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Vol. 37/No. 8
April 3, 2024

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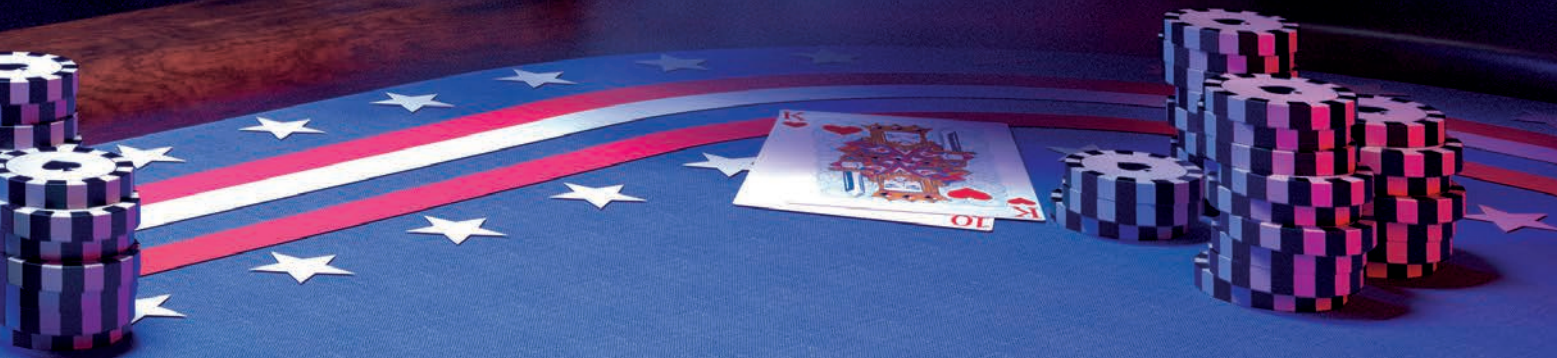
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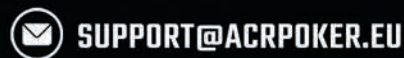
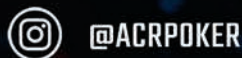
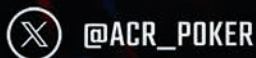
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Card Player (ISSN 1089-2044) is published biweekly by Card Player Media LLC, 6940 O'Bannon Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89117. Annual subscriptions are \$39.95 U.S. (\$59.95 U.S. for two years), \$59.95 Canada, and \$75.95 International. Remit payment to CUSTOMER SERVICE, CARD PLAYER MAGAZINE, PO BOX 434, CONGERS, NY 10920-0434 or call 1-866-587-6537. Periodicals postage paid at Las Vegas, NV, and additional mailing offices USPS #022-483. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes to CARD PLAYER MAGAZINE, PO BOX 434, CONGERS, NY 10920-0434.

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NEWS FROM THE GAMBLING WORLD

AGA REPORTS RECORD GAMBLING NUMBERS FOR 2023

U.S. Commercial Gaming Brings In \$66.5 Billion In Revenue

By Card Player News Team



Americans' interest in gambling shows no sign of slowing down. Expanded sports betting, more legal jurisdictions, and the growth of online gaming brought record commercial gaming revenue of \$66.5 billion in 2023, according to the American Gaming Association's (AGA) "Commercial Gaming Revenue Tracker."

That total topped 2022's previous record of \$60.5 billion by 10 %, and 2023 was the industry's third-straight record revenue year.

"From the traditional casino experience to online options, American adults' demand for gaming is at an all-time high," AGA President and CEO Bill Miller said. "Sustaining our momentum will take unified industry efforts around combating pernicious illegal operators and growing responsible gambling efforts in tandem with the growth of the legal market – both of which the AGA is committed to lead on throughout 2024."

Industry Continues To Grow

A look at the fourth quarter numbers offers even more of a positive note for the industry, reaching an all-time quarterly revenue record of \$17.4 billion. December was especially big at \$6.2 billion, the highest grossing month in industry history.

It's also important to note that these numbers are for the commercial casino industry only and do not include tribal gaming revenues, which aren't yet available.

The AGA notes that commercial gaming continues to evolve, and online gaming (including mobile sports betting) made up nearly one-quarter (24.7%) of nationwide commercial gaming revenue in 2023, also a new record high. Here's a look at each gaming sector:

Traditional gaming – Slots and table games grossed a record \$49.4 billion in 2023, up 3.3% from 2022. On a

state level, 19 of 27 traditional gaming markets saw record annual revenue.

Sports betting – In 2023, sports betting achieved new records for handle (\$119.8 billion, up 27.8%) and sportsbook revenue (\$10.9 billion, up 44.5%). "Continued maturation across most existing markets" and the addition of new markets contributed to that, particularly in Massachusetts and Ohio.

iGaming – Online casino revenue grew 22.9% from 2022 to \$6.2 billion in the six states with legal online gaming. Several other states are also now considering online gaming, including poker.

A Look At Top Markets

At the state level, 12 of the top 20 casino gaming markets reported revenue growth compared to the previous year. The Las Vegas Strip saw the strongest year-over-year gains, although one recent report noted that overall Strip profits fell.

New Jersey again was the second-highest grossing market with the Chicagoland area moving into third after flipping positions with Baltimore/Washington, D.C. The Mississippi Gulf Coast rounded out the top five.

Additionally, the industry contributed more to state and local governments than ever in 2023. That included an estimated \$14.4 billion in direct gaming revenue taxes, an increase of 9.7% year over year. The industry also pays billions of additional tax dollars to states each year in the form of income, sales, payroll, and various other corporate taxes.

"Gaming's success translates directly to the success of the states, cities, and towns in which we operate," Miller said. "We are proud to be in 47 U.S. jurisdictions, acting as economic drivers, creating jobs and providing the funding that makes critical public education programs, infrastructure projects, problem gambling resources and more possible." ♠

SHAUN DEEB NABS \$800K IN WEIGHT LOSS PROP BET

By Sean Chaffin



The world of poker has seen numerous weight loss prop bets over the years and Shaun Deeb has become the latest poker player to shed some pounds and score some cash in the process.

Deeb originally made the wager with high-stakes poker player and entrepreneur Bill Perkins in March of last year, putting up \$100,000 to Perkins' \$1 million. However, the two have now settled with Deeb collecting \$800,000 as part of the buyout.

"There was never a minute I considered quitting," Deeb noted on Twitter. "I knew how much time I put in. I wasn't ever going to let that go to waste. I've always been a volume/long term thinker of EV (expected value). This bet was just perfect for my grinding mindset."

The original wager proposed that Deeb would need to get to 17% body fat by the start of this year's *World Series of Poker*, having started at more than 40%. That gave Deeb 14 months to meet the challenge. If not, he would have to cough up the \$100,000 to Perkins.

The high-stakes pro got serious about the bet, documenting his fitness journey on Twitter and on his YouTube channel "MillionDollarDeeb." In September, Deeb detailed the entire wager and how it came about in *Card Player's* Poker Stories Podcast.

With the pounds still melting away, Perkins could see the writing on the wall and proposed a buyout. Last week, Deeb said he and his wife discussed whether to accept a buyout offer and ultimately agreed to \$800,000. That adds to his live tournament winnings of \$12.3 million. The 37-year-old high-stakes player also has six *WSOP* bracelets.

Perkins had previously won a weight-loss bet with Doug Polk, pocketing \$200,000 when Polk failed to meet his target.

Even though the bet is wrapped up, Deeb is still determined to reach his fitness goals. He's also willing to accept more wagers on whether he will ultimately get there.

"I'm still working toward my goal of 17% (body fat)," he noted on Twitter. "I'm going to get there to show my kids that if I can do this, they can do plenty of things people say are too hard or impossible. I initially thought to not announce the buyout since I am determined to reach the goal, but too many people have side action to not let them know that Bill bought out and at what percentage."

"And if anyone doubts me on still getting there, I'm open to taking a lot more bets on myself. Anyone who needs advice on their own goals, feel free to reach out – if I can't help, I can direct you to someone who can."

Deeb did allow himself to shave his long beard and hair. He had previously grown it out in the hopes that its added weight would help him meet his body-fat percentage. ♠



DELAWARE IGAMING REVENUE SURGES WITH NEW OPERATOR, POKER STILL NOT RUNNING

By Card Player News Team

Delaware Lottery's switch from 888 Holdings to Rush Street Interactive (RSI) for the state's online gaming has already paid some big dividends. In January, the new operator almost tripled revenue to \$3.4 million compared to \$1.2 million from the same month in 2023.

RSI debuted as the state's chosen operator in January, offering online table games, slots, and sports betting. The numbers point to the possibility of seeing a small, but growing market as more states now consider legalizing iGaming.

Delaware's online model is a bit different from that found in most states and legal jurisdictions around the world. Because of the state's low population of about one million, there is only one operator. RSI then partners with the state's three casino racetracks – Delaware Park, Dover Downs, and Harrington Raceway and Casino – to offer online gaming.

