michigan, New Jersey, and Delaware.

Other states have also considered adding online gaming recently, including Maryland. Addabbo hopes to add to the success of sports betting in the state.

“What we’re seeing is that mobile sports betting in New York is being perceived as the number one product in the country,” Addabbo told Poker Industry Pro in November. “We should build upon that. The timing for iGaming is perfect in the sense that we’re showing that New Yorkers have the propensity and the desire to game with a device, as well as going through a brick-and-mortar site.” ♠

HAWAII LOOKING AT ONLINE POKER, SPORTS BETTING

By Card Player News Team

With no legal casinos or card rooms, Hawaii hasn’t exactly been a hotbed for poker. In fact, Hawaii is one of just two states that has outlawed all forms of gambling, the other being Utah.

But that may be changing at least to some extent if legislators can pass a new bill bringing online poker and sports betting to the state.

Sen. Ronald Kouchi (D) has submitted a bill in the state senate and a companion bill has been filed in the house as well. The bills would legalize online poker and sports betting, and the house version also includes language allowing for a single casino within the Aloha State.

The senate bill proposes a profit-sharing plan with a single gaming operator. The state would take 70% of revenue in year one, decreasing by 5% each year until dropping to only 5% by the 14th year. New Hampshire and Rhode Island run similar single-operator plans.

Funds raised would be earmarked for the state’s wildfire fund, to help prevent fires and aid victims. The state is facing significant costs associated with the August wildfires in Maui, which is estimated at more than \$5 billion.

The senate bill is frank in its language, noting that many on the island already make use of offshore gaming sites for casino play, poker, and sports betting. Backers of the plan



hope to bring those players and their dollars into a legal environment that benefits the state.

“To protect Hawaii residents who gamble on the Internet, and to capture revenues generated in Hawaii from online sports wagering and poker, it is in the best interest of the state and its citizens to regulate this existing activity by authorizing and implementing a secure, responsible, and legal system for online sports and poker wagering,” the bill notes.

With a population of just 1.4 million people, Hawaii creating a vibrant online poker player pool on its own seems unlikely, even with tourists.

The bill doesn’t currently include language to join the country’s Multi-State Internet Gaming Agreement (MSIGA), which allows shared liquidity among poker operators in Nevada, Michigan, New Jersey, and Delaware. ♠

FORCED TAG TEAM? TEXAS POKER ROOM HOSTS 'WACKY WEEKEND'

By Ryan Lucchesi

The Lodge Card Club in Round Rock, Texas hosted one of the strangest lineups you will ever see for a tournament series in early February. If you were looking for some unique tournaments with interesting rules then this was the stop for you.

The *Wacky Weekend of Poker* lineup included deuces wild, double board bomb pot, fun under the gun, flip and go, forced tag team, nit game, dealer's choice, no checking no-limit hold'em, mystery bounty chaos, and blood river (ocean).

If some of those event names sound unfamiliar, you are not alone.

Dealer's choice and double board bomb pots might be known to most experienced players, but what was happening in the fun under the gun tournament? In that event, the first player to act was able to pick the game *after* looking at their cards.

There was also a deuces wild tournament. Local radio host and Lodge Poker commentator Rick Epstein managed to bust from the tournament holding pocket deuces, and failed to make the money despite being dealt the hand four times.

The flip and go tournament saw Omaha flips until the start of the final table, and then the forced tag team event lived up to its name by not allowing players to pick their partners – that was done at random.

The nit game event forced the last player to win a hand to pay a 'nit tax' to the pot, similar to a 'stand up' round in cash games. The 'no checking' event was rather self-explanatory, but things got really interesting on the final day of the tournament series with two fun variations.

The Lodge put a twist on the club's mystery bounty event, offering not only bounties, but also tournament penalties.



Knock a player out and you could win cash, or see your stack cut in half!

The closing event for the series was the blood river (ocean) tournament, where if the river was a red card, then a sixth card would be added to the board as well.

Mixed-games expert and two-time *WSOP* bracelet winner Nathan Gamble was among the winners at the tournament series, sharing his excitement about the new game variations.

"Every table from the start to the finish had more happy people, more laughter, and more bonding than the next," said Gamble. "Amazing showcase of the mix game world."

Lodge Card Club co-owner and high-stakes pro Doug Polk reported that the series was an overall success and teased that more "wacky" events may be in the works in the future.

"Entry numbers have been great for the *Wacky Weekend of Poker*, apart from a few duds," Polk said. "We'll definitely be running more stuff like this." ♠

Twitter/X Inks Deal With BetMGM For Sports Betting

By Card Player News Team



Check out Twitter on an average NFL Sunday and sports fans will find plenty of predictions, crazy bets, and frustration about bets gone wrong. There seems to be plenty of posting about the day's gridiron action.

With 39 states (as well as Washington D.C. and the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico) legalizing some form of sports betting, BetMGM and Twitter/X are looking to bring even more stats and prognostication to the platform. The two companies have announced a deal that will bring BetMGM betting lines and information to Twitter as well as BetMGM advertising.

"While the specific financial terms of the collaboration could not be learned, the intention is to introduce a feature for X soon that will showcase betting odds and provide a direct link to BetMGM, allowing users to place bets," Fortune reports.

The agreement may be a first for Twitter, which has recently rebranded as X, but looks to enhance an outlet already used by many sports betting fans. The platform allows BetMGM to reach many gamblers as the company looks to grow its customer base.

MGM occupies the third-place spot in the U.S. sports betting market behind FanDuel and DraftKings. The company sits at a market share of 17%, but is looking to grow that number to over 20%, management outlined in a recent presentation.

Already an official sports betting partner of the NFL, NHL, and MLB, BetMGM also hopes to go live in North Carolina, New York, Maryland, and Illinois this year as part of its expansion efforts. ♠

TROPICANA CASINO IN LAS VEGAS SETS CLOSING DATE

By Card Player News Team



Gamblers hoping for some action at the Tropicana in Las Vegas only have a few weeks left to hit the craps tables or drop a few bucks in a slot machine. Bally's announced this week that the property will officially close on April 4 as site preparation and construction on the new A's baseball stadium is expected to begin in the coming months.

"While this is a great opportunity for the company, it comes with a bittersweet feeling as this means that operations at the Tropicana Las Vegas will shut down for redevelopment," Tropicana Vice President and General Manager Arik Knowles said in a memo to employees.

The Tropicana opened in 1957 and at a cost of \$15 million (\$161 million today) was the most expensive property to open in Las Vegas at the time. The casino saw some additions over the years including the construction of two hotel towers in 1979 and 1986.

The casino tended to target mid-range gamblers and the "Folies Bergere" showgirl review became a popular entertainment option. Other acts taking the stage at the casino included Louis Armstrong, Jayne Mansfield, Gladys Knight, Wayne Newton, Siegfried and Roy, and others.

On the card-playing front, the property had been the home of Bally's Big Bet Poker over the last two years. The streaming cash game was hosted by Maverick Gaming CEO and high-stakes poker player Eric Persson. There has been no word yet if the live stream will return in a new space when the casino is rebuilt, or move to a new venue in Las Vegas entirely, but the game will be headed to the Commerce

Casino in Los Angeles later this year.

Tropicana management is working with employees to offer resources and severance packages. The company is also assisting staff members who may be interested in jobs at other Bally's casinos across the country.

"On behalf of our entire leadership team, we deeply appreciate all the effort and incredible work our team has put forth during our time here – dating all the way back to the property's debut in 1957," Knowles said in the memo to employees. "We know the past few months have not been easy, but we cannot begin to express how thankful we are to have such a stellar team to work with day in and day out."

The A's and Bally's announced a 50-year lease deal in May for the team to build a \$1.5 billion, 35,000-seat stadium on the site. The stadium will occupy nine acres, with the remaining 25-acre site available for the gaming company to build another hotel and casino.

The MLB approved the move from Oakland to Las Vegas in November and the new stadium is expected to be finished by 2027 or 2028. That could change if a group known as Schools Over Stadiums gets their wish, pushing for a ballot referendum to vote on the fate of \$380 million in public funds earmarked for the stadium project.

There's also the issue of ongoing TV contract negotiations, as each market is a different size. The A's are scheduled to leave Oakland next year but do not yet have a temporary stadium to play host to their home games while waiting for the Las Vegas stadium to be built. ♠

JONATHAN LITTLE HOISTS THE POKERGO CUP

Poker Coach Puts On A Clinic With Clutch Win In Series Finale

By Erik Fast



The 2024 *PokerGO Cup* series paid out more than \$7.3 million in total prize money from Jan. 25 - Feb. 3, with 637 total entries made across the eight-event high-stakes tournament festival.

This year's series-long points race came down to a photo finish, with **Jonathan Little** able to close out the victory in the clutch, taking down the \$26,000 final to jump to the top of the leaderboard.

With two titles and \$730,350 in total earnings made across four cashes during the eight-event tournament festival, Little was officially crowned this year's *PokerGO Cup* champion, securing the trophy and an additional bonus of \$25,000.

"What an amazing feeling! This week was a blast battling against many of the best players in the world and I'm incredibly lucky to win this \$25,000 and the *PokerGO Cup*," said Little. "Thanks for all the love and support, it means the world to me!"

This high-roller victory was the fourth-largest payday of Little's tournament career. The *Card Player* columnist and two-time *World Poker Tour* champion now has more than \$8.8 million in lifetime earnings to his name after his impressive showing during this series.

The 39-year-old poker pro and owner of the PokerCoaching training site has cashed for nearly \$800,000 in 2024, which is already good enough for his third-biggest year on the live circuit since he first showed up on the scene in 2006.

David Peters Strikes First, Jonathan Little Follows

Despite only eight events on the schedule, half of them were won by two players. Like Jonathan Little, **David Peters**

also won two tournaments during the series, and would have secured the leaderboard title had it not been for Little and Zaki finding themselves heads up in the finale.

Peters was the first player to pose for a winner photo, having topped a field of 111 entries in the \$5,100 kickoff event. The four-time bracelet winner earned \$141,525 and his 42nd recorded tournament victory.

Dylan Weisman came out on top of an 89-entry field in event no. 2, banking \$240,300. His victory in this \$10,500 buy-in event earned him his second-largest career tournament score.

This was also the biggest no-limit hold'em payday for Weisman, who has found most of his success on the circuit playing pot-limit Omaha events, including his *WSOP* bracelet win. Thanks to this two-card victory, Weisman now has more than \$2.8 million in recorded earnings to his name.

This was Weisman's second title of 2024, having also won a \$5,300 buy-in event and cashed in another during the *PGT Kickoff* series. He has already accrued 912 POY points this year, good for 34th place in the 2024 POY standings. He has also locked up 505 *PGT* rankings points across these two wins and three in-the-money finishes. As a result, he sits in fourth place on that leaderboard.

The first of Little's two titles came in event no. 3. He defeated a stacked final table in the \$10,500 tournament to earn \$229,500, which was his largest live victory in a decade.

The event drew 85 entries to build an \$850,000 prize pool. The top 13 finishers made the money, including six-time bracelet winner and 2021 *PokerGO Cup* champion Daniel Negreanu (7th), two-time bracelet winner Jesse Lonis

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(4th), and bracelet winner Alex Foxen (2nd).
 Speaking of past *PokerGO Cup* champions, 2023 series points leader **Cary Katz** was the next to get his hand on a trophy. The 53-year-old businessman and poker player defeated a field of 81 entries in the \$10,500 tournament for his latest tournament victory, earning \$226,800 for the win.
 The *PokerGO* founder surpassed \$40 million in career tournament earnings with this victory, becoming just the 15th player in poker history to top that milestone.
 The final \$10,500 buy-in on the schedule was won by **Justin Zaki**, who topped a field of 83 entries to earn \$232,400 and just his third live tournament title.
 Zaki's win in this event put him in the position to go for the series win with a deep run in the finale. More on that later, though.