The January revenue numbers were solid, but poker players may be feeling a bit left out. The switch from 888 means that there isn't currently an online poker option. The state is part of the country's multi-state online poker agreement with Nevada, New Jersey, and Michigan, but Delaware players are left on the sidelines as of now.

RSI doesn't currently offer an online poker product, but acquired Phil Galfond's Run It Once Poker in 2022 for \$5 million. The company is expected to enter the U.S. market with that platform. Delaware officials have said they expect RSI to launch poker at some point, but further details haven't been announced.

"Rush Street Interactive has announced previously that it is developing a poker platform that they are excited about sharing with players," Delaware Lottery director Helene Keeley told *Card Player* in August. "The Lottery and RSI are working together towards making poker available to Delaware patrons, though we're not prepared to discuss a specific timeline at this stage." ♠

POKER STREAMER TURNS CAMERAS ON 24/7 FOR ONLINE CHALLENGE

By Sean Chaffin

Twitch poker streamers have done plenty of bankroll challenges before, but one popular streamer is offering up something a bit new. Online poker pro Kevin Martin is ditching his entire bankroll in a new challenge he's calling "Poker From \$0" – all captured on video 24/7.

The effort sees the Canadian attempt to run up his bankroll from nothing. But what may be even more interesting is that the GGPoker ambassador is moving into a new house to have the entire experience – beyond simply the online poker action – streamed live from various camera angles around the location.

The entire setup may be fitting for the former Big Brother Canada contestant and winner – combining reality show and poker streaming.

"Welcome to the closest look into my life that there might ever be," he notes in a video promoting the new challenge. "If you wanted a reality show, we made our own reality show. I've put myself in a rigorous social experiment. I officially have no money and I have to recreate my entire poker life."

Martin isn't actually starting from nothing, with new Twitch subscribers adding 10 cents to the roll, and he's also sold a few items to kick things off, with video cameras following him to a pawn shop to see what he could get. He returned with \$200 and the hope to then spin that up to \$5,000.

"Ideally in my mind, this is all I need," he said on day one after securing some cash from the pawn shop. "This is really an ember and we're going to aggressively bankroll (manage),



© Kevin Martin

and we're going to see (where it goes)."

That kind of challenge has become commonplace on Twitch today, but the idea of Martin locking himself into a house and having the entire experience filmed is something different. Beyond simply playing poker, viewers can tune in as he sleeps, grabs a snack from the kitchen, and more. His poker life has now entered a fishbowl.

"I'm running a real-life Truman Show and a shocking amount of people watched me sleep all night," reported Martin.

Viewers will quickly notice the production values involved with the entire operation, and Martin has stated that he spent about \$30,000 to make it happen. Cameras are stationed in the living room where he plays poker as well as in the bedroom, kitchen, and even in the bathroom (although the camera faces the opposite way when he's showering and taking care of other matters). ♠

Venetian Announces Expansion Plans For Largest Poker Room In Vegas

By Card Player News Team

The Venetian has some big plans for poker in the works that will see the property house the largest card room in Las Vegas. This summer, the room will be moved to the second level of the Grand Canal Shoppes, which connects the Venetian to the adjacent Palazzo Casino.

The move takes the room from 35 tables to 50 in the new 14,000-square-foot space. Venetian said the new venue would "push the boundaries of modern poker forward."

Venetian management took player input into account when planning for the new area. Players will no longer have to walk out into the main casino for a trip to the restroom. Plans now call for dedicated bathrooms right in the poker room.

Other amenities include a self-serve fountain drink and coffee station, USB chargers at every seat, easy online food ordering right at a player's seat, with sports betting and player rewards kiosks located in the room as well.

"It's going to be a completely different look and a completely different feel," Director of Poker Operations Tommy



LaRosa told the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. "It's going to be modern, it's going to be clean, and it's just going to be unique. It's going to be a one-of-a-kind space."

The location near the Palazzo puts the room away from the smoke and noise of the main casino floor, and also allows for easier access to the self-parking garage, and more restaurant options. The Venetian is also bringing a high-tech touch to the plans with a dedicated streaming room for tables during tournament series and also for poker vloggers who may want to visit.

The current poker room is expected to remain open until the new venue is unveiled. ♠

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ANDREW LICHTENBERGER: CLIMBING TO THE SUMMIT OF POKER SUCCESS

'LuckyChewy' Talks Seven-Figure Scores, Teaching Poker, And Cold Plunges

By Sean Chaffin



Andrew Lichtenberger met up with fellow poker pros Stephen Chidwick and Orson Young last year before the Paris stop on the *European Poker Tour*. The three possess some of the most advanced poker minds in the game, but discussing hands wasn't on the menu.

The three were instead tackling Fontainebleau, located about 35 miles to the south and one of the world's premier rock-climbing destinations.

Rather than riffling chips, the group searched for perfect hand holds, gripped outcroppings, and found unique pathways to reach the summit of La Marie-Rose, one of the site's more challenging climbs. Reaching the pinnacle brought on a similar feeling of elation as winning a poker tournament – overcoming adversity to reach a goal.

“Talk about high morale,” Lichtenberger says. “It was just incredible. It was probably the best climbing experience I've ever had and maybe ever will have. The sun is shining and you're with your pals and you're succeeding at this thing. It's not a trivial climb. Compared to an expert, it's quite simple. But for where I'm at, it's tough. It was just awesome.”

While it may be every man for himself at the poker table, scaling a massive boulder brings more group dynamics, and Lichtenberger likes the idea of cheering on each other to achieve a goal. In rock climbing slang, the goal is to “send” –

© PokerGO



shorthand for ascend.

“If I send, you get psyched,” he says. “If you send, I get psyched. Any win is a collective win. Whereas in poker, if I win you might be on the losing end. So, it’s a cool difference, and then just from a physical standpoint, it’s fascinating. There’s a lot of problem solving. How do you dispose your weight in your feet so that you can sort of get your hand up? There are so many little technical nuances that are really fun to try and explore and it’s a great workout.”

And while Lichtenberger may enjoy the communal feelings that come with climbing, over the last year he’s been scaling the poker tournament leaderboards and registering some boulder-sized payouts.

A Massive Run On The Felt

To say Lichtenberger had a phenomenal 18 months would be a major understatement. The 36-year-old rode a wave of winnings in late 2022 that included a third-place finish in the \$300,000 *Super High Roller Bowl* for \$1.2 million and a win in a \$25,000 *Poker Masters* event for \$465,750.

In 2023, he scored another *Poker Masters* win for \$204,000 and then returned to the *Super High Roller Bowl* to improve to a runner-up finish for \$1.7 million. Then at the *WPT World Championship* in December, Lichtenberger picked up a career-best score.

The *WPT World Championship* was a particularly nice rush on a massive stage. This year’s event attracted 3,835 entries with a \$40 million prize pool. The third-place finish brought the 36-year-old a massive \$2.8 million.

“It’s intense, even a bit overwhelming at times,” he says. “It’s just a dream come true. You never know when it’s going to be your turn. And when it is, there’s just incredible amounts of gratitude because it’s rare. It was just an amazing experience.”

Combined with some recent entrepreneurial efforts,

including the launch of his training platform, the poker pro couldn’t have asked for better 2023.

“It’s been an incredible year in more ways than one,” he said. “The public announcement of Octopi Poker and this project I’ve been working hard on, alongside all the success, has felt like a bit of a fairy tale.”

“It’s funny, in poker you can work super hard and do all the right things and sometimes it’s just not your time. In this case, it certainly was my time, so I’m always really grateful to have a lot of success like this because certain things are outside of your control at the poker table. It was just a wild ride. Things just kept going right for me in really big spots, and that’s kind of really what you need.”

Despite some big runs with runner-up and third-place finishes, Lichtenberger doesn’t dwell on the close calls and understands the variance that comes with reaching the winner’s circle. In a game where players may be constantly replaying hands in their heads, “LuckyChewy” steers clear of the “would have/should have” mentality.

“When you have a good result, and it’s such a profoundly good result, you always want to do better, but that’s in some ways like an ego desire,” he said. “You always want more. It’s good and it’s part of competition. It’s healthy to want to do better, but sort of the eating away (at you) side of it can be quite insidious and I find that’s not really the type of person I want to be. I prefer when I feel grateful about my successes, and not dwell on the fact that it could have been better if X, Y, or Z happened. Because it can always be better. That’s just sort of a foregone conclusion unless you win.”

This doesn’t mean that he doesn’t reflect on his game. Lichtenberger looks at his strategic decisions and reviews things he might have done differently just like any other successful pro, but unlike the natural instincts of many, has no desire to beat himself up for how things *might* have gone.



Those feelings can become unhealthy, he says, and aren't good in the long run.

"I think for me, as long as I've really done my best and I feel like I've played well, I'm just usually pretty content," Lichtenberger said. "Of course, being on a big rush certainly helps."

The success comes at a time when Lichtenberger has taken a more sustainable approach to the game. That has included a commitment to decompressing and trying to relax before playing a tournament. That doesn't mean just getting plenty of sleep. Lichtenberger enjoys yoga and even wrote a book titled *Yoga of Poker: A High Stakes Journey to Freedom*. His tournament preparation also includes breathing exercises and meditation.