Coleman Continues Hot Streak, Peters Gets No. 2

David Coleman didn't win his first live tournament title until 5,055 days after making his first cash on the circuit. That long-awaited breakthrough has seemingly opened the floodgates.

After more than 13 years on the scene with plenty of success but no outright live wins, Coleman has captured four titles already in 2024, with \$766,000 in earnings across eight in-the-money finishes.

Coleman's latest victory saw the 30-year-old former online grinder from New Jersey defeat a field of 63 entries in the first of two \$15,700 buy-in tournaments on the *PokerGO Cup* schedule. He took home \$302,400 for the win, increasing his career earnings to more than \$4.4 million in the process.

This hot streak began with a win in the \$1,600 *Card Player Poker Tour Venetian* main event for \$115,989. He then made four cashes and won two events at the *PokerGO Kickoff* series before adding two more final tables during the *PokerGO Cup*, including this win.

Coleman has already accrued 2,156 POY points, with three qualified wins and six final-table finishes. One of his four titles came in an event that did not award POY points due to not meeting the minimum prize pool requirements. Nonetheless, Coleman has surged into first place in the 2024 POY standings thanks to his impressive start to the year. He also leads the *PGT* points race with 937 total points in that high-stakes-centric competition.

The penultimate event of the festival saw **David Peters** best a field of 70 entries to come away with \$315,000 and his second title of the series. As a result, he took the lead in the series-long points race heading into the final event, having accrued 457 *PGT* points and \$456,525 and has climbed into fifth in the year-long *PGT* standings.

The 36-year-old American pro came into this festival with two final-table finishes already under his belt in 2024. He now has four, accumulating 1,324 POY points. This latest win catapulted the 2016 POY award winner into the top 10 in the 2024 POY standings.

Peters now has more than \$47.7 million in lifetime earnings accumulated across 505 in-the-money finishes, which is good for ninth place on poker's all-time money list.

Kristen Foxen finished second for \$204,750 in the tournament. She has now made six final tables so far in 2024, with one title won along the way, and as a result, she now

sits in seventh place in the POY standings and second in the *PGT* points race.

This was her second cash of this series, having also finished eighth in event no. 4 for \$32,400. She now has more than \$8.2 million in lifetime tournament earnings, the second-highest total of any female player. Only Vanessa Selbst with \$10.9 million has cashed for more on the circuit.

Little Closes Out The Series In Style

Little came into the final event with not only the victory in event no. 3 but also a seventh-place showing in event no. 1 and a ninth-place finish in event no. 5. His strong performance inside the *PokerGO Studio* at Aria Resort & Casino on the Las Vegas Strip came amidst a social media beef between poker pros Daniel Negreanu and Matt Berkey that arose from criticism of Little's play by Berkey. Despite the drama, Little was able to shut out the noise and put together one of his best runs yet on the tournament circuit.

There were 55 entries in the \$26,000 buy-in finale, which resulted in a \$1,375,000 prize pool that was ultimately split up amongst the top eight finishers. Stephen Chidwick (8th) and Jim Collopy (7th) each earned \$55,000 after being knocked out late on day 1 after the bubble had burst thanks to the cracked pocket aces of four-time bracelet winner Nick Schulman. Two-time bracelet winner John Riordan's Q-9 suited improved to two pair on the turn after the chips went in pre flop, which helped Riordan bag the chip lead heading into day 2.

Little was in fifth chip position among the remaining six contenders when cards got back in the air. *PokerGO* newcomer Shaneil Stokes (6th – \$82,500) was the first to fall. His pocket sixes were outraced by the A-Q of event no. 5 winner Justin Zaki, who had already overtaken the lead. Zaki flopped a queen and held from there to pull even further ahead.

Little scored a key double up with middle pair holding against Zaki's open-ended straight draw and overcards to find some room to maneuver. He then knocked out short-stack Seth Davies in fifth place (\$110,000), besting his fellow *WPT* champion's A-9 with A-K to narrow the field to four.

The surge up the leaderboard continued for Little when he picked off a river bluff from Zaki. Little's diamond flush draw improved to a pair of aces on the end, while Zaki's bottom pair and club flush draw bricked out.

Riordan's run came to an end when his A-J was unable to come from behind facing the A-Q suited of Zaki. He earned



\$137,500 as the fourth-place finisher to increase his career earnings to nearly \$4 million.

Not long after that, another two-time bracelet winner found himself all-in and at risk against Zaki. This time around, it was Justin Saliba who was facing elimination. His $A\clubsuit 3\heartsuit$ was in rough shape against the $A\spadesuit A\diamondsuit$ of Zaki. The board came down $Q\clubsuit Q\clubsuit 3\clubsuit 2\clubsuit 7\clubsuit$ to give Zaki the nut flush and the knockout.

Saliba earned \$192,500 for his third-place showing. Like Little, he also cashed in half of the events on the schedule. The 29-year-old already has more than \$5.9 million in cashes despite being one of the younger players on the high roller circuit.

With two previous event winners heads-up, Peters was officially eliminated from leaderboard contention despite his two wins. Little had the advantage over Zaki to start with

a 4:3 lead.

Little was able to extend his lead to nearly 3:1 by the time the final hand was dealt. He shoved from the button with $A\clubsuit 3\clubsuit$ and Zaki called with $K\heartsuit 7\heartsuit$. The board came down $A\heartsuit 9\diamondsuit 7\spadesuit J\clubsuit J\heartsuit$ and Little made aces and jacks to lock up the pot, the title, and the *PokerGO Cup* championship.

Zaki earned \$288,750 as the runner-up, the fourth-largest score of his career. He now has more than \$5.3 million in lifetime cashes to his name.

In addition to earning enough *PokerGO Tour* points to top this festival's leaderboard, Little's 549 points accrued during this series were sufficient to move him into third place in the season-long *PGT* standings. His hot start to the year has also moved him into a tie for 17th place in the 2024 *Card Player* Player of the Year rankings presented by Global Poker. ♠

PokerGO Cup Leaderboard

Rank	Player	Points	Wins	Cashes	Winnings
1	Jonathan Little	549	2	4	\$730,350
2	David Peters	457	2	2	\$456,525
3	Justin Zaki	405	1	2	\$521,150
4	David Coleman	347	1	2	\$346,900
5	Seth Davies	277	0	3	\$321,050
6	Daniel Smiljkovic	261	0	2	\$260,750
7	Cary Katz	252	1	2	\$251,700
8	Justin Saliba	250	0	4	\$326,875
9	Dylan Weisman	240	1	1	\$240,300
10	Kristen Foxen	237	0	2	\$237,150

PokerGO Cup – Aria – Las Vegas, Nevada



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$5,300 NLH Jan. 25-26 Entries: 111 Prizepool: \$555,000	1 David Peters	\$141,525 (480)
	2 Mark Ioli	\$88,800 (400)
	3 Shawn Daniels	\$63,825 (320)
	4 Fabian Quoss	\$49,950 (240)
	5 Dusti Smith	\$36,075 (200)
	6 Cody Daniels	\$27,750 (160)
	7 Jonathan Little	\$22,200 (120)
	8 Jeremy Becker	\$22,200 (80)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,500 NLH Jan. 30-31 Entries: 83 Prizepool: \$830,000	1 Justin Zaki	\$232,400 (480)
	2 Joey Weissman	\$149,400 (400)
	3 Stephen Chidwick	\$107,900 (320)
	4 Sam Soverel	\$78,850 (240)
	5 Justin Saliba	\$58,100 (200)
	6 Joris Ruijs	\$41,500 (160)
	7 Ariel Mantel	\$33,200 (120)
	8 Dan Shak	\$33,200 (80)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,500 NLH Jan. 26-27 Entries: 89 Prizepool: \$890,000	1 Dylan Weisman	\$240,300 (480)
	2 Daniel Smiljkovic	\$155,750 (400)
	3 Byron Kaverman	\$111,250 (320)
	4 Anthony Hu	\$80,100 (240)
	5 Michael Watson	\$62,300 (200)
	6 David Coleman	\$44,500 (160)
	7 Morten Klein	\$35,600 (120)
	8 Alex Foxen	\$35,600 (80)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$15,700 NLH Jan. 31-Feb. 1 Entries: 63 Prizepool: \$945,000	1 David Coleman	\$302,400 (432)
	2 Dylan Destefano	\$189,000 (360)
	3 Seth Davies	\$132,300 (288)
	4 Michael Brinkenhoff	\$94,500 (216)
	5 Aram Zobian	\$70,875 (180)
	6 Justin Saliba	\$51,975 (144)
	7 Jeremy Ausmus	\$37,800 (108)
	8 Sam Soverel	\$37,800 (72)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,500 NLH Jan. 27-29 Entries: 85 Prizepool: \$850,000	1 Jonathan Little	\$229,500 (480)
	2 Alex Foxen	\$148,750 (400)
	3 Dan Shak	\$106,250 (320)
	4 Jesse Lonis	\$76,500 (240)
	5 Peter Weinand	\$59,500 (200)
	6 Brock Wilson	\$42,500 (160)
	7 Daniel Negreanu	\$34,000 (120)
	8 John Hennigan	\$34,000 (80)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$15,700 NLH Feb. 1-2 Entries: 70 Prizepool: \$1,050,000	1 David Peters	\$315,000 (504)
	2 Kristen Foxen	\$204,750 (420)
	3 Brock Wilson	\$141,750 (336)
	4 Daniel Smiljkovic	\$105,000 (252)
	5 Seth Davies	\$78,750 (210)
	6 Morten Klein	\$57,750 (168)
	7 Nick Petrangelo	\$42,000 (126)
	8 Sean Winter	\$42,000 (84)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,500 NLH Jan. 29-30 Entries: 81 Prizepool: \$810,000	1 Cary Katz	\$226,800 (480)
	2 Stoyan Madanzhiev	\$145,800 (400)
	3 Aram Zobian	\$105,300 (320)
	4 Chino Rheem	\$76,950 (240)
	5 Jeremy Ausmus	\$56,700 (200)
	6 Jesse Lonis	\$40,500 (160)
	7 Brock Wilson	\$32,400 (120)
	8 Kristen Foxen	\$32,400 (80)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$26,000 NLH Feb. 2-3 Entries: 55 Prizepool: \$1,375,000	1 Jonathan Little	\$453,750 (420)
	2 Justin Zaki	\$288,750 (350)
	3 Justin Saliba	\$192,500 (280)
	4 John Riordan	\$137,500 (210)
	5 Seth Davies	\$110,000 (175)
	6 Shaneil Stokes	\$82,500 (140)
	7 Jim Collopy	\$55,000 (105)
	8 Stephen Chidwick	\$55,000 (70)

RESORTS WORLD LAS VEGAS TEAMS UP WITH POKERATLAS TOUR THIS MARCH

More Than \$700,000 Guaranteed During Series March 7-18

By Card Player News Team



Resorts World Las Vegas hosted its first major poker series late in 2023 with the PokerStars *North American Poker Tour*. The festival was a smashing success, with over 3,200 total entries and more than \$4.2 million in prize money awarded across 17 events. The \$4.3 billion property is now set to welcome another exciting festival in March of 2024.

The 10-event *PokerAtlas Tour* Las Vegas stop is set to run from March 7-18, with more than \$700,000 in guaranteed prize money to be paid out along the way.

Chip counts for every player throughout every event are published as part of the tour's coverage.

The centerpiece of the festival is the \$300,000 guaranteed \$800 buy-in no-limit hold'em main event scheduled for March 14-18.

This stop has something for every player, with a variety of games and formats on offer and buy-ins ranging from \$260 up to the \$800 price tag for the main event. In addition to several standard no-limit hold'em tournaments, there will also be a \$150,000 guaranteed \$400 buy-in mystery bounty event, a \$400 H.O.R.S.E. tournament, a \$400 Omaha eight-or-better event, and a \$400 Omaha eight-or-better/stud eight-or-better mix event.

About Resorts World

When Resorts World Las Vegas opened in 2021, it marked the first new resort on the legendary Las Vegas Strip in over a decade. The property was developed on the site of the Stardust, which was demolished back in 2007.

The resort features a 117,000 square foot casino, and a 59-story hotel with three distinct Hotels. Las Vegas Hilton, Conrad Las Vegas, and Crockfords Las Vegas combine for nearly 3,500 total rooms.

The casino floor boasts 1,400 slot machines, 117 table games, and of course, the poker room.

In addition to gaming, the property offers plenty of other world-class entertainment options, with the 5,000-person

Resorts World Theater, the Zouk Nightclub, and the Ayu Beach House. There are also more than 50 dining and drinking establishments on site.

For more information on Resorts World Las Vegas, check out the official website at rwlasvegas.com. ♠



Event	Date	No. of Days	Buy-In
No-Limit Hold'em \$200K GTD*	Mar 07	4	\$500
Giant Stack \$25K GTD	Mar 10	1	\$400
No-Limit Hold'em \$10K GTD	Mar 10	1	\$260
Mystery Bounty \$150K GTD*	Mar 11	4	\$400
Omaha 8	Mar 11	1	\$400
H.O.R.S.E.	Mar 12	1	\$400
Omaha 8 / Stud 8	Mar 13	1	\$400
No-Limit Hold'em \$300K GTD*	Mar 14	5	\$800
No-Limit Hold'em \$10K GTD	Mar 16	1	\$260
No-Limit Hold'em \$10K GTD	Mar 17	1	\$260

‘THE RAMINATOR’ TRIUMPHS IN LUCKY HEARTS POKER OPEN

By Erik Fast



The name ‘Singh’ comes from a Sanskrit word for a lion. This seems fitting for Raminder Singh, who has become an apex predator in the Florida tournament poker scene.

Even though poker is just a hobby for the Delray Beach businessman, he has managed to accumulate nearly 90 tournament titles in the past 11 years, with most of those coming in his home state.

Singh saved his best performance for January, however, taking down the *Lucky Hearts Poker Open* \$3,500 main event at the Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood for a career-best payday of \$486,353. Singh now has nearly \$2.8 million in recorded tournament earnings after this latest win.

“It feels really great. I don’t really ever play any big tournaments that go into the week. I need to have a pretty fine schedule to skip all my work, so normally I don’t play these. But this time, my friends, they convinced me to play in this. This was the time to play. I’ve been in good form, I’ve been playing well, I couldn’t miss this tournament,” Singh told *SHR* reporters.

“With this prestigious win, to be honest with you, I may really have to think about a trophy case with this giant trophy. This is my no. 1 win. This is by far my largest score,” said Singh when asked about his rapidly expanding collection of tournament hardware.

This win did indeed blow away Singh’s previous top score of \$200,000 earned for a victory in a \$600 buy-in event with 3,229 entries back in 2019. That event was also held at the Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood, which is now the site of three of Singh’s four largest tournament results.

In addition to this latest title and the prize money, Singh also earned 1,440 POY points as the champion of this event. This was already his second POY-qualified final table of the year, having placed fourth in a \$400 turbo event earlier in this same festival. With 1,493 total points, Singh now sits in fifth place on the 2024 POY leaderboard.

This tournament drew a massive field of 1,188 entries, nearly doubling the \$2 million guarantee to build a final prize pool of \$3,801,600. The top 148 finishers made the money, with six-figure paydays for the final seven.

After two starting flights and two more days of action, the field narrowed down to 16 contenders with Justin Datloff in the lead and Singh in third place. 2021 *Wynn Millions* champion Andrew Moreno (15th) and two-time bracelet winner Sean Troha (14th) were among the notables that fell on the way to the official final table.

Plenty of highly-accomplished players joined Singh among the final nine, including six-time bracelet winner Brian Hastings (9th), bracelet winner Toby Joyce (8th), five-time bracelet winner Benny Glaser (7th), 2023 *Hard Rock Poker Showdown* third-place finisher Mitch Garshofsky (6th), and *WPT* champion Jonathan Jaffe (5th).

The elimination of Datloff in fourth place (\$229,000) left Singh playing three-handed with former online poker stand-out Dan Martin and two-time bracelet winner Jesse Lonis. That trio battled it out for a bit before deciding to take a look at some chop numbers. They ultimately agreed to a deal that brought the tournament to an end.

As the chip leader at the time, Singh was awarded \$486,353 and the title. Martin took home \$460,000, while Lonis secured \$404,247 as the third-place finisher.

Martin climbed to 15th place in the POY standings with 1,200 points, while Lonis moved to fourth place with 1,504 total points. Lonis had finished sixth in a \$5,300 event at the *PGT Kickoff* festival earlier this month for \$22,500 and 144 points, and backed up this podium finish with a pair of final-table showings at the *PokerGO Cup* for a total of \$117,000 and 400 points.

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Raminder Singh	\$486,353 (1,440)
2 Daniel Martin	\$460,000 (1,200)
3 Jesse Lonis	\$404,247 (960)
4 Justin Datloff	\$229,900 (720)
5 Jonathan Jaffe	\$173,500 (600)
6 Mitch Garshofsky	\$132,300 (480)
7 Benny Glaser	\$102,000 (360)
8 Toby Joyce	\$79,400 (240)
9 Brian Hastings	\$62,500 (120)

© Seminole Hard Rock

ALEX QUEEN TAKES DOWN BORGATA WINTER POKER OPEN

By Ryan Lucchesi

Alex Queen topped the field at the *Borgata Winter Open* in late January, taking home the top prize worth \$613,063 to take his career earnings past \$2.4 million.

The victory was Queen's seventh overall, and was also the largest single score of his poker career. The Borgata regular from nearby Bethlehem, Pennsylvania has recorded his three largest cashes at the property.

The win was also worth a massive 1,680 *Card Player* POY points to Queen, who now sits in second place.

The \$5,300 buy-in event attracted a field of 689 entries over two starting flights to create a prize pool worth \$3,341,650. The top 87 players all took home at least \$8,220 in prize money.

Queen took the chip lead in one of the largest hands of the tournament near the start of the final table when his pocket aces topped the pocket kings of John Pannucci (three-time *WPT* champion Anthony Zinno folded pocket queens in the hand as well). The aces held for Queen, and he never looked back from there.

He then took out Carlos Chadha-Villamarin in fifth place, Brian Yoon in third place, and ultimately fellow poker professional and Borgata regular Pannucci in the final heads-up match to snag the victory.

Queen ran his chip advantage up to a 10:1 ratio before the final hand was dealt, and the tournament was sealed when his A-4 dominated the 8-4 of his opponent and held.



Pannucci took home \$429,836 for the runner-up finish, also the largest score in his poker career.

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Alexander Queen	\$613,063 (1,680)
2 John Pannucci	\$429,836 (1,400)
3 Brian Yoon	\$277,123 (1,120)
4 Anthony Zinno	\$203,473 (840)
5 Carlos Chadha-Villamarin	\$155,387 (700)
6 Casey Hatmaker	\$123,875 (560)
7 Frank Lagodich	\$102,589 (420)
8 Paul Volpe	\$81,670 (280)
9 Yunkyu Song	\$61,319 (140)

© Poker.org / Matthew Berglund

FORMER POKER REPORTER WINS MSPT BLACK HAWK

By Erik Fast

Mo Nuwwarah worked in the poker media from 2013 through 2021, with six years as a staff writer for *PokerNews*. The Omaha, Nebraska native recently transitioned to covering sports betting as a writer for *The Lines*. Despite shifting to a new industry, he has continued to be involved with poker as a player.

Nuwwarah has now cashed for more than \$575,000, with his three biggest scores coming in the past five months. The largest of all of those came in late January, when Nuwwarah outlasted a field of 822 to win the *Mid-States Poker Tour Bally's Black Hawk* \$1,110 main event in Colorado for \$155,189.

Nuwwarah earned 912 POY points for his second title of the year, having already taken down a \$600 event at the Harrah's Council Bluffs *Holiday Poker Classic*. He now sits in 12th place in the overall standings.

Nuwwarah survived to the final table as the short stack, and then cracked pocket aces with a rivered flush with his pocket kings to surge up the counts. He won another big all-in later with pocket queens holding against the A-K of both Jeff Soffer (4th) and Antonio Vargas (3rd), who were sharing each other's outs.

Nuwwarah was able to convert his 5:1 chip lead over Jeremy Wood into the title, with his pocket deuces winning a flip against A♦ 8♦ to bring the event to a close.

Nuwwarah had come close to a major win before, finishing runner-up in the 2023 *WSOPC Council Bluffs* main event for \$72,216 and second in a 2019 *MSPT* main event



for \$42,349. Nuwwarah has also won two *WSOPC* rings over the years.

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Mohammed Nuwwarah	\$155,189 (912)
2 Jeremy Wood	\$95,497 (760)
3 Antonio Vargas	\$70,352 (608)
4 Jeffrey Soffer	\$52,525 (456)
5 Jack Corrigan	\$39,792 (380)
6 Mansour Alipour-Ford	\$30,242 (304)
7 Sean Lee	\$23,079 (228)
8 Shant Marashlian	\$18,304 (152)
9 Michael Giardina	\$14,325 (76)

© MSPT

KONSTANTIN HELD CAPTURES WPT CAMBODIA TITLE

By Erik Fast

A total of 760 entries were made in the *WPT Cambodia Championship* \$3,500 main event, blowing away the \$1 million guarantee to create a prize pool of \$2,432,760 that was split among the top 95 finishers.

After two starting flights and three more days of action at the NagaWorld Integrated Resort in Phnom Penh, it was Germany's Konstantin Held who nabbed the title and \$350,910. Held was also awarded 1,368 POY points for the win, moving him into eighth place in the points race.

This was the largest score yet for Held, who now has more than \$750,000 in total recorded tournament earnings.

Held came into the final day leading the remaining nine contenders, and took out two more players on the way to three-handed play, where a deal was struck. Held locked up \$350,910 as the chip leader, while Florent Remi was paid out \$302,019, and Joshua Mccully earned \$277,291, leaving just the trophy and a *WPT Championship* seat to play for.

Mccully overtook and then knocked out Remi in third, with a flush-over-flush scenario landing the final blow. He held better than a 3:1 chip lead after that, but that was quickly erased thanks to a double-up and a big pot won without showdown for Held.

In the final hand, Mccully shoved from the button with 9♦ 7♣ and Held called with K♥ 5♠. The board ran out J♥ 4♥ 2♦ 10♦ 6♦ to see Held lock up the pot and the title.