Another recent addition to his routine comes with some cooler vibes – as in ice cold. The poker pro has embraced cold plunging. These quick therapeutic soaks in ice water not only ease sore muscles, but also help with focus and sleep, according to advocates. Lichtenberger finds a cold bath or shower can fit the bill while on the road, and at home in Las Vegas he has a water chiller perfect for a daily plunge.

"I know it's kind of all the rage, but I find them to be particularly useful, just being able to sort of develop that resilience of mind and focus and to push past unavailability," he explained. "There's just something awesome about willingly getting very cold. It's worth experiencing and seeing how you feel afterward. There's a certain high associated with it in all honesty, there's a dopamine release for sure and I would recommend it."

Looking At The Poker Landscape

While he may enjoy cold sensations, Lichtenberger has been on fire at the poker table. That includes on the high roller scene, with several big finishes in the PokerGO Studio and at other venues over the last few years. As a poker coach, professional player, and now entrepreneur in the industry, Lichtenberger is bullish on not only the sustainability of larger-stakes events, but of poker as a whole.

"Even before COVID, field sizes were rising," he said. "Then we had the biggest ever (*WSOP*) main event last year. It just seems like live poker is undefeated in its ability to draw new faces because, if I'm being honest, I think poker is sort of the most interesting game. I've always loved games throughout my life, and I've dabbled in a number of them.

I've just never found a more interesting one than poker.

"I think the reason for that really is that there's just so many different styles that can succeed," Lichtenberger explained. "You have this very distinct and unique disposition between the logical aspects of the game, being able to break everything down to sort of ones and zeros, quantifying edges, strategic choices, and expected values, and you have the complete other side of the coin, which is the intuitive aspect – the emotional components going into decision making, the psychological elements. Those are things that we can't really model for yet. Maybe we have plans to do that at some point. There's just no game like it. It has those two distinct pillars of different areas of exploration, and they're just so seamlessly woven together."

Looking at the high roller scene, there still remain plenty of shortcomings in even the most elite players, Lichtenberger says. It's a misconception that players in these events have mastered it all, he says, and many still have some leaks to plug.

"Poker is such a deep game," he said. "It really is just about constantly learning, and that is one of the things I love about it. There aren't enough days in my life to play poker and stop learning. The game is far too deep. Everyone is always making mistakes and learning from them. Obviously, when we're talking about sort of the elite level of competition, there's a significant ability to overcome these mistakes and make a lot of amazing plays. But it's an incredibly challenging endeavor and there is constantly room for improvement."

New Ventures And New Responsibilities

Beyond the winnings at the table, which now sit at \$20 million and counting, Lichtenberger is now one of the brains behind Octopi Poker. He's worked as a poker coach and instructor for years, including with LearnWPT, but he's now branched out with Octopi Poker.

The platform is a "poker tech company" focused on education and building communities of players looking to improve their skills. The community and social aspect is a major focus, something he hopes takes the platform in a different direction than most training sites.

"I really think one of the best things about poker is the community," he said. "It's why poker is in large part fun – it's the people you're interacting with. So, we've created social components into the learning software, whether it's hand history reviews from hands you've played or hands friends have played or stream hands we have in our database."

"For me, I think it speaks to the significance of just respecting the fact that poker is a logical and intuitive endeavor, and it's not one or the other. It's really both and there will be people that have varying levels of interest in either one or the other. And it has to be able to cater to one or both of those things."

The Octopi team goes through a rigorous process, he says, in developing training resources and materials. That includes simulations optimized for different raises and bet sizes as well as a simplification of the game tree with heuristics that are most useful for building blocks for strategic understanding.

The team also boasts quite a roster of coaches, influencers, and content creators including *High Stakes Poker* commentator Nick Schulman, who is a co-founder, PokerGO commentator Brent Hanks, and fellow high-stakes pros Stephen Chidwick, Nick Petrangelo, Chris Brewer, and



“Poker is such a deep game. It really is just about constantly learning, and that is one of the things I love about it. There aren’t enough days in my life to play poker and stop learning. The game is far too deep.”



Maria Ho. Poker player and entrepreneur Victoria Livschitz, whom Lichtenberger met two years ago, also serves to drive the tech side of the operation.

Octopi allows coaches and creators to feature their own content and hopes to be the Amazon for poker in a way. The company faces a competitive market in the training site space, but Lichtenberger believes there is room for many differing options. He's hoping the platform helps promote even more creativity with content geared toward all levels of skill, bridging the gaps in understanding.

As CEO and co-founder of the enterprise, Lichtenberger has had to step out of his comfort zone to deal with other parts of a business and industry he's not used to.

"I'm just generally very excited for the first time in my life to be on this side of poker education and content creation because I've been a poker coach for probably 15 years, but I've never been quite in this role where I'm developing a real integrated learning platform for what I think is really most useful as a beginner and intermediate player or the advanced player," he said.

"It's super fascinating for me to learn about this whole new world. It is not something I understood before going into it. That's part of the reason that I owe Victoria [Livschitz] such a debt of gratitude because she's been able to take me under her wing with all of the entrepreneurial things one has to be made aware of to become successful. There are so many blind spots. I've made this mistake in the past where like, 'Okay, I'm successful at poker. Well poker is problem solving, I can problem solve other stuff.' But there's so much going on that you just don't have an eye for if it's your first time, so I really do enjoy it. I've been mentoring Victoria in poker and she's been mentoring me in business."

Away From The Table And Looking Ahead

Originally from New York City, Lichtenberger grew up

on Long Island for most of his childhood. He attended Stony Brook University for three semesters before deciding to earn a poker Ph.D instead. Las Vegas is his home now and he enjoys the energy of the city and the feeling that there is always something going on. (There are plenty of opportunities for rock climbing nearby as well.)

Lichtenberger describes himself as a man with many interests. He enjoys spending time with his wife and the couple has two pet doves. Violin lessons were also a part of his routine for a few years and he also recently bought a guitar.

"I just try to stay well rounded and expose myself to different things," he says. "In some sense, with hobbies I go where the wind blows."

With so much going on, Lichtenberger has no plans of slowing down.

"Take someone like Erik Seidel for example, to me it's quite inspiring how much longevity he's had in this game," he said of the 64-year-old Hall of Famer. "He's still playing at the highest levels and just won the \$50,000 high roller (at the *WSOP Paradise*) in the Bahamas. I really admire that. Being able to stay successful and competitive for many years on end is something that I value, so I will certainly seek to do that. I don't foresee that I'm going to leave the industry. It's very much my home. I love it."

"Doyle's infamous quote of, 'You don't stop playing because you get old, you get old because you stop playing,' there's probably a bit of truth to that. Poker at the end of the day is a game. It's meant to be fun. And the more that you can do that, and take that to heart, [the better]. That never really gets old. It's part of what drew many of us to poker in the first place, and what will keep us fascinated with the game." ♠



Top Tournament Scores

Date	Event	Place	Payout
Dec. 2023	\$10,000 WPT World Championship	3 rd	\$2,798,700
Dec. 2014	\$100,000 WPT Alpha8 Bellagio High Roller	1 st	\$1,770,692
Sept. 2023	\$300,000 PokerGO Super High Roller Bowl	2 nd	\$1,680,000
Oct. 2022	\$300,000 PokerGO Super High Roller Bowl	3 rd	\$1,152,000
May 2019	\$50,000 WSOP High Roller NLHE	2 nd	\$917,232
Dec. 2018	\$10,000 WPT Five Diamond Poker Classic	3 rd	\$802,973
April 2022	\$50,000 Hard Rock Poker Showdown NLHE	1 st	\$638,223
June 2016	\$3,000 WSOP NLHE	1 st	\$569,158
Dec. 2011	\$20,000 Epic Poker League Mix Max NLHE	2 nd	\$514,480
July 2009	\$10,000 WSOP Main Event	18 th	\$500,557
Sept. 2022	\$25,000 PokerGO Poker Masters	1 st	\$465,750
July 2015	\$25,000 Aria High Roller NLHE	1 st	\$432,980
Dec. 2021	\$25,000 Five Diamond Poker Classic High Roller	1 st	\$432,000
Nov. 2014	\$50,000 Aria High Roller NLHE	1 st	\$398,160
June 2015	\$111,111 WSOP High Roller For One Drop	9 th	\$390,875

BARNY BOATMAN SCORES CAREER-DEFINING WIN AT EPT PARIS FESTIVAL

68-Year-Old Original Hendon Mobster Becomes Oldest EPT Champ

By Erik Fast



The 2024 *PokerStars European Poker Tour Paris* festival ran from Feb. 14-25 at the Palais des Congres de Paris, with more than \$45 million in total prize money paid out across more than 30 events. The series featured everything from a record-setting €1,100 buy-in kickoff event with 4,149 entries (see our previous issue for more on that tournament which was won by Mateusz Moolhuizen) to a plethora of high roller events with buy-ins of €25,000 or higher.