Player	Payout (POY)
1 Konstantin Held	\$350,910 (1,368)
2 Josh Mccully	\$277,291 (1,140)
3 Florent Remi	\$302,019 (912)
4 Motoyoshi Okamura	\$157,858 (684)
5 Amit Kaushik	\$118,906 (570)
6 Kyle Diep	\$90,532 (456)
7 Jianfeng Sun	\$69,678 (342)
8 Kou Vang	\$54,212 (228)
9 Anthony Cierco	\$42,647 (114)

© WPT / Joe Giron

MATTHEW HIGGINS EARNS FIFTH CIRCUIT RING

By Ryan Lucchesi

Matthew Higgins captured the top prize in the *WSOP Circuit* main event that brought the tournament series to a close at the Horseshoe Casino & Hotel in Tunica, Mississippi. This takes the *WSOP Circuit* gold ring count for Higgins up to five thanks to four previous victories he racked up in North Carolina.

His career earnings are now close to \$1.75 million with this, his fifth six-figure score in the books.

The \$1,700 tournament saw a field of 568 entries join the fray during two starting flights. That took the prize pool up to \$791,673 to top the half-million guarantee.

The top 60 players made the money for a min-cash worth \$3,356. Notables that made a deep run in the tournament included many former *WSOP Circuit* victors including 15-time winner Maurice Hawkins (30th), Jared Ingles (16th), Spencer Champlin (15th), and 14-time winner Daniel Lowery (11th).

Higgins was second in chips to start the final day, but eliminated Marty Martin in sixth place to take the chip lead by the first break in play. He never relinquished it, taking out B.J. McBrayer in third place to enter heads-up play against Dale Roesel.

All the money got in the middle only once between the final two contenders, and Higgins held Q-3 offsuit against the suited 8-4 of Roesel. Higgins found another queen on the flop, and that was it for Roesel, who took home \$103,248 for the runner-up finish to take his career earnings up close to \$1.3 million.



Player	Payout (POY)
1 Matthew Higgins	\$167,058 (840)
2 Dale Roesel	\$103,248 (700)
3 B.J. McBrayer	\$74,743 (560)
4 Ronald Taylor	\$54,898 (420)
5 Richard Hines	\$40,919 (350)
6 Marty Martin	\$30,958 (280)
7 Eric Salazar	\$23,779 (210)
8 David Baize	\$18,548 (140)
9 Charlie Dawson	\$14,695 (70)

© WSOP

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DONNIE PETERS & TIM DUCKWORTH



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CIRCUIT RESULTS

All payouts in USD.



© Deerfoot Casino

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit	1 Zhun Chen	\$247,819 (960)
	2 Hasanain Ghunaim	\$153,164 (800)
Deerfoot Casino Calgary, Canada	3 Xavier Zofimo	\$116,997 (640)
	4 Tommy Nguyen	\$90,079 (480)
	5 Garrett Maybery	\$69,910 (400)
C\$1,700 NLH Jan. 18-22 Entries: 1,475 Prizepool: \$1,659,656	6 Arif Dhalla	\$54,694 (320)
	7 Jackson Oniske	\$43,138 (240)
	8 Jason Heang	\$34,303 (160)
	9 Sunny Lubana	\$27,502 (80)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit	1 David Li	\$107,279 (480)
	2 Wille Scott	\$66,303 (400)
Deerfoot Casino Calgary, Canada	3 Bashar Ramahi	\$47,790 (320)
	4 Jeff Cormier	\$35,001 (240)
	5 Mike Leah	\$26,054 (200)
C\$2,200 NLH Jan. 21-22 Entries: 346 Prizepool: \$504,984	6 Abe Shawile	\$19,717 (160)
	7 Zhigang Yang	\$15,173 (120)
	8 Jimmy Lee	\$11,878 (80)
	9 Michael Flanagan	\$9,461 (40)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
LAPC	1 Rudy Cervantes	\$50,000 (365)
Commerce Casino Commerce, CA	2 Farzin Akhtar	\$32,840 (304)
	3 Linh Luong	\$24,240 (243)
	4 Kenton Moore	\$18,040 (182)
\$400 NLH Jan. 15-20 \$150,000 GTD Entries: 879 Prizepool: \$281,280	5 Tong Thanh Le	\$13,570 (152)
	6 Yukun Zhang	\$10,420 (122)
	7 Garrett Poling	\$8,040 (91)
	8 Narine Malkhasyan	\$6,270 (61)
	9 Frank Lin	\$4,960 (30)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Moneymaker Poker Tour	1 Han Ming Feng	\$54,100 (336)
	2 Bradley Ruben	\$49,095 (280)
Texas Card House Houston, TX	3 David Shaw	\$30,050 (224)
	4 Juan Tejada	\$22,210 (168)
\$1,500 NLH Jan. 16-22 \$250,000 GTD Entries: 198 Priepool: \$267,300	5 Venkat Chivukula	\$16,670 (140)
	6 Gabriel Andrade	\$12,705 (112)
	7 Thia Ha-Quang	\$9,840 (84)
	8 Walter Lynch	\$7,740 (56)
	9 Joshua Bozarth	\$6,190 (28)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
January Guarantee	1 Marlon Posadas	\$42,953 (360)
	2 Arash Asadabadi	\$40,596 (300)
MGM National Harbor Oxon Hill, MD	3 John Major	\$22,100 (240)
	4 Michael Anderson	\$15,100 (180)
	5 Jonathan Thomas	\$11,600 (150)
\$600 NLH Jan. 17-21 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 482 Prizepool: \$246,330	6 Anonymous	NA
	7 Zaid Alwan	\$8,070 (90)
	8 David Coghlan	\$6,490 (60)
	9 Michael Choe	\$4,915 (30)



© Seminole Hard Rock

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Lucky Hearts Open	1 Stoyan Madanzhiev	\$104,035 (432)
Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood, FL	2 Eric Yanovsky	\$101,729 (360)
	3 Carl Carodenuto	\$75,431 (288)
	4 Sabas Ferrer-Ferrer	\$34,900 (216)
\$5,000 NLH 8-Max Jan. 23 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 99 Prizepool: \$465,300	5 Robert Lofaso	\$27,220 (180)
	6 Connor Rash	\$21,750 (144)
	7 David Forbes	\$18,500 (108)
	8 Viktor Ustimov	\$16,055 (72)

TOURNAMENTS

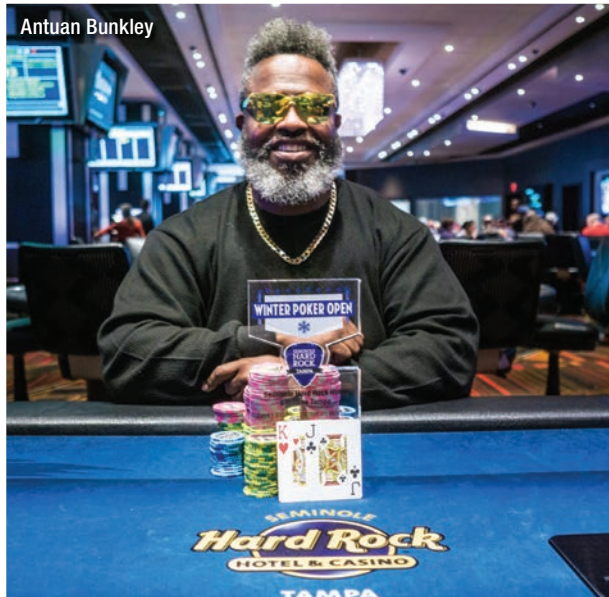
Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Carrasco High Roller	1 Nicolas Duat	\$55,000 (336)
	2 Florencio Sanchez	\$38,000 (280)
Casino Carrasco Montevideo, Uruguay	3 Jose Gonzalez	\$28,000 (224)
	4 Darci Fantin	\$21,000 (168)
	5 Iago Sabino	\$17,000 (140)
\$2,000 NLH Jan. 18-20 Entries: 190 Prizepool: \$213,200	6 Nicolas Zunino	\$13,500 (112)
	7 Pedro Fraga	\$10,600 (84)
	8 Henrique Souza	\$8,100 (56)
	9 Diego Bucero	\$6,000 (28)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
La Notte Degli Assi	1 Pierpaolo Lamanna	\$48,150 (420)
	2 Roberto Tasca	\$28,890 (350)
Casino Admiral Mendrisio, Italy	3 Mike Giussani	\$20,330 (280)
	4 Mario Perati	\$16,050 (210)
€550 NLH Jan. 18-28 €250,000 GTD Entries: 539 Prizepool: \$288,374	5 Anonymous	NA
	6 Antonio Bernaudo	\$10,700 (140)
	7 Claudio Apa	\$8,560 (105)
	8 Raffaele Castro	\$6,420 (70)
	9 Daniele Palma	\$4,922 (35)



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Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Winter Deep Stack	1 Aaron Speer	\$46,838 (365)
	2 Henry Wilken	\$34,399 (304)
Daytona Beach Card Club Daytona Beach, FL	3 Toni Fiorenza	\$22,208 (243)
	4 Dante Cianfarra	\$16,434 (182)
	5 Joseph Boulais	\$12,519 (152)
\$400 NLH Jan. 17-22 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 811 Prizepool: \$275,740	6 Gabriel Fuller	\$9,943 (122)
	7 David Yeazall	\$8,228 (91)
	8 Mahmoud Bidarian	\$6,546 (61)
	9 John Leggett	\$4,905 (30)



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Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Western Series	1 Mohamed Mokrani	\$342,500 (1260)
	2 Nichan Khorchidian	\$252,500 (1050)
Merit Crystal Cove Kyrenia, Cyprus	3 Felipe Ketzner	\$155,000 (840)
	4 Christophe Panetti	\$114,400 (630)
\$3,300 NLH Jan. 20-25 \$1,500,000 GTD Entries: 672 Prizepool: \$1,854,720	5 Damir Zhugralin	\$85,700 (525)
	6 Mustafa Ercan	\$69,100 (420)
	7 Antoine Hasbani	\$57,300 (315)
	8 Samy Barka	\$45,600 (210)
	9 Hadi Khordbin	\$34,300 (105)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
UK Poker League	1 Jamie Le	\$47,006 (300)
	2 Dan Laidlaw	\$34,850 (250)
Grosvenor Casino Coventry, United Kingdom	3 Arian Hassankashani	\$23,725 (200)
	4 Anthony Kennedy	\$15,419 (150)
	5 Archibald Seaton	\$10,350 (125)
£560 NLH Jan. 18-21 Entries: 371 Prizepool: \$220,687	6 Alex Todd	\$7,269 (100)
	7 Wendy Mbe	\$5,838 (75)
	8 Paul O'Callaghan	\$5,069 (50)
	9 Paul Whitehead	\$4,294 (25)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Winter Poker Open	1 Antuan Bunkley	\$74,370 (384)
	2 Gabriel Fuller	\$49,390 (320)
Seminole Hard Rock Tampa, FL	3 Francis Spaulding	\$36,570 (256)
	4 Chad Kitchen	\$27,340 (192)
	5 Daniel Brandsdorfer	\$20,640 (160)
\$400 NLH Jan. 24-28 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 1,394 Prizepool: \$460,020	6 Khanh Truong	\$15,740 (128)
	7 Michael Pasquale	\$12,120 (96)
	8 Phillip Krnyaich	\$9,440 (64)
	9 Leigh Lewis	\$7,420 (32)