GOATman: Barny Bests 1,747 Entries To Set Record As Oldest EPT Main Event Champion

Poker history was made in the €5,300 main event. The massive field of 1,747 entries was whittled down across two starting flights and five more days of play until a single champion remained in **Barney Boatman**. The 68-year-old British poker legend became the oldest player to ever secure an *EPT* main event title.

In addition to locking up that unique distinction, Boatman also took home a career-high payday of €1,287,800 (\$1,390,824 USD) for the win.

This easily surpassed his previous top score of \$546,080 earned for taking down a \$1,500 buy-in bracelet event at the 2013 *World Series of Poker*. Boatman, a member of the UK poker crew 'Hendon Mob' that the popular results database is named after, now has more than \$4.8 million in career tournament earnings.

"This doesn't feel real. It's the biggest result I've had in poker, nothing's close," he told *PokerStars* reporters after coming out on top. "I'm just very happy. I've been in quite a few finals where I've never quite got the job done. All that was needed was for me to run like god, especially three-handed."

This was the sixth recorded tournament title for the London resident, including two bracelet wins. The 2,160 *Card Player* Player of the Year points that Boatman secured as the champion were enough to catapult him into first place in the 2024 POY standings, presented by Global Poker. He now leads second-ranked David Coleman by just four points.

The huge turnout for this event (sixth largest *EPT* main event ever) resulted in \$9,038,000 in total prize money, with the top 255 finishers earning a share. Plenty of big names ran deep, including bracelet winner and *EPT* champion Dimitar Danchev (16th), 2022 *WPT World Championship* winner Eliot Hudon (11th), high-stakes crusher Farid Jattin (10th), and *Aussie Millions* main event champion Ami Barer (7th), but only six contenders advanced to the final day.

Germany's David Kaufmann was the clear leader when play resumed, with more than 47% of the total chips in play. Boatman sat in third chip position, but added to his stack early when he got involved in an all-in confrontation against three-time *WPT* champion Eric Afriat.

The chips went in on a Q♠ 10♠ 10♣ flop with Afriat holding Q♣ 8♦. Boatman held pocket kings for an overpair. The 8♣ turn and 2♠ river kept Boatman's two pair best to send Afriat packing in sixth place (\$282,582). He now has nearly \$5 million in career tournament earnings after this latest deep run.

2023 *EPT Paris* main event runner-up Peter Jorgne came incredibly close to improving on that finish in 2024, but ultimately bowed out in fifth place when his A-9 was unable to outrun the 8-7 suited of two-time bracelet winner Aleksey Ponakovs.



Daniel Dvoress



The Latvian turned an eight-high straight to leave Jorgne drawing dead going into the river. The Swede took home \$367,308 for the second act of his incredible back-to-back showing in this event. He was awarded \$834,707 for his second-place finish last year.

The UK's Owen Dodd was the next to fall, with his pocket deuces being unable to outflip the A-10 of Kaufmann. The small pair remained best through the turn, but an ace on the river sent Dodd to the payout desk to collect \$477,522 for his fourth-place finish.

Boatman overtook the lead during three-handed action, winning a big pot with a full house after a bluff-raise on the river from Kaufmann. He continued to pull away as short-handed action continued.

Ponakovs and Kaufmann eventually got involved in a preflop clash that saw Ponakovs fall to just a couple of big blinds when his K-J suited was unable to beat out A-8. He managed to win two all-ins, but was soon at risk again with A♥ 8♣ against the pocket treys of Kauffman. Neither player improved on the runout and Ponakovs was eliminated in third place (\$620,838). He now has nearly \$17.4 million in recorded tournament earnings to his name.

Heads-up play began with Boatman holding better than a 2:1 chip lead over Kaufmann. On just the second hand of the showdown, Kaufmann raised on the button with A♦ 9♣ and Boatman defended his big blind with J♦ 2♦. The flop came down J♥ 9♠ 6♠. Boatman bet and Kaufmann called. The 5♦ on the turn prompted Boatman to move all-in for Kaufmann's last 10,180,000. Kaufmann made the call and the Q♣ completed the board to lock up the title for Boatman. Kaufmann earned \$869,130 as the second-place finisher.

Dvoress Dominates High Rollers

This stop featured a variety of high-roller events, including seven tournaments with a buy-in of €25,000 or higher. The very first of those was won by two-time POY award winner **Stephen Chidwick**. The British poker pro took home \$421,006 and 420 POY points after defeating a field of 51 total entries.

He overcame a stacked final table en route to the victory,

including Adrian Mateos (\$278,532) heads-up. He followed this win up with an eighth-place showing in the €50,000 event just days later. With eight final-table finishes and more than \$1 million in to-date POY earnings, Chidwick now sits in fifth place in the 2024 POY rankings. (For more on Chidwick, check out the English money list leaderboard on page 34).

The second €25,000 tournament drew an even larger turnout, with 62 entries building a \$1,574,899 prize pool paid out among eight in-the-money finishers. The largest chunk was captured by Canadian poker pro **Daniel Dvoress**.

The two-time bracelet winner locked up \$480,427 for the win, along with 504 POY points. He had also finished seventh in the first high roller, and would soon add a few more deep runs to his tally in Paris.

Michael Watson finished fifth in this event, backing up his fourth-place showing in the first €25,000 and his ninth-place finish in the €10,200 mystery bounty event earlier in the series.

The Canadian *World Poker Tour* winner and two-time *EPT* champion also won a €2,100 six-max event later on in the series for \$110,160. His hot streak in Paris moved him inside the top 50 in the POY race and increased his lifetime earnings to nearly \$22.7 million.

The €50,000 event drew 62 entries before registration came to an end, building a prize pool of \$3,149,798 for the top eight finishers. A French player came out on top, with **Thomas Santerne** walking away with the trophy and \$960,638.

This was the largest score yet for the native of Normandy, easily surpassing the \$254,417 he earned as the runner-up in the *World Series of Poker* \$10,000 six-max event last year. He now has more than \$1.6 million in career earnings.

Two-time bracelet winner Chris Brewer finished second for \$629,964. He went on to finish fourth in a later €25,000 event as well. With 800 total POY points, he now sits just outside the top 100.

Sweden's Niklas Astedt, who finished runner-up in the second €25,000 high roller, placed seventh in this event. The online superstar known to many as 'Lena900' added

TOURNAMENTS



Stephen Chidwick

© PokerStars - Danny Maxwell



Thomas Santerne

© PokerStars - Danny Maxwell



Teun Mulder

© PokerStars - Manuel Kovsca



Enrico Camosci

© PokerStars - Manuel Kovsca



Santhosh Suvarna

© PokerStars - Eloy Cabarcas



Oliver Weis

© PokerStars - Eloy Cabarcas

one more high roller final table later on, placing fourth for \$99,360. All told, he cashed for \$571,752 across three in-the-money finishes during this festival.

The third €25,000 high roller drew 51 total entries, building a prize pool worth nearly \$1.3 million. The top seven finishers made the money, with a min-cash being worth \$67,986 to three-time bracelet winner Joao Vieira. The largest payout awarded went to champion **Teun Mulder**. The Dutch poker pro took home \$421,060 for the win. This was the fifth-largest recorded tournament score of his career. It increased his lifetime earnings to nearly \$8.4 million.

Mulder won the same buy-in level tournament at the 2023 *EPT Paris* festival, also. The longtime online crusher now has eight recorded tournament victories under his belt from 49 in-the-money finishes.

Dvoress recorded his third final-table finish of the series in this one, placing fifth for \$110,106 just a few days after winning the second €25,000 offered in Paris this year. Dvoress was not yet done padding his stats at this stop, though.

The day after his fifth-place showing in the third €25,000 high roller, Dvoress managed to emerge victorious from a field of 34 entries in the fourth such event for his second title at the festival and \$297,842. The very next day, he placed sixth in yet another high roller, adding \$104,004. With that he increased his career earnings to more than \$32 million.

The Mississauga, Ontario resident remains in fourth place on Canada's all-time money list. He is one of just 22 players in the history of the game to have accumulated more than \$30 million in recorded tournament earnings. With his two titles and five cashes for \$1,060,419 in POY earnings, Dvoress has climbed to 24th place in this year's POY standings.

With 63 total entries, the penultimate €25,000 high roller ended up with a prize pool of \$1,600,301 that was paid out among the top eight finishers. The single-day affair ended with Italy's **Enrico Camosci** as the champion. The bracelet winner took home \$488,117 for the win, the second-largest payday of his career. He now has nearly \$3.1 million in recorded lifetime earnings.

Steve O'Dwyer finished as the runner-up, earning \$320,058 for his first live cash of 2024. The score pushed him over \$41 million in career earnings, good for 12th on poker's all-time money list for the time being.

The final €25,000 saw 43 entries build a \$1,092,269 prize pool. Bracelet winner **Santhosh Suvarna** was the last player standing. He took home \$376,769 after defeating Samuel Ju heads-up for the title. Suvarna, who primarily plays high stakes, has already racked up more than \$7 million in tournament earnings across his first 27 in-the-money finishes.

The €10,300 high roller attracted 512 entries, building a prize pool of more than \$5.3 million. Germany's **Oliver Weis** came away with the title and \$1,047,816. This was the only other seven-figure payout awarded during the festival besides the nearly \$1.4 million that went to Boatman for taking down the main event.

This was also the first seven-figure score for Weis, blowing away his previous top payday of \$406,900 earned for taking down a high roller at the 2017 *PokerStars Championship Macau* stop. His career earnings now exceed \$3.6 million.

Weis was also awarded 2,100 POY points for the win. This was his first deep run of the year, but it was sufficient to move him into third place in the POY rankings. ♠

European Poker Tour - Palais de Congres de Paris - France

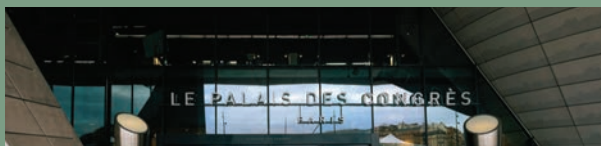
Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€10,200 NLH KO Feb. 14-15 Entries: 103 Prizepool: \$1,049,004	1 Duco Haven	\$263,520 (600)
	2 Quan Zhou	\$166,320 (500)
	3 Thomas Boivin	\$89,856 (400)
	4 Sirzat Hissou	\$99,684 (300)
	5 Sergi Reixach	\$106,164 (250)
	6 Adrian Mateos	\$39,096 (200)
	7 Elias Gutierrez	\$40,932 (150)
	8 Aurelie Russo	\$27,864 (100)
	9 Michael Watson	\$53,676 (50)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 NLH Feb. 16 Entries: 51 Prizepool: \$1,295,482	1 Stephen Chidwick	\$421,006 (420)
	2 Adrian Mateos	\$278,532 (350)
	3 Jean Noel Thorel	\$187,812 (280)
	4 Michael Watson	\$142,452 (210)
	5 Jesse Lonis	\$110,160 (175)
	6 Sam Greenwood	\$87,480 (140)
	7 Daniel Dvoress	\$68,040 (105)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 NLH Feb. 17 Entries: 62 Prizepool: \$1,574,899	1 Daniel Dvoress	\$480,427 (504)
	2 Niklas Astedt	\$314,928 (420)
	3 Tamas Adamszki	\$228,312 (336)
	4 Johannes Straver	\$173,232 (252)
	5 Michael Watson	\$133,920 (210)
	6 Joris Ruijs	\$102,384 (168)
	7 Enrico Camosci	\$78,732 (126)
	8 Viacheslav Buldygin	\$62,964 (84)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€550 NLH Feb. 17-18 Entries: 2,055 Prizepool: \$1,063,142	1 Nolan Madene	\$154,656 (540)
	2 Tung Nguyen	\$96,444 (450)
	3 Jean-Louis Santoni	\$68,850 (360)
	4 Wojciech Barzantny	\$52,974 (270)
	5 Vladimir Lipnitskii	\$40,770 (225)
	6 Birger Larsen	\$31,320 (180)
	7 Massou Cohen	\$24,084 (135)
	8 Eero Rantala	\$18,522 (90)
	9 Carlo Savinelli	\$14,256 (45)

TOURNAMENTS



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€2,200 NLH Feb. 18-19 Entries: 1,794 Prizepool: \$3,712,460	1 Henrik Juncker	\$588,373 (1080)
	2 Parker Talbot	\$360,914 (900)
	3 Guillermo Gordo	\$257,796 (720)
	4 Omar Del Pino	\$198,277 (540)
	5 Michel Leibgorin	\$152,518 (450)
	6 Rony Halimi	\$117,364 (360)
	7 Yunsheng Sun	\$90,288 (270)
	8 Dann Haim Assouline	\$69,455 (180)
	9 Sonny Franco	\$53,417 (90)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€50,000 NLH Feb. 18-20 Entries: 62 Prizepool: \$3,149,798	1 Thomas Santerne	\$960,638 (612)
	2 Chris Brewer	\$629,964 (510)
	3 Pieter Aerts	\$456,732 (408)
	4 Duco Haven	\$346,464 (306)
	5 Markkos Ladev	\$267,732 (255)
	6 Sirzat Hissou	\$204,768 (204)
	7 Niklas Astedt	\$157,464 (153)
	8 Stephen Chidwick	\$126,036 (102)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€5,300 NLH Feb. 19-25 Entries: 1,747 Prizepool: \$9,038,000	1 Barny Boatman	\$1,390,824 (2160)
	2 David Kaufmann	\$869,130 (1800)
	3 Aleksejs Ponakovs	\$620,838 (1440)
	4 Owen Dodd	\$477,522 (1080)
	5 Peter Jorgne	\$367,308 (900)
	6 Eric Afriat	\$282,582 (720)
	7 Ami Barer	\$217,350 (540)
	8 Lorenzo Arduini	\$167,184 (360)
	9 Sindre Hansen	\$128,628 (180)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€5,200 PLO Feb. 19 Entries: 94 Prizepool: \$497,448	1 Bogdan Capitan	\$132,732 (432)
	2 Georgios Tsoupras	\$85,644 (360)
	3 Vasil Medarov	\$61,128 (288)
	4 Jose Fernandes	\$46,980 (216)
	5 Jari Mahonen	\$37,584 (180)
	6 Jerry Odeen	\$30,132 (144)
	7 Klas Lofberg	\$24,084 (108)
	8 Berndt Gleissner	\$19,224 (72)
	9 Lautaro-Valentino Guerra	\$15,444 (36)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 NLH Feb. 20 Entries: 51 Prizepool: \$1,295,482	1 Teun Mulder	\$421,060 (420)
	2 Imad Derwiche	\$278,532 (350)
	3 Jean Noel Thorel	\$187,866 (280)
	4 Roman Hrabec	\$142,506 (210)
	5 Daniel Dvoress	\$110,106 (175)
	6 Leon Sturm	\$87,426 (140)
	7 Joao Vieira	\$67,986 (105)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€2,100 NLH Feb. 20 Entries: 260 Prizepool: \$539,136	1 Enzo Enzo	\$110,344 (432)
	2 Ramon Miquel	\$68,936 (360)
	3 Joan Carlos Vecino	\$49,237 (288)
	4 Omar Del Pino	\$37,876 (216)
	5 Gerard Rubiralta	\$29,138 (180)
	6 Matas Cimbolas	\$22,410 (144)
	7 Birger Larsen	\$18,500 (108)
	8 Gregory Puissant	\$15,422 (72)
	9 Henok Tekle	\$12,852 (36)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 NLH Feb. 21 Entries: 34 Prizepool: \$863,654	1 Daniel Dvoress	\$297,842 (336)
	2 Adrian Mateos	\$194,292 (280)
	3 Markkos Ladev	\$133,920 (224)
	4 Niklas Astedt	\$99,360 (168)
	5 Tamas Adamszki	\$77,760 (140)
	6 Artur Martirosian	\$60,480 (112)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€3,000 NLH KO Feb. 21-23 Entries: 997 Prizepool: \$2,888,435	1 Ram Faravash	\$435,560 (1368)
	2 Mustafa Sayegh	\$210,298 (1140)
	3 Salomon Azria	\$163,480 (912)
	4 Pierre May	\$115,117 (684)
	5 Tsugunari Toma	\$90,623 (570)
	6 Fabrice Bigot	\$81,745 (456)
	7 Fehim Hajdari	\$57,974 (342)
	8 Gediminas Uselis	\$73,343 (228)
	9 Arvin Vahdat	\$33,070 (114)