TOURNAMENTS



© bestbet Jacksonville

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Winter Open bestbet Jacksonville, FL \$2,000 NLH Jan. 26-29 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 260	1 Derek Bowers	\$101,538 (432)
	2 Paul Brooks	\$67,685 (360)
	3 Danny Wilson	\$49,513 (288)
	4 Timothy Miles	\$36,714 (216)
	5 Alan Franco	\$27,600 (180)
	6 Dustin Bennett	\$21,040 (144)
	7 Raymond Leone	\$16,267 (108)
	8 Wayne Castleberry	\$12,758 (72)
	9 Richard Bryan	\$10,153 (36)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Even Bigger One Texas Card House Dallas, TX \$300 NLH Jan. 24-28 \$250,000 GTD Entries: 1,865 Prizepool: \$406,200	1 Alvin Wilson	\$80,000
	2 Justin Akins	\$51,000
	3 Thomas Robertson	\$34,600
	4 Cedric Carrigan	\$23,800
	5 Nikola Mircetic	\$18,575
	6 Rikesh Shrestha	\$13,700
	7 Carson Winneker	\$10,500
	8 Jonathan Kotula	\$8,000
	9 Schuyler Thornton	\$6,350

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
One Day Event Bay 101 San Jose, CA \$1,000 NLH Jan. 27 Entries: 198 Prizepool: \$178,200	1 Stuart Tuvey	\$35,830 (336)
	2 Moses Saquing	\$29,920 (280)
	3 Sajid Zia	\$27,380 (224)
	4 Ronnie Bardah	\$11,110 (168)
	5 Tee Tran	\$8,580 (140)
	6 Orit Hadas	\$7,110 (112)
	7 Cuong Vu	\$6,060 (84)
	8 Jeffrey Day	\$5,240 (56)
	9 Samir Fahmy	\$4,440 (28)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
DeepStack	1 Bryan Allen	\$35,000 (360)
	2 Jesus Perez	\$31,695 (300)
Venetian Las Vegas, NV	3 Nicholas Seward	\$20,199 (240)
	4 Byung Shin	\$14,868 (180)
\$600 NLH Jan. 25-28 \$150,000 GTD Entries: 420 Prizepool: \$212,100	5 Ivan Ruban	\$11,100 (150)
	6 Justin Tseng	\$8,407 (120)
	7 Jeffrey Tanouye	\$6,461 (90)
	8 Qing Liu	\$5,040 (60)
	9 Garen Zobian	\$3,990 (30)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Swiss Poker Series	1 Mathieu Gomez	\$43,010 (420)
	2 Doo Bourqui	\$26,087 (350)
Casino Grande Cercle Aix Les Bains, France	3 Karim Souaid	\$16,328 (280)
	4 Soulemane Sta	\$11,856 (210)
	5 Franco Pugliese	\$9,898 (175)
€500 NLH Jan. 25-28 Entries: 590 Prizepool: \$266,647	6 Kevin Nagaelen	\$8,656 (140)
	7 Olivier Overney	\$7,511 (105)
	8 Jetmir Jakaj	\$6,538 (70)
	9 Ali Gutsche	\$5,682 (35)



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Event	Player	Payout (POY)
MSPT	1 Matthew Eng	\$168,903 (960)
	2 Nazim Temiz	\$127,000 (800)
	3 Curtis Vierstraete	\$127,000 (640)
	4 Kyle Gross	\$70,660 (480)
\$1,110 NLH Feb. 1-4 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 1,156 Prizepool: \$1,119,820	5 Ryan Zickefoose	\$52,631 (400)
	6 Richard Ali	\$40,313 (320)
	7 Neal Aulick	\$31,354 (240)
	8 Adam Foster	\$24,636 (160)
	9 Kevin Kerchenski	\$20,156 (80)

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POKERGO CUP ALL-TIME EARNINGS LEADERBOARD

Rank	Player	Earnings	Wins	Cashes
1	Cary Katz	\$2,449,150	2	14
2	Daniel Negreanu	\$1,709,100	2	11
3	Sam Soverel	\$1,318,600	0	10
4	Sean Winter	\$1,310,250	1	8
5	Alex Foxen	\$1,226,590	2	8
6	Sean Perry	\$1,104,000	2	5
7	David Coleman	\$1,056,900	1	6
8	Jeremy Ausmus	\$1,033,900	1	9
9	Brock Wilson	\$976,900	0	8
10	David Peters	\$867,575	2	6

The *PokerGO Cup* series first debuted in July of 2021. There have now been four iterations of the festival, with \$31.2 million in total prize money awarded along the way. While 2024 series champion Jonathan Little racked up \$730,350 across four cashes this year, he fell just short of making the top 10 on the series' all-time earnings leaderboard (according to *PokerGO Tour* official stats).

There are eight players who have accumulated over a million in series earnings, including the other three series champions. Chief among them is *PokerGO* founder and 2023 *PokerGO Cup* champion **Cary Katz** with nearly \$2.5 million in earnings.

Katz has 14 total cashes and two titles at this stop over the years. He made the money in five of the eight events on the schedule during his win last year, accumulating \$655,800 during that series alone. Katz's largest score at this stop came

when he took down the \$100,000 buy-in finale in 2021, earning \$1,058,000 as the champion.

Daniel Negreanu sits in second place on this leaderboard with more than \$1.7 million in earnings. Like Katz, Negreanu has two event wins and one series championship under his belt, having won the inaugural running back in 2021. On his way to hoisting the cup that year Negreanu recorded four cashes for \$994,200, including taking down the \$50,000 buy-in event for \$700,000.

The third *PokerGO Cup* champion represented on this list is **Jeremy Ausmus**, who ended the 2022 festival atop the series standings. Ausmus made four final tables, recording two third-place showings, a runner-up finish, and one outright victory along the way. All told, he cashed for \$824,500 before the festival concluded. ♠

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2024 Card Player Player of the Year

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Rank	Player	Points	Titles	Final Tables	Earnings
1	David Coleman	2,156	3	6	\$683,889
2	Alexander Queen	1,680	1	1	\$613,063
3	Alex Foxen	1,545	1	7	\$834,075
4	Jesse Lonis	1,504	0	4	\$543,747
5	Raminder Singh	1,493	1	2	\$488,298
6	John Pannucci	1,400	0	1	\$429,836
7	Kristen Foxen	1,394	1	6	\$621,550
8	Konstantin Held	1,368	1	1	\$361,310
8	Matthew Higgins	1,368	2	2	\$389,149
10	David Peters	1,324	2	4	\$560,325
11	Stephen Chidwick	1,306	0	6	\$456,625
12	Mohammed Nuwwarah	1,272	2	2	\$200,835
13	Mohamed Mokrani	1,260	1	1	\$342,500
14	Daniel Smiljkovic	1,222	0	4	\$454,900
15	Daniel Martin	1,200	0	1	\$460,000
16	Aram Zobian	1,170	0	5	\$369,650
17	Josh Mccully	1,140	0	1	\$277,291
17	Jonathan Little	1,140	2	4	\$742,350
19	Max Deveson	1,128	1	2	\$231,487
20	Dylan Destefano	1,123	1	4	\$481,875
21	Brian Yoon	1,120	0	1	\$277,123
22	Nichan Khorchidian	1,050	0	1	\$252,500
23	Daniel Butler	1,020	2	2	\$110,700
24	William Berry	1,010	0	2	\$158,752
25	Seth Davies	993	0	4	\$427,650
26	Stoyan Madanzhiev	982	1	4	\$298,155
27	Sam Laskowitz	960	1	4	\$377,200
27	Zhun Chen	960	1	1	\$247,819
27	Ruman Meman	960	1	1	\$196,682
27	Matthew Eng	960	1	1	\$168,903

DARA O'KEARNEY: HOW SHOULD YOU PLAY TO MOVE UP IN STAKES?

By Craig Tapscott



The Pro: Dara O'Kearney is a professional poker player, sponsored Unibet Pro, and the co-host of The Chip Race Podcast. He is highly regarded as one of the world's best tournament grinders and poker coaches, with a particular focus on modern solver technology.

He is the co-author with Barry Carter of *Poker Satellite Strategy*, *PKO Poker Strategy*, *Endgame Poker Strategy*, *GTO Poker Simplified*, *Mystery Bounty Poker Strategy*, and the just released *Beyond GTO: Poker Exploits Simplified*.

Craig Tapscott: Let's kick this discussion off in the right direction. Please define the GTO (Game Theory Optimal) and Exploitive styles and how these approaches are used to become a stronger, more successful player.

Dara O'Kearney: Sure. GTO is playing a style that cannot be exploited in any way. It's basically a defensive strategy where you decide you're not trying to exploit the other player, you just don't want them to be able to exploit you. It's a strategy that will win against everyone if you're implementing it better than they are. But you won't win the maximum against anyone.

Craig Tapscott: How so?

Dara O'Kearney: Exploitative poker is interested in identifying an opponent's leaks or mistakes and exploiting them to win the maximum. The problem is if you diverge from GTO to exploit someone, you open yourself up to exploitation.

A simple example is that you notice someone doesn't bluff very often, so you stop calling when you only beat their bluffs. You're now exploiting them by folding all your bluff catchers

rather than calling a certain percentage of the time to avoid being exploited.

However, if that player picks up on the fact you nearly always fold to their bets, they will decide to bluff more frequently. Now you're the one being exploited.

Perhaps someone notices you're three-betting someone too often because they fold too much, and they start four-betting you more frequently. In trying to exploit the first player, you set yourself up to be exploited by the second one.

Craig Tapscott: What are the most significant leaks pre-flop besides calling with too wide a range of hands?

Dara O'Kearney: I would say a general lack of aggression and poorly-constructed ranges are some of the biggest leaks. In heads-up situations, you generally want to three-bet a lot with a polarized range.

First, you have your best hands, and you three-bet, hoping to get action with them. Then you have hands just below those in strength value that aren't good three-bets because they fall into the "not strong enough to happily call a four-bet but too strong to happily fold" category. So, you just call rather than three-bet with those hands, removing the option to four-bet from your opponent. Less strong hands just below that group or category, once again you can use as your three-bet bluffs because you love when the opponent folds. And, of course, you don't mind so much having to fold if they four-bet.

Also, a very common mistake players make is they three-bet linear, meaning just their strong hands. That makes them very easy to play against. You never have to guess whether

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they're strong or weak; you know they have a strong hand.

Craig Tapscott: What do the solvers say to do when engaged in multi-way pots?

Dara O'Kearney: In multi-way pots, solvers hate flatting, except in the big blind. If one player opens and another calls, solvers generally squeeze all or most of their range with a linear range (if you have no flats, you have no reason to squeeze weak hands).

Still, humans do the opposite. They just flat most of the time, and now you have a multi-way pot that others may come in behind.

Craig Tapscott: You brought up big blind play. Over the past few years, players have started defending their big blind more diligently than in the past. Where are most players going overboard in this spot?

Dara O'Kearney: By far, the biggest one is people realizing how wide they should defend in GTO but not realizing how different things are when ICM (Independent Chip Model) is a factor. So, they defend too wide and get into trouble post-flop.

Craig Tapscott: Is there a mental component to the choice between playing "GTO Poker" and an exploitative style? How does one prepare and execute to do either approach in game?

Dara O'Kearney: Well, it's essential to realize that both styles have inherent advantages and disadvantages, and both have their place in an excellent fundamental overall strategy.

Specifically, GTO should be used when you have no specific reads on your opponent or you think they're just better than you. In that instance, you want to play a defensive strategy where they can't exploit you, and you're happy to surrender the capability to exploit them (because you have no confidence in your ability to do so).

A further advantage of GTO is that it works at all levels against everyone. Historically, exploitative players start at

one level, identify leaks that players at that level exhibit, and develop exploits that take advantage of those leaks.