TOURNAMENTS

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€1,100 NLH Feb. 22-23 Entries: 814 Prizepool: \$842,236	1 Mats Ullereng	\$156,082 (912)
	2 Soenke Jahn	\$97,578 (760)
	3 Nemo Israel	\$69,703 (608)
	4 Aurelien Russo	\$53,611 (456)
	5 Leon Zeaiter	\$41,234 (380)
	6 Eusebiu-Niclae Jalba	\$31,720 (304)
	7 Joao Sydenstricker	\$24,397 (228)
	8 Kevin Dedner	\$18,770 (152)
	9 Clement Thumy	\$14,440 (76)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 NLH Feb. 22 Entries: 63 Prizepool: \$1,600,301	1 Enrico Camosci	\$488,117 (504)
	2 Steve O'Dwyer	\$320,058 (420)
	3 Maksim Vaskresenski	\$232,038 (336)
	4 Evgeniy Tereshchenko	\$176,040 (252)
	5 Ben Heath	\$136,026 (210)
	6 Daniel Dvoress	\$104,004 (168)
	7 Bryn Kenney	\$80,028 (126)
	8 Marius Gierse	\$63,990 (84)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€10,300 NLH Feb. 23-25 Entries: 512 Prizepool: \$5,308,416	1 Oliver Weis	\$1,047,816 (2100)
	2 Luca Marki	\$655,290 (1750)
	3 Sergey Lebedev	\$468,018 (1400)
	4 Ihar Soika	\$360,072 (1050)
	5 Stanislav Zegal	\$277,020 (875)
	6 Carlos Ribeiro	\$213,084 (700)
	7 Nikita Kuznetsov	\$163,944 (525)
	8 Alexander Tkatschew	\$126,090 (350)
	9 Tomi Brouk	\$98,226 (175)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€1,650 NLH KO Feb. 23-24 Entries: 687 Prizepool: \$1,066,246	1 Ioannis Oikonomidis	\$145,519 (840)
	2 Shan Jiang	\$93,733 (700)
	3 Birger Larsen	\$128,984 (560)
	4 Cenk Nigbolu	\$51,948 (420)
	5 Paul Tedeschi	\$51,959 (350)
	6 Sebastian Schulze	\$31,655 (280)
	7 Ben Spragg	\$25,596 (210)
	8 Moritz Dietrich	\$35,521 (140)
	9 Julien Stropoli	\$20,596 (70)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€2,200 NLH Feb. 24-25 Entries: 369 Prizepool: \$765,158	1 Blaz Zerjav	\$153,014 (600)
	2 Mateusz Wozniak	\$95,472 (500)
	3 Jun Chun	\$68,148 (400)
	4 Mohamed Aissani	\$52,488 (300)
	5 Henri Kasper	\$40,392 (250)
	6 Toby Joyce	\$30,996 (200)
	7 Yoni Perez Cohen	\$23,868 (150)
	8 Krishna Madhariwar	\$19,656 (100)
	9 Paul-Adrian Runcan	\$16,416 (50)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 NLH Feb. 24-25 Entries: 43 Prizepool: \$1,092,269	1 Santhosh Suvarna	\$376,769 (420)
	2 Samuel Ju	\$245,808 (350)
	3 Jamil Wakil	\$169,344 (280)
	4 Chris Brewer	\$125,604 (210)
	5 Viacheslav Buldygin	\$98,280 (175)
	6 Sam Greenwood	\$76,464 (140)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€2,100 NLH 6-Max Feb. 25 Entries: 260 Prizepool: \$539,136	1 Michael Watson	\$110,160 (432)
	2 Gerard Rubiralta	\$68,904 (360)
	3 Umberto Ruggeri	\$49,248 (288)
	4 Frederik Thiemer	\$37,908 (216)
	5 Yoonhee Yea	\$29,160 (180)
	6 Justin Steinbrenner	\$22,464 (144)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€5,150 NLH 6-Max Feb. 25 Entries: 103 Prizepool: \$533,952	1 Kuljinder Sidhu	\$142,560 (480)
	2 Jesse Lonis	\$91,908 (400)
	3 Nikolay Ponomarev	\$65,644 (320)
	4 Natan Chauskin	\$50,436 (240)
	5 Fabrice Bigot	\$40,392 (200)
	6 Jon Vallinas	\$32,292 (160)



ARI ENGEL EXTENDS RECORD WITH 17TH WSOP CIRCUIT RING

Lowery And Cartwright Add Titles To Keep Pace

By Ryan Lucchesi



The *World Series of Poker Circuit* continues to see a spirited sense of competition atop the tour's all-time titles leaderboard, and there was a lot of movement in the gold-rings race in February.

Ari Engel increased his lead by winning a record 17th gold ring in a *WSOP Circuit* Michigan online event. The \$500 no-limit hold'em big 500 8-max tournament attracted 76 entries with Engel coming out on top to claim the victory.

"It was only 48 unique players, and I was three of [the entries], but I managed to run great and win ring no. 17 online," Engel admitted on Twitter afterwards, clarifying that he actually lost money on the series overall but was happy to extend his lead in the rings race.

The 40-year-old was still feeling a bit of the heat, however, complimenting his closest competitors on the quality of their wins before flying off for yet another tournament stop. The world traveler now has close to \$8.9 million in total earnings, and has won an impressive 50 tournaments in his poker career. That includes three *WSOP* gold bracelets as well. But the 17th *WSOPC* win is what gave him some separation from his closest challengers for the gold ring crown.

Meanwhile, Daniel Lowery was busy adding gold rings to his trophy case as well at the *WSOP Circuit* series at Harrah's Cherokee in North Carolina. He scored his 15th gold ring after topping the 3,577-entry field in a \$400 monster stack event to cash for \$148,416. (Read a breakdown of his win on pg. 36.)

That put his career earnings above \$3.15 million, with \$1.8 million of that coming in *Circuit* events, but it also put Lowery in a three-way tie in the chase group behind Engel, along with Maurice Hawkins and Joshua Reichard.

"The chase is real, we've been taking it serious," said

Lowery after the win to reporters on the scene. "I'm very real with myself about poker, and I feel like I played amazing this week."

"I said a long time ago, some guys said it didn't matter, but it matters to be number one, one time, so I'm trying," the 50-year-old business owner added. "We'll see who can get there."

Another player who grew his *WSOP Circuit* gold ring collection in North Carolina was Kyle Cartwright. He took home the title after a two-hour heads-up battle in the \$1,100 no-limit hold'em event, topping 600 entries to win his ninth gold ring and move him into a tie for 13th all time.

The father of three told reporters that he doesn't have as much time for tournaments these days, but was fortunate to get "let out of the house" so he could find the winner's circle again.

"I don't really play tournaments anymore, so I'm not chasing [rings],"

Cartwright stated. "Lowery is an animal. What he's doing in these 1,000-player fields is amazing."

The cash of \$111,305 took his career earnings above \$3.1 million, more than half of which has come on the *Circuit*. The 36-year-old also has a bracelet for winning a \$1,000 no-limit event back in 2014.

Hawkins, meanwhile, narrowly missed out on ring no. 16 when he took third in the main event for \$178,870. (Read more about the main event on the next page.) The embattled poker pro from Florida is by far the *WSOP Circuit's* all-time biggest winner with nearly \$2.5 million in cashes, leading Lowery by almost \$700,000 and Cartwright by more than \$900,000, although he has faced scrutiny by fellow players for alleged unpaid debts.

Rank	Player	Rings
1.	Ari Engel	17
2.	Maurice Hawkins	15
2.	Daniel Lowery	15
2.	Joshua Reichard	15
5.	Valentin Vornicu	13
6.	Roland Israelashvili	11
6.	Soheb Porbandarwala	11
8.	Jeffrey Trudeau	10
8.	Robert Hankins	10
8.	Martin Ryan	10
8.	David Larson	10
8.	Michael Setera	10

TYLER BARNES WINS WSOP CIRCUIT CHEROKEE MAIN EVENT

By Erik Fast



The *WSOP Circuit Harrah's Cherokee* \$1,700 main event drew a sizable field of 1,659 entries, easily surpassing the \$1.5 million guarantee to create a final prize pool of \$2,513,385. After two starting flights and two more days of action, Tyler Barnes emerged victorious with the title and the top prize of \$383,856. The North Carolina resident scored every elimination at the official final table on his way to closing out the win.

This was Barnes' second *WSOPC* gold ring victory, and by far his largest tournament score. Before this six-figure windfall, his top payout was the \$39,051 he secured for taking down the \$600 buy-in event at a 2022 *WSOPC* stop at this same venue for his first ring.

In addition to the title and the money, Barnes also walked away with 1,080 *Card Player* Player of the Year points. This was enough to move him into a tie for 45th place in the 2024 POY race standings presented by Global Poker.

Ryan D'Angelo, a bracelet winner, was among many highly accomplished tournament players who made it deep in this event alongside Barnes. D'Angelo ultimately hit the rail in 12th place for \$31,876. Several other notables survived to the top nine, including 2021 *Wynn Millions* winner Andrew Moreno, who held the chip lead when the field combined onto the final table.

Barnes scored his first knockout at the final table by winning a preflop race against Ruben Chappell (9th). He then busted Christopher Mo (8th) and David Yue (7th) to continue his climb up the leaderboard. Yue had won his first ring earlier this series, taking down a \$400 buy-in no-limit hold'em event for a career-high score of \$135,366.

The next key hand saw all the chips go in the middle with Barnes holding pocket kings against Moreno's pocket

jacks. The larger pair held up and Moreno was eliminated in sixth place. The \$80,857 payout increased his career earnings to more than \$4.3 million.

Adam Hendrix was the next to fall. The Alaskan ran A-Q suited into Barnes' pocket nines preflop. Hendrix added flush and straight draws to his overcards by the turn, but a brick on the river saw him eliminated in fifth place (\$104,413). He now has over \$6.2 million in lifetime cashes.

Two-time bracelet winner Michael Wang got all-in on a Q♦ 9♦ 2♥ Q♣ board with pocket kings, only to be shown that Barnes had turned trips with Q♣ 10♠. The J♠ on the end saw Wang sent to the rail in fourth place (\$136,052).

Like Hendrix, Wang surpassed \$6.2 million in total scores thanks to his run in this event. This was already his sixth final-table finish of the year, including a pair of runner-up finishes. With 1,165 total points, he now sits in 34th place in the POY standings.

15-time winner Maurice Hawkins was looking to break out of a three-way tie for second place on the all-time rings list, but ultimately got knocked out via a three-way all-in. He held A♦ 10♣ facing the J♦ 9♥ of Barnes and the 9♦ 8♦ of Zachary Gilbert. The final board read Q♣ J♥ 4♣ 9♠ 6♥, giving Barnes two pair.

Hawkins earned \$178,870 as the third-place finisher, the sixth-largest score of his career. He is now approaching \$5.4 million in lifetime earnings, with nearly \$2.5 million of that coming from his 148 in-the-money finishes in *WSOPC* ring events.

The final hand saw all of the chips go in after a flop of Q♦ 9♥ 6♥. Gilbert was ahead with Q♣ J♥ and Barnes held 7♠ 6♦. The 5♠ turn gave Barnes a straight draw to go with his other outs, and the 8♥ on the end completed that straight to eliminate Gilbert in second place for \$237,256.

"It feels great to win," Barnes said. "I'd like to give a shoutout to Ryan D'Angelo for coaching and supporting me through this."

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
1	Tyler Barnes	\$383,856 (1,080)
2	Zachary Gilbert	\$237,256 (900)
3	Maurice Hawkins	\$178,870 (720)
4	Michael Wang	\$136,052 (540)
5	Adam Hendrix	\$104,413 (450)
6	Andrew Moreno	\$80,857 (360)
7	David Yue	\$63,188 (270)
8	Christopher Mo	\$49,836 (180)
9	Ruben Chappell	\$39,671 (90)

ELKY WINS APT TAIPEI SUPERSTAR CHALLENGE

By Ryan Lucchesi

Bertrand Grospellier made his first cash in 2024 memorable when he won the 10th poker tournament of his impressive career, topping the field in the *Asian Poker Tour Superstar Challenge* in Taipei, Taiwan. The online poker legend known as ‘ElkY’ took home the top prize worth \$372,250 to take his lifetime tournament earnings to \$15.1 million.

Grospellier is one of the few players who can claim the poker triple crown, with *World Series of Poker*, *World Poker Tour*, and *European Poker Tour* titles on his résumé. He now adds the glossy noir lion trophy.

“I wanted the lion trophy so badly since I joined the *APT*, it’s the last thing I’ve ever wanted in poker. So I am so happy. I’m so ecstatic I finally won it,” Grospellier said to reporters.

The NT\$800,000 buy-in no-limit hold’em tournament created a total prize pool worth \$1,181,786 thanks to 49 entries. The final seven players all took home at least \$62,048 in prize money.

The final table was an international affair with players from six different countries seated together. Sweden’s Mikael Andersson finished in seventh, and then bracelet winner Danny Tang from Hong Kong fell short of his second *APT* title in sixth place. Austria’s Klemens Roiter busted in fifth place, and the other Hong Kong resident at the final table fell in fourth place when Biao Ding exited. Roman Hrabec from



the Czech Republic was out in third to set up the heads-up final.

The final match saw Grospellier overcome a 3:1 chip disadvantage against the chip leader at the start of the final day, Lester Edoc.

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
1	Bertrand Grospellier	\$372,250 (420)
2	Lester Edoc	\$268,864 (350)
3	Roman Hrabec	\$171,360 (280)
4	Biao Ding	\$129,984 (210)
5	Klemens Roiter	\$100,448 (175)
6	Danny Tang	\$76,832 (140)
7	Mikael Andersson	\$62,048 (105)

ISAAC HAXTON SECURES FIRST TITLE OF 2024

By Erik Fast

Isaac Haxton ended 2023 in a tie for the most titles won of any player on the live tournament circuit. He and Danny Tang both racked up seven first-place finishes last year. Haxton made a total of 27 final tables in 2023, accumulating more than \$15.9 million across those scores, the most of any player.

Haxton managed two final-table finishes within the first few days of 2024, but had since been without a deep run on the live circuit. On March 3, he picked up his first victory of the new year by taking down a high-roller event at the *Asian Poker Tour Taipei* stop. He beat out a field of 137 entries in the NT\$300,000 (\$9,504 USD) buy-in no-limit hold’em event, earning \$290,869 USD for the win.

“It was a wild heads-up match. Big pots every hand and a lot of back and forth,” said Haxton to event host Gregory Liow, known to many as ‘Greg Goes All In.’

This score pushed Haxton’s career earnings past the \$49.2 million mark. He remains the eighth-ranked player on poker’s all-time money list, and is now closing in on becoming the eighth player to surpass \$50 million in cashes.

This latest victory saw Haxton walk away with 528 POY points. With 1,063 points, he now sits just outside the top 50 in the 2024 POY standings.

Haxton wasn’t the only 2023 POY top performer who ran deep in this tournament. Ren Lin, who finished last year in



fifth place in the final standings, finished runner up.

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
1	Isaac Haxton	\$290,869 (528)
2	Ren Lin	\$197,536 (440)
3	Edward Yam	\$130,272 (352)
4	Yan Tsang	\$107,616 (264)
5	Mike Takayama	\$86,400 (220)
6	Punnat Punsri	\$67,744 (176)
7	Tien Ling	\$50,784 (132)
8	Sung Joo Hyun	\$37,568 (88)
9	Andrija Robovic	\$29,088 (44)

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CIRCUIT RESULTS

All payouts in USD.

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Milly Tournament	1 Matthew Archer	\$227,150 (660)
	2 Nick Lanzi	\$190,000 (550)
Reserve Poker Club Toledo, OH	3 Abdul Amer	\$125,000 (440)
	4 Adam Friedman	\$75,000 (330)
	5 Zachary Andrews	\$55,000 (275)
\$600 NLH Feb. 1-19 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 3,639 Prizepool: \$1,819,500	6 Michael Stephenson	\$44,000 (220)
	7 Scott Freeman	\$36,000 (165)
	8 Robert Reed	\$30,000 (110)
	9 Chad Stone	\$25,000 (55)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Escalator Series	1 Eidrys Reyes	\$36,771 (365)
	2 Mahmut Urkun	\$36,255 (304)
Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood, FL	3 Rajasekar Govindan	\$28,814 (243)
	4 Luis Soriano	\$25,525 (182)
\$400 NLH Feb. 21-25 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 978 Prizepool: \$322,740	5 Nicholas Velentzas	\$20,550 (152)
	6 Sadany Hevia	\$11,240 (122)
	7 Ronald Katz	\$9,320 (91)
	8 Al Norman	\$7,405 (61)
	9 Moises Jattin	\$5,550 (30)



Tommy Zhang

© Champions Club

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Potomac Open	1 James Anderson	\$143,484 (540)
	2 Shahabaldin Shirazi	\$79,059 (450)
MGM National Harbor Oxon Hill, MD	3 Andy Le	\$63,238 (360)
	4 Mark Lusk	\$49,177 (270)
\$520 NLH Feb. 14-18 \$750,000 GTD Entries: 2,044 Prizepool: \$878,920	5 William Beer	\$38,278 (225)
	6 Michael Linster	\$29,644 (180)
	7 Matthew Sherman	\$23,160 (135)
	8 Carlos Matos	\$18,326 (90)
	9 Eric Ladny	\$14,238 (45)



Shahabaldin Shirazi

© MGM National Harbor

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Winter Open	1 Tommy Zhang	\$209,730 (960)
	2 Spencer Champlin	\$164,430 (800)
Champions Club Houston, TX	3 Andrew Esposito	\$131,540 (640)
	4 Tzu Yen	\$78,750 (480)
	5 Adam Hendrix	\$59,910 (400)
\$1,500 NLH Feb. 12-19 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,033 Prizepool: \$1,363,560	6 Cedric Trevino	\$48,180 (320)
	7 David Diaz	\$40,000 (240)
	8 Christopher Staats	\$31,920 (160)
	9 Charles Sinn	\$24,020 (80)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Liberty Bell Open	1 Kenny Huynh	\$75,508 (600)
	2 Travis Hartshorn	\$55,425 (500)
Live! Casino Philadelphia, PA	3 Sundiata DeVore	\$36,635 (400)
	4 Kyle Lorenz	\$23,560 (300)
	5 Arthur Schiavo	\$18,135 (250)
\$1,100 NLH Feb. 21-25 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 392 Prizepool: \$381,808	6 Alex Ha	\$15,025 (200)
	7 Ryan Dodd	\$12,580 (150)
	8 Joseph Renzi	\$10,240 (100)
	9 Edward Leonard	\$7,915 (50)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Potomac Open	1 Shahabaldin Shirazi	\$246,852 (1080)
	2 Carlos Villamarin	\$194,133 (900)
MGM National Harbor Oxon Hill, MD	3 Matthew Silberzweig	\$119,121 (720)
	4 Mark Radoja	\$87,837 (540)
\$3,020 NLH Feb. 23-26 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 444 Prizepool: \$1,203,240	5 Justin Liberto	\$66,178 (450)
	6 Drew O'Connell	\$50,536 (360)
	7 Jason Brunetti	\$39,707 (270)
	8 Nathan Cho	\$30,081 (180)
	9 Michael Watkins	\$24,065 (90)