When they move up to a new level, they generally find that the leaks they saw at earlier levels are not the same, so the exploits they developed don't work anymore. Worse, those exploits might open them to exploitation at a new level.

Craig Tapscott: Can you give me an example or two?

Dara O'Kearney: A concrete example is players at the lowest levels generally don't bluff enough, mainly when they bet or raise big. An exploitative player who notices that will develop a very simple exploit, which is to fold all your bluff catchers and call those bets only when you beat actual value hands that might use that size. Players who incorporate this exploit into their game will tend to win, to the point they may decide to move up to the next level.

Experienced players at the higher level will recognize that these newbies tend not to bluff catch enough or at all, so they will seek to exploit them by bluffing more frequently. By contrast, the dogmatic GTO disciple who insists on calling the correct amount of the time to be unexploitable will win at both levels, albeit not as much as the best exploitative players at both levels.

Craig Tapscott: Does this mean one approach is better than the other overall?

Dara O'Kearney: This means that the GTO and exploitative players have two very different experiences as they move up levels. The GTO player can expect to win at every level (assuming their GTO game is good enough) without making any strategic modifications as they move up levels. In contrast, the exploitative player has to forget all the exploits that worked at the last level and work out new ones for the current level. And they have to do this every time they move up.

Craig Tapscott: So, who can expect to move up faster?

O'Kearney With Podcast Co-Host David Lappin And Fans Of His Books



Dara O'Kearney: The GTO player, obviously. But the big problem with the dogmatic GTO approach is that it leaves a lot of money on the table. Yes, it can expect to win at every level, but it won't win as much at any one level as the best exploitative players.

Craig Tapscott: What's the mental game aspect to best approach GTO or exploitative play?

Dara O'Kearney: Without question, it's a lot easier on your peace of mind to be a rigid GTO disciple. You know if you stick to that strategy, you'll win in the long term no matter what your opponents do.

By contrast, the exploitative player has to continually be on the lookout for new leaks and exploits and eternally interrogate whether the ones they previously identified still apply. They also have to accept they'll be wrong a lot.

There are a lot of "if you never get caught doing - x - then you're not doing it enough" in poker. The best-known one is if you're never caught bluffing, you're not bluffing enough. A lesser-known one is if you never get called by a better hand when you thin value bet the river, you're not thin-value betting enough. The same is true of deviating from GTO based on a read.

Craig Tapscott: What do you mean?

Dara O'Kearney: You'll get them wrong sometimes, and it can be very upsetting mentally when you do. GTO is telling you to call, but you fold because your read is this particular opponent is under bluffing. After you fold, you get shown a bluff, and well, that's memorable.

Previously, I've viewed "read-based" exploitative players with suspicion because of how often I saw them get a read wrong or apparently wrong. It was Andy Black who shifted my view on this over the course of a long conversation at a recent *WSOP*.

He pointed out two things I should have figured out before. First, just because you get shown a bluff after folding doesn't mean your read was wrong. The opponent might still be under bluffing in this spot, just not on this occasion.

It's a bit like blockers. Having a relevant blocker makes it less likely your opponent has specific holdings, but not impossible.

And second, you're not aiming for 100% on your reads. They just have to be right over half the time to be valuable. If you never get them wrong, you're not using them often enough. When you get one apparently wrong, just accept it and move on, knowing that these imperfect reads are plus EV in the long term.

Craig Tapscott: How do you recommend new and even more experienced players tackle the "GTO vs. exploitative" divide?

Dara O'Kearney: First, I point out there's no real divide. As I said before, they both have pluses and minuses, and both have their part to play in your overall strategy.

I start by recommending you study GTO for two reasons. First, it's the best overall conceptual framework for poker (you should think of it as the base solution or default strategy, to be diverged from as more information on opponent leaks and reads becomes available). Second, it'll keep you out of trouble and defend you against being exploited by more experienced players until you gain more experience yourself.

Once you've mastered the GTO framework, you can start thinking about leaks and exploits. You can try to come up with your own on the fly (or learn them from others), or you can use solvers to identify the optimal exploits (the method myself and Barry Carter explain how to do in the *Beyond GTO* book).

Funny enough, when Andy and I initially debated GTO versus exploitative on my podcast *The Chip Race* in a segment we dubbed "GTO versus white magic," this was our most significant bone of contention. We agreed both approaches had merit and both had a part to play in a good overall strategy but disagreed on the order in which they should be tackled. I thought GTO first, then exploits, whereas Andy flipped that order.

As I said earlier, Andy turned my head around on the overall value of reads and made me see we should be seeking statistical advantage rather than certainty. I'm glad to report I turned *his* head on this one. Andy told me in Killarney last year he'd come round to the view that GTO first and exploits second is the best order to approach things.

You can keep up to date with Dara O'Kearney at www.daraokearney.com and @daraokearney. ♠

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GT-NO: POKER STRATEGY ISN'T APPLES AND ORANGES

By David Sklansky

By playing a GTO strategy, you are guaranteed to win, which is why many of the world's best players are gravitating towards it. But while it will win against a table full of amateur or low-stakes players, it will also leave a lot of money on the table. In this series we look at ways to spot exploits in your opponents and maximize your win rate.



Game Theory Optimal (GTO) strategies can be used for almost any game. Poker is just one of them.

For instance, suppose you and I choose between two fruits, say apples and oranges. We secretly write down apples or oranges on a piece of paper, and then compare them.

If we both wrote the same fruit, you give me \$3. If you wrote oranges and I wrote apples, I give you \$5. If you wrote apples and I write oranges, I give you \$1.

If we choose our numbers randomly, then this is an even game. But because we don't, one of us might be able to predict the tendencies of the other one and have an edge.

For instance, if I think you are 70% to write oranges, I will write oranges and have a 70% chance to win \$3 and a 30% chance to lose \$5. That's an EV of 60 cents.

If you think there is an 80% chance I will write oranges, you will write apples and win \$1 80% of the time while losing \$3 20%. Your EV would be 20 cents.

But rather than try to predict what you will do, I can fall back to the GTO strategy. Which in this case means that I write oranges with a probability of two-thirds. If I do that and you write apples, I will win \$3 one-third of the time when I also write apples, and lose \$1 the other two thirds of the time. My EV is one-third of a dollar.

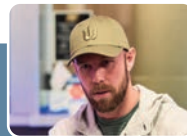
TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2024 PokerGO Cup
\$26,000 No-Limit Hold'em



Shaneil Stokes
1,395,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 51%
After Flop: 11%
After Turn: 5%



Seth Davies
685,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 48%
After Flop: 89%
After Turn: 95%



PREFLOP

With six players remaining and blinds of 15,000-30,000 with a big blind ante of 30,000, Shaneil Stokes limped from under the gun. Seth Davies raised to 90,000 from the hijack, and Stokes called.



Stokes checked, and Davies bet 80,000. Stokes called.



Stokes checked, and Davies bet 180,000. Stokes raised all-in, and Davies called for 515,000 total.



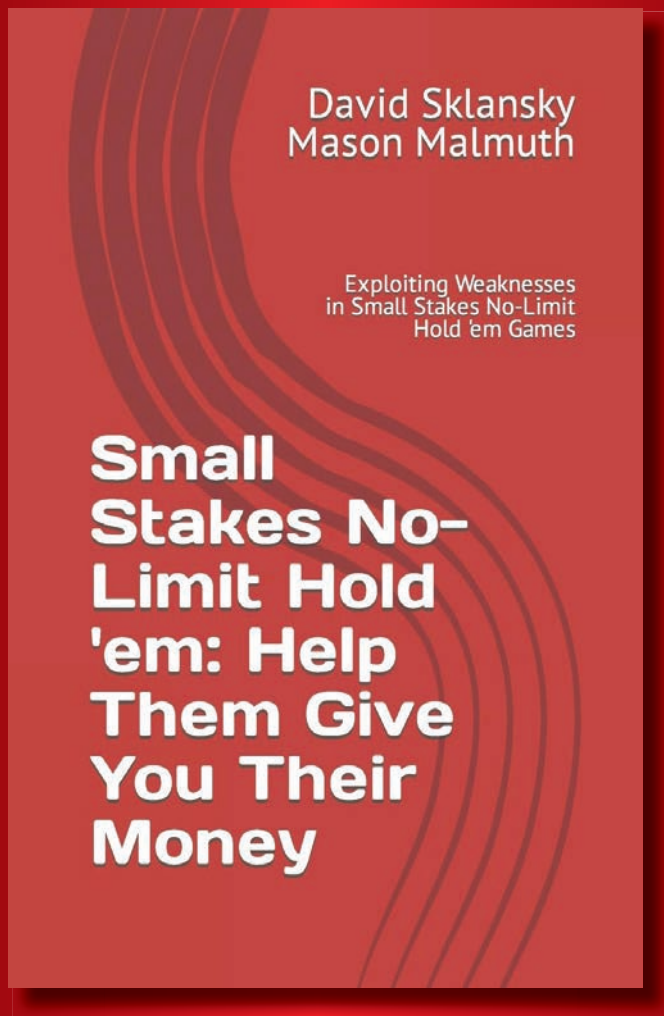
COMMENTARY:

Shaneil Stokes was situated firmly in the middle of the pack with six players remaining in the \$26,000 finale of the *PokerGO Cup*, trailing second-ranked Justin Zaki by more than 33 big blinds while leading fourth-ranked Seth Davies by nearly 24 big blinds. With three players sitting on less than 25 big blinds, Stokes was incentivized to avoid big confrontations. In this hand, however, he got involved in a sizable pot that ended up greatly hindering his ability to outlast those short stacks. He kicked off the action by limping with a small pair, and then called a raise from the aforementioned Davies. The flop brought a pair of nines and a king, with two clubs on board. Stokes check-called a 2.67 big blind continuation bet from Davies, who had flopped trip nines with an ace kicker. The turn brought one of the rare cards in the deck that wasn't an overcard to Stokes' pocket fours. He checked again and Davies bet 180,000 (nearly 35 percent of his 515,000 stack). Stokes moved all-in, perhaps trying to fold out some of Davies' unimproved A-X holdings. Davies was likely betting the turn with either his strongest value hands and his best draws, or his bluffs. With such a high percentage of his stack committed, Davies is unlikely to fold anything from that first collection of combos. While Stokes' shove could very well force him off of his bluffs, Stokes was already ahead of those holdings with only one card to come. This situation demonstrates why small pocket pairs are so hard to play against tough competition, as they will often lead to these types of 'no-man's land' scenarios when one doesn't flop a set. Davies made a quick call with his trips and held to swap spots with Stokes on the leaderboard.

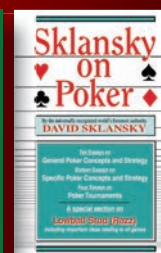
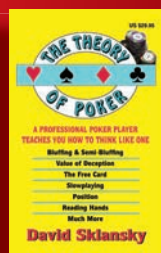
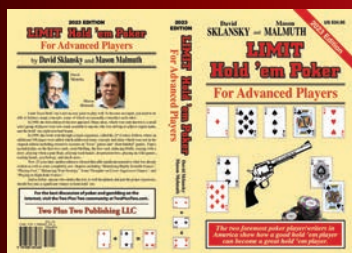
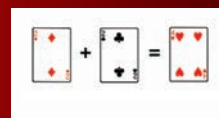
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If instead you wrote oranges, I would win \$3 two-thirds of the time and lose \$5 one-third. Again, my EV would be one-third of a dollar.

Thus, in this game I can guarantee myself a profit of 33.3 cents on average per game, and there is nothing you can do about it.

If we played many games and you always wrote apples, I would average exactly the same profit as I would if you always wrote oranges. And importantly, I would make 33.3 cents per hand even if you played any type of “mixed strategy.”

Do you see this? If you don't, I ask you to consider your oranges and apples separately. Since they both average giving me that same 33.3 cents, mixing up your strategy rather than always writing the same fruit, it doesn't change anything. (Which is why it is simple algebra to calculate GTO

strategies in games like this.)

Also notice that it would not help you in the slightest if I told you exactly what my strategy was. I will average a third of a dollar times the number of times we play. Such is the nature of GTO.

BUT if I used any other strategy and told you about it (or if you could deduce it), that would be a different story.

For instance, if you knew or suspected that I was writing both numbers with equal frequency, you would know (if you know GTO) that I am writing apples more often than GTO would tell me to.

So you should EXPLOIT that by writing oranges more often. In fact, you should write oranges every time!

Do that and you lose \$3 half of the time but win \$5 the other half. There's the GTO strategy you could have used that kept your loss down to 33.3 cents per hand no matter what I did, but it would be insane to use it once you are pretty sure that I am straying from my GTO strategy.

In this case you moved your EV from minus 33.3 cents all the way up to plus a dollar.

And, of course, these same concepts can be applied directly to poker. It's more of an apples-to-apples comparison, no oranges required. More next issue. ♠



David Sklansky is the author of *The Theory of Poker*, as well as nearly two dozen other guides on gambling, poker, and other games. The three-time WSOP bracelet winner's latest book, *Small Stakes No-Limit Hold'em: Help Them Give You Their Money*, is now available on Amazon. You can contact Sklansky at dsklansky@aol.com.

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2024 PokerGO Cup
\$26,000 No-Limit Hold'em



Jonathan Little
1,440,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 62%
After Flop: 80%
After Turn: 91%



Seth Davies
610,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 37%
After Flop: 20%
After Turn: 9%

PREFLOP

With five players remaining and blinds of 20,000-40,000 with a big blind ante of 40,000, Jonathan Little raised to 80,000 from the cutoff. Seth Davies called from the big blind.



Davies checked, and Little bet 60,000. Davies called.



Both players checked.



Davies bet 220,000, and Little called.

COMMENTARY:

Shortly after Jonathan Little found a key double-up against chip leader Justin Saliba, short-stacked Seth Davies found an opportunity to apply pressure to the newly-minted mid-stack. The clash between the pair of *World Poker Tour* champions kicked off with a min-raise from Little from late position. Davies was getting laid a great price, and made the call despite a less-than-exciting holding of 5-4. Little spiked top pair with his A-9 and bet when checked to. Davies' check-called with his gutshot straight draw and the turn paired the middle card from the flop. Davies now sat with just 430,000 remaining in his stack, while the pot had grown to 340,000. Davies checked and Little, who might have considered this to be a 'way-ahead or way-behind scenario,' checked behind. The river brought a third seven to the board and Davies had to decide what to do with five high. Perhaps spurred on by Little's check back on the turn, he opted for the aggressive route of firing 220,000, or just over half of his remaining stack. While he probably didn't expect to be able to fold out any A-X holdings for Little, this bet might be able to get his opponent off of some missed flush draws or unimproved high cards that would beat Davies' five-high at showdown. As it was, though, Little had a fairly easy call with his ace, and any raise he put in would be unlikely to be called by worse. He flicked in a call and dragged the pot to move into second place in the chip counts. Davies was left with just over five big blinds after the hand.

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BEING A BULLY

Jonathan Little

I was recently told about an interesting situation from a \$2-\$4 live no-limit cash game that demonstrates how to take advantage of weak, straightforward players who telegraph their hand's strength with their bet sizes.

With \$600 effective stacks, a player from middle position limped, as did the cutoff. Our Hero raised to \$24 from the button with J♠ 10♠.

While I am fine with raising this decently-strong hand that has good post-flop playability from the button, both calling and raising larger to \$32 are also reasonable options.

Calling keeps the pot small, amplifying your post-flop advantage (assuming you play well) and raising larger allows you to pick up the preflop pot with no contest more often. When you make it between \$16 and \$24, you will find that you almost never win the pot preflop, meaning you will often have to flop well to have a good chance to win the pot.

Only the cutoff called Hero's \$24 raise. The flop came A♠ Q♦ 8♠, giving Hero a flush draw and double-gutshot straight draw. The cutoff led for \$20 into the \$54 pot.

Most of the time when someone leads on a flop that should be excellent for the preflop raiser's range, they usually have some sort of marginal made hand or a junky draw. Given Hero's J♠ 10♠ makes it less likely that the opponent has a draw, he likely has a weak ace that is betting to try to "find out where it stands".

If you think the opponent will fold an ace to a flop raise, then raising large, perhaps to \$100, has a lot of merit. If you think your opponent will never fold top pair, calling with the strong draw makes more sense. That said, when you have a premium draw, taking the aggressive route is rarely wrong because even when your opponent calls, you will still win the pot roughly 50% of the time.

Hero called. The turn was the 10♠. Both players checked.

When checked to on the turn, Hero should assume his middle pair is rarely the best hand, although it will be from time to time when he is against a junky



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flush draw like 7♠ 6♠. The real question is whether or not the opponent will fold an ace to a turn plus river bet.

In my experience, they will make a big fold if you bet large enough. However, if you think your opponent plans to call down once he checks the turn, semi-bluffing makes no sense.

The river was the Q♦. The opponent bet \$30 into the \$94 pot.

At this point, it is highly unlikely that Hero has the best hand. The opponent will have an ace or queen almost every time. In his post-hand analysis to me, Hero mentioned that he has seen his opponent bet small on the river twice with marginal value hands and large on the river once with the nuts. This made Hero think the opponent was much more likely to have an ace than a queen (or a better made hand).

Hero bluff-raised to \$120.

I like raising the river more than I like calling. When you lose to all the marginal made hands in your opponent's range and you think most of your opponent's range is marginal

made hands, calling makes no sense.

Hero's only options are to raise or fold. Hero must now assess whether or not the opponent will fold an ace to a raise. Some players will always call while others will always fold. If you are confident your specific opponent will rarely call with an ace, raising makes a lot of sense.

I like Hero's \$120 raise size. It is a substantial amount that will often result in the opponent folding.

The opponent grumbled for a minute about how lucky Hero was to catch his queen on the river before folding A-2 face-up. Nice hand! ♠



Jonathan Little is a two-time WPT champion with nearly \$9 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

For a limited time, Jonathan Little is celebrating being crowned 2024 PokerGO Cup Champion with one of his

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SEVEN CARD STUD: PLAYING SMALL PAIRS WITH A BIG KICKER

By Kevin Haney

Big pairs are your bread-and-butter hands in stud high. They are best played heads-up, thus you are most often going to complete or reraise the action on third street, and just keep on betting until your opponent possibly gives you a reason to slow down. And unless circumstances look dire, we go to showdown with this most profitable hand type. Most players know this and many of these hands end up playing themselves.

You can, however, differentiate yourself from your opponents by playing the marginal hands well, and in this article we will look at playing small pairs with a big kicker.

Playing Guidelines – Third Street In An Unopened Pot

Unless you are in a steal position, you should tend to only play these hands when your cards are completely live. If you run into a better hand you need all of your outs to fall back upon. While a two flush does add some value, it's usually not enough to overcome dead pair cards.

An ace kicker has a lot of value, and a hand like (A♠ 4♥) 4♣ should often be completed, even from early position. Even if you run into a pair of kings it's not that big of a deal since you have an over-card kicker and are thus drawing to a higher two pair. In fact, if your hand is completely live and one of the kings is dead it's almost a 50/50 proposition.

Your hand may even still be playable when getting reraised twice. For example, if you get two-bet (a raise of a complete is a two-bet) by a queen and three-bet by a king, not only can you

call, you should probably cap the betting. Given this action, even a loose player will be tempted to fold a pair of queens. He's not only up against a likely pair of kings, your action looks really strong and could easily be aces in the hole or even rolled-up fours.

When getting the player to fold a pair of queens, your equity goes up from around 30% to 45%. If successful, you then get to take the hand heads-up with the positional advantage. Not only is this maneuvering mathematically sound, it can also help gain you a profitable borderline maniacal image. And on your good days the player with the king up does not have what he's trying to represent.

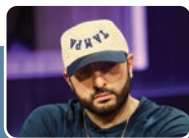
When opening it's not a requirement that your kicker be an ace or higher than any other up-card, but it must be reasonably strong. For example, you can complete (Q♣ 4♥) 4♣ with a few players left behind you, including a king. If you are reraised your typical response would be to fold, unless perhaps you are up against a really aggressive opponent.

Playable Situations – Previously Opened Pots

If another player has entered the pot before you from a non-steal position it is very important that your kicker is an over-card to the pair that you could be facing. For example, if you have (4♠ K♥) 4♣ you can play against a queen door card. You may not be up against a pair of queens, and if you are, the high-ante structure compensates your uphill climb.

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2024 PokerGO Cup
\$26,000 No-Limit Hold'em



Justin Zaki
3,675,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 38%
After Flop: 22%
After Turn: 14%



Jonathan Little
1,880,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 62%
After Flop: 77%
After Turn: 86%



PREFLOP

With five players remaining and blinds of 25,000-50,000 with a big blind ante of 50,000, Justin Zaki raised to 120,000 from the button. Jonathan Little called from the small blind.



Little checked, and Zaki bet 180,000. Little called.



Little checked, and Zaki bet 420,000. Little folded.

COMMENTARY:

Seth Davies began this hand with fewer than four big blinds, a fact which surely influenced the way that both Justin Zaki and Jonathan Little approached this button-versus-small blind clash. Little, sitting as the second-largest stack with 38 big blinds, had to tread carefully when squaring off against Zaki and his 74 big blinds. On the other hand, Zaki was likely aware that Little was highly incentivized to avoid any big missteps with Davies running on fumes. With that in mind, he had every reason to amp up the aggression when presented with any reasonable opportunity to do so. In this hand, Zaki raised with K-10 and Little flat-called with A-Q. The flop brought a pair of fives and a six. Zaki fired 180,000 into the pot of 520,000 when checked to and Little made the call with his under-represented big ace. The turn brought the 9♦ and Little checked a second time. Zaki kept his foot on the gas, this time opting for a sizing of 420,000 into 700,000 (60 percent pot). Little might have suspected that his ace high was still best fairly often, but he still opted to avoid risking too much of his valuable stack in this marginal spot. He folded to send the healthy pot to Zaki, who pulled even further ahead. Davies was indeed eliminated in fifth place, earning \$110,000 for his 65th career six-figure tournament score.

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If instead your opponent is in a stealing position and might be opening a very wide range your kicker can become relatively inconsequential. This would be the case if you are to the direct right of the bring-in and an aggressive player opens with a queen showing.

In a spot where villain might be opening any two cards underneath we should reraise a hand like (4♠ 9♥)4♣ as long as our cards are live. It might be okay to do so if a nine is dead, but certainly we want all of the fours to be available.

It's not enough to try and play sheriff by simply calling in this spot. That just gives your opponent a better price on his steal and possibly allows him to win with a piglet holding such as (5♣ 9♠)Q♦; a hand that would have folded to an extra bet on third street.

Don't keep the door open to your opponent playing a hand like that and dragging the pot with something like a pair of fives. If that happens you didn't get unlucky, you just misplayed the hand.

Frequent reraising also has the effect of possibly tightening up your opponents' opening range in the future, affording you more stealing opportunities. Successful stud play means the game will more often flow through you, and the task will be put to your opposition to slow you down, not vice versa.