TOURNAMENTS

© Moneymaker Poker Tour



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Moneymaker Poker Tour	1 Pavlos Kasselouris	\$121,485 (540)
	2 Ian O'Hara	\$84,315 (450)
Palm Beach Kennel Club West Palm Beach, FL	3 Josh Kay	\$51,250 (360)
	4 Brian Vazquez	\$31,175 (270)
\$2,500 NLH Feb. 22-27 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 214 Prizepool: \$500,000	5 Michael Jagroo	\$24,075 (225)
	6 Charles Mitchell	\$19,950 (180)
	7 Spencer Simpson	\$17,000 (135)
	8 Ben Mintz	\$14,550 (90)
	9 Caleb Piderit	\$12,150 (45)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Leap Into Spring	1 Derek Normand	\$68,000 (480)
	2 Christian Elliston	\$44,000 (400)
Texas Card House Dallas, TX	3 Lynn Samples	\$30,850 (320)
	4 Cody Tooker	\$21,500 (240)
\$500 NLH KO Feb. 21-25 Entries: 1,253 Prizepool: \$354,300	5 Nicholas Summervill	\$15,500 (200)
	6 Evan Moore	\$11,600 (160)
	7 Christopher Laieta	\$9,000 (120)
	8 Brandon Blake	\$7,200 (80)
	9 Ryan Hardin	\$5,900 (40)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Winter Poker Fest	1 Rory Linton	\$80,684 (420)
	2 Allan Secord	\$50,476 (350)
Canberbury Park Shakopee, MN	3 Ezequiel Gonzalez	\$36,781 (280)
	4 Jason Hoffman	\$27,390 (210)
\$800 NLH Feb. 22-25 Entries: 563 Prizepool: \$391,285	5 Derek Stay	\$20,738 (175)
	6 Michael Estes	\$15,651 (140)
	7 Ali Nabiz	\$12,130 (105)
	8 Carl Carodenuto	\$9,391 (70)
	9 Brock Collins	\$7,434 (35)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Wynn Millions	1 Myles Mullaly	\$66,856 (456)
	2 Lee Rzentkowski	\$44,316 (380)
Wynn Las Vegas, NV	3 Peter Hengsakul	\$33,961 (304)
	4 Pablo Carretero	\$26,557 (228)
\$600 NLH Feb. 20-22 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 714 Prizepool: \$367,710	5 Michael Azzaro	\$20,603 (190)
	6 Joshua Gerber	\$15,682 (152)
	7 Jeffrey Farnes	\$11,702 (114)
	8 Ivan Ruban	\$8,609 (76)
	9 Bruno Fabrizio	\$6,188 (38)



© Wynn Las Vegas

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Wynn Millions	1 Eric Baldwin	\$96,909 (480)
	2 Paul Taylor	\$63,335 (400)
Wynn Las Vegas, NV	3 Aaron Massey	\$48,713 (320)
	4 Tyler Montoya	\$36,620 (240)
\$600 NLH Feb. 22-25 \$250,000 GTD Entries: 1,085 Prizepool: \$558,775	5 Maurice Paola	\$28,510 (200)
	6 Sergio Cruz	\$22,083 (160)
	7 Kevin Theodore	\$16,933 (120)
	8 Jay Fredricksen	\$12,772 (80)
	9 David Larson	\$9,237 (40)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit	1 Daniel Lowery	\$148,416 (528)
	2 James Willey	\$91,745 (440)
Harrah's Cherokee, NC	3 Jason Isbell	\$69,574 (352)
	4 Mark Hickman	\$53,220 (264)
\$400 NLH Feb. 20-22 \$750,000 GTD Entries: 3,577 Prizepool: \$589,050	5 Richard Ali	\$41,067 (220)
	6 Lorenzo Bassette	\$31,969 (176)
	7 Scott Davis	\$25,109 (132)
	8 William Baskin	\$19,899 (88)
	9 Mario Hudson	\$15,913 (44)

TOURNAMENTS

Kyle Cartwright



© WSOP

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit Harrah's Cherokee, NC \$1,100 NLH Feb. 21-23 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 600 Prizepool: \$600,000	1 Kyle Cartwright	\$111,305 (840)
	2 Rohit Kwatra	\$68,789 (700)
	3 Thomas Shepard	\$50,522 (560)
	4 Faysal Smile	\$37,156 (420)
	5 Anonymous	NA
	6 Timothy Bishop	\$21,178 (280)
	7 Anonymous	NA
	8 Lucian Camargo	\$12,757 (140)
	9 Jonathan Lewis	\$10,113 (70)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit Harrah's Cherokee, NC \$2,200 NLH Feb. 25-26 \$150,000 GTD Entries: 152 Prizepool: \$304,000	1 Dustin Goldklang	\$80,577 (288)
	2 Nissar Quraishi	\$49,800 (240)
	3 Scott Smile	\$34,452 (192)
	4 Ari Katz	\$24,416 (144)
	5 Taylor Hart	\$17,736 (120)
	6 Brett Apter	\$13,215 (96)
	7 Kevin Dubrocq	\$10,105 (72)
	8 Trace Henderson	\$7,937 (48)
	9 Matthew Ernst	\$6,407 (24)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit Horseshoe Hammond, IN \$400 NLH Feb. 29-Mar. 3 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 2,705 Prizepool: \$892,650	1 Thomas Hahne	\$119,757 (480)
	2 Kanj Chehade	\$75,109 (400)
	3 Gabe Eisenhut	\$55,500 (320)
	4 Jeffrey Halcomb	\$42,037 (240)
	5 Alejandro Tinocogallegos	\$32,158 (200)
	6 Michael Souri	\$24,850 (160)
	7 Elliot Chanen	\$19,399 (120)
	8 Bin Liu	\$15,300 (80)
	9 Daniel Stern	\$12,194 (40)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Triple 5 Tournament Borgata Atlantic City, NJ \$500 NLH Feb. 27-Mar. 1 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 1,818 Prizepool: \$793,557	1 Vinny Pahuja	\$105,000 (540)
	2 Ryan Herold	\$84,505 (450)
	3 Joshua Reifer	\$81,800 (360)
	4 Onofrio Reina	\$38,594 (270)
	5 Nicholas Santo	\$26,332 (225)
	6 Frank Lupi	\$20,255 (180)
	7 Raymond Ferretti	\$15,893 (135)
	8 Balakrishna Patur	\$12,519 (90)
	9 Mykhailo Lendel	\$9,809 (45)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
APT Chinese Texas Poker Taipei City, Taiwan NT\$130,000 NLH Feb. 29 Entries: 86 Prizepool: \$312,324	1 Lester Edoc	\$85,956 (288)
	2 Anonymous	NA
	3 Shimizu Nozomu	\$39,968 (192)
	4 Santhosh Suvarna	\$30,752 (144)
	5 Vladas Tamasauskas	\$24,352 (120)
	6 Vincent Rubianes	\$19,040 (96)
	7 Jack Salter	\$14,976 (72)
	8 Ren Lin	\$11,712 (48)
	9 Park Yu Cheung	\$8,896 (24)



© MSPT

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Missouri State Championship Hollywood Casino Maryland Heights, MO \$1,110 NLH Feb. 22-25 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 713 Prizepool: \$691,610	1 Andrew Pichee	\$141,780 (912)
	2 William McCracken	\$86,454 (760)
	3 Blair Hinkle	\$64,320 (608)
	4 Abhishek Yerra	\$47,721 (456)
	5 Christopher Audrain	\$35,964 (380)
	6 Darren Cunningham	\$26,973 (304)
	7 BK Goli	\$20,748 (228)
	8 Michael Reisner	\$16,599 (152)
	9 Roger Ruehmann	\$12,449 (76)



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ENGLAND ALL-TIME MONEY LIST

Rank	Player	Earnings
1	Stephen Chidwick	\$55,814,961
2	Sam Trickett	\$21,824,988
3	Ben Heath	\$21,700,841
4	Talal Shakerchi	\$18,750,156
5	Sam Grafton	\$14,648,052
6	Toby Lewis	\$9,996,499
7	Chris Moorman	\$9,822,927
8	Charlie Carrel	\$9,622,935
9	Jack Salter	\$8,960,823
10	Benny Glaser	\$7,581,295

England has long been one of the top poker-playing nations of the world. Only U.S. (1,483) and Canada (83) sport more bracelet wins at the *WSOP*, with fellow European poker powerhouse Germany tied with England at 59 such titles. England also joins the US, Germany, and Canada as the only nations to produce three or more players with over \$20 million in lifetime tournament earnings.

While there are many great players from England, including recent *EPT Paris* main event champion and Hendon Mob member Barny Boatman (see page 20), **Stephen Chidwick** stands apart from the rest. The bracelet winner and two-time *Card Player* Player of the Year award winner has cashed for more than \$55.8 million over the years, good for third place on the overall money list.

Only Justin Bonomo (\$65.5 million) and Bryn Kenney (\$65.4 million) have