Chasing The Higher Pair

Unfortunately, sometimes we will bump up against a higher pair, but when we have an over-card kicker to his most probable hand we are forced to chase. Assuming your opponent does not pair his door or make a running pair, you have the pot odds to continue all the way especially since implied odds are usually in our favor.

Let's assume that we are holding the (A♠ 4♥)4♣ and have

run into a probable pair of queens. We will act last throughout the hand unless we improve in some fashion with trips, aces up, or by picking up another over-card kicker.

We can usually get in a check-raise with aces up, but should lead with trip fours and can expect to get called as our opponent will assume he's often up against two pair that he can outdraw. We should of course fold if he catches a queen, and that's one of the reasons why we probably hold an implied-odds advantage over opponent. We can fold when he often has trip queens (or two higher pair), but our opponent will often continue on when we are very strong.

Seventh street play is usually straight-forward; raise aces up or better, call with lesser two pair, and generally fold unimproved. However, we are getting enormous pot odds on the river to call, and should do so if there's any possibility that our opponent was on a draw.

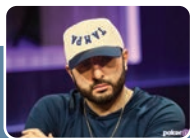
Small pairs can be a tricky hand type to play effectively in stud but we should still look to get involved when the time is right. We don't want to miss profitable playing situations on third street as you only get so many of those in a session. We should also look to get aggressive with them in the appropriate spots, allowing us to gain better control over our opposition. ♠



Kevin Haney is a former actuary but left the corporate job to focus on his passions for poker and fitness. The certified personal trainer owned a gym in New Jersey, but has since moved to Las Vegas. He started playing the game back in 2003, and particularly enjoys taking new players interested in mixed games under his wing and quickly making them proficient in all variants. Learn more or just say hello with an email to haneyk612@gmail.com.

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2024 PokerGO Cup
\$26,000 No-Limit Hold'em



Justin Zaki
3,435,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 30%
After Flop: 47%
After Turn: 75%

Jonathan Little
2,040,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 68%
After Flop: 53%
After Turn: 25%

PREFLOP

With four players remaining and blinds of 25,000-50,000 with a big blind ante of 50,000, Justin Zaki raised to 175,000 from the small blind. Jonathan Little called from the big blind.



Zaki bet 135,000, and Little called.



Zaki bet 280,000, and Little called.



Zaki bet 740,000, and Little called.

COMMENTARY:

This hand was the turning point of the final table, with Justin Zaki well out in front of the pack and Jonathan Little with a hold on second chip position. The two top dogs tangled in a 54-big-blind pot, which was roughly the total amount of combined chips held by the two shorter stacks of John Riordan and Justin Saliba. The battle of the blinds got underway with a raise to 3.5x from Zaki, who held 5-4 suited in the small blind. Little defended with A-5 suited and picked up a backdoor flush draw to go with his ace high. Zaki led right out with his flopped club draw and Little made the call. The 4♦ on the turn gave Zaki the best hand with a pair of fours, but also improved Little to a fully-fledged nut flush draw. Zaki fired again, this time to the tune of nearly 42 percent pot. Little made the call and the A♥ completed the board, improving Little to a pair of aces with a small kicker. With his flop and turn bets both being called, Zaki seemingly decided that his pair of fours was not strong enough to just showdown. He opted to turn his bottom pair into a bluff, firing 740,000 into the pot of 1,230,000 (60 percent pot). Little was hardly thrilled, as Zaki could very well have fired the flop and turn with a set or something like J-10 for the Broadway straight draw that got there on the end. But after a bit of thought, Little made the call and took down the 2,710,000 pot to move into the chip lead. He went on to take down the title, earning \$453,750 for the win. Zaki ultimately finished as the runner-up, securing \$288,750 for his efforts.

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	Feb. 19-March 31	DeepStack Showdown	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Feb. 28-March 8	PGT Mixed Games	Aria PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Feb. 29-March 11	WSOP Circuit Chicago	Horseshoe Casino ■ Hammond, IN
MARCH	March 6-18	WSOP Circuit Tulsa	Hard Rock Hotel & Casino ■ Catoosa, OK
	March 7-18	PokerAtlas Tour Las Vegas	Resorts World ■ Las Vegas, NV
	March 7-26	WPT Rolling Thunder	Thunder Valley Casino & Resort ■ Lincoln, CA
	March 14-24	RGPS Jacksonville	bestbet ■ Jacksonville, FL
	March 14-25	WSOP Circuit New York	Turning Stone Casino & Resort ■ Verona, NY
	March 20-29	PGT PLO Series	Aria PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	March 21-April 1	WSOP Circuit Las Vegas	Horseshoe Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
March 31	Easter Tournament	Ocean's 11 Casino ■ Oceanside, CA	
APRIL	April 1-May 19	DeepStack Extravaganza II	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	April 3-23	WPT SHR Poker Showdown	Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino ■ Hollywood, FL
	April 4-14	Seven Clans of Poker Series	Coushatta Casino & Resort ■ Kinder, LA
	April 4-15	WSOP Circuit Chicago	Grand Victoria Casino ■ Elgin, IL
	April 8-14	San Diego Spring Classic	Ocean's 11 Casino ■ Oceanside, CA
	April 8-17	U.S. Poker Open	Aria PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	April 8-24	Signature Series	Wynn ■ Las Vegas, NV
	April 17-May 6	WPT Choctaw	Choctaw Casino & Resort ■ Durant, OK
April 18-29	WSOP Circuit Mississippi	Horseshoe Casino & Hotel ■ Robinsonville, MS	
MAY	May 2-12	Destination RunGood California	Graton Resort & Casino ■ Rohnert Park, CA
	May 2-13	WSOP Circuit North Carolina	Harrah's ■ Cherokee, NC
	May 9-20	WSOP Circuit Southern Indiana	Caesars ■ Elizabeth, IN
	May 28-July 17	World Series of Poker	Horseshoe Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV

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CALIFORNIA

GRATON - ROHNERT PARK

MONDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$135

TUESDAY

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$135

WEDNESDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$135

THURSDAY

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$200 KO \$25

FRIDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$200 KO \$25

SATURDAY

10:00 a.m. MIX, \$300

SUNDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$250 KO \$100

OCEAN'S ELEVEN - OCEANSIDE

MONDAY-THURSDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$95 AO \$5

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$95 AO \$5

FRIDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$95 AO \$5

SATURDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$190 AO \$10

SUNDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$140 AO \$10

FLORIDA

BESTBET - JACKSONVILLE

MONDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100

WEDNESDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$100

FRIDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$200

SUNDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$200

BESTBET - ORANGE PARK

TUESDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100

THURSDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100

SATURDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100
SUNDAY
 12:00 p.m. NLH, \$60

BESTBET - ST. AUGUSTINE

MONDAY
 12:00 p.m. NLH, \$60
 7:00 p.m. NLH, \$60
TUESDAY
 12:00 p.m. NLH, \$60
WEDNESDAY
 7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100
THURSDAY
 12:00 p.m. NLH, \$60
FRIDAY
 12:00 p.m. NLH, \$100
 7:00 p.m. NLH, \$160
SATURDAY
 12:00 p.m. NLH, \$100
 7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100
SUNDAY
 7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100

RESORTS WORLD - LAS VEGAS

DAILY
 12:05 p.m. NLH, \$200 (\$5K Guarantee)
 7:05 p.m. NLH, \$160 (\$3K Guarantee)

WYNN - LAS VEGAS

MONDAY-THURSDAY
 12:00 p.m. NLH, \$200 (\$10K Guarantee)
 5:00 p.m. NLH, \$160 (\$10K Guarantee)
FRIDAY
 12:00 p.m. NLH, \$240 RB \$200 AO \$100 (\$40K Guarantee)
 5:00 p.m. NLH, \$160 (\$10K Guarantee)
SATURDAY
 12:00 p.m. NLH, \$300 (\$30K Guarantee)
 5:00 p.m. NLH, \$160 (\$10K Guarantee)
SUNDAY
 12:00 p.m. NLH, \$240 RB \$200 AO \$100 (\$40K Guarantee)
 5:00 p.m. NLH, \$160 (\$10K Guarantee)

LOUISIANA

OREGON

COUSHATTA - KINDER

FRIDAY
 6:00 p.m. NLH, \$200

WILDHORSE - PENDLETON

TUESDAY
 6:30 p.m. NLH, \$70
THURSDAY
 6:30 p.m. NLH, \$70
FRIDAY
 6:30 p.m. NLH, \$125
SATURDAY
 1:00 p.m. NLH, \$125
SUNDAY
 1:00 p.m. NLH, \$70

NEVADA

BELLAGIO - LAS VEGAS

SUNDAY
 11:00 a.m. NLH, \$200 (\$4K Guarantee)
 6:00 p.m. NLH, \$200 (\$4K Guarantee)



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You are eight-handed playing in a \$1-\$2 cash game with a \$500 chip stack. UTG limps into the pot and the decent player UTG+1 raises to \$10. After the lojack calls, action is on you in the hijack holding Q♣ J♣.

Question 1: Should you fold, call, reraise to \$42, or reraise to \$62?

Answer: Whenever a decent player raises over an early position limp, you can assume they are raising with a good range, so you should not reraise too often. They will rarely fold to your three-bet, making this an optimal spot to call and see the flop with your strong suited connector.

You call along with the small blind, big blind, and the UTG player making it six ways heading to the flop. After the flop comes K♥ 10♣ 3♦, it checks to UTG+1 who makes a continuation bet of \$30 (33% pot). The lojack calls, and action is on you.

Question 2: Should you fold, call, raise to \$75, or raise to \$150?

Answer: While it may be tempting to raise, it is relatively easy for UTG+1 to have a really strong hand like a set. Raising is not a terrible play, but considering the pot odds you are being given with an open-ended straight draw, you are much better off calling and seeing what develops on the turn. If you were to raise, you should do so only for a large size to generate lots of fold equity.

You call and everyone else folds, leaving three players in the pot. The turn is the 4♠ and UTG+1 bets \$60 (40% pot). Once again, the lojack calls.

Question 3: Should you fold, call, raise to \$150, or go all-in?

Answer: Just like on the flop, there is no need to raise. You are being offered a great price to call and try and hit your straight on the river. If you raise and your opponent shoves, not only are you forced into making a crying call due to the pot odds, but one of your opponents likely has a blocker to your straight.

If you get the overwhelming sense that both of your opponents are holding marginal hands that will fold to aggression, you can consider raising, but overall this is a nice spot to call and try and river your straight.

You call and the river bricks with the 4♣. UTG+1 checks, and the lojack bets \$60 (18%).

Question 4: Should you fold, call, raise to \$150, or go all-in?

Answer: The \$60 bet from the lojack screams weakness, suggesting they are holding a marginal made hand like K-Q or K-J that is going for thin value. You may be able to get away with a bluff, but an attempted bluff may get looked up by a top pair or pocket aces that are well within UTG+1's range.

The deciding factor when contemplating whether or not to bluff is the "trickiness" of UTG+1. If UTG+1 is straightforward and only bets with made hands, you can consider raising to steal the pot, but if they are capable of checking strong hands that can easily call a raise, do not bluff. In situations where you do decide to bluff, you should go all-in, given the size of the pot, but in this spot, the best play is to simply fold.

You fold and UTG+1 quickly calls revealing A♠ K♣ to beat the lojack's K♠ 9♣. While you may have been able to get a river bluff past both opponents, you likely saved yourself from making a costly, overly-aggressive play. ♠

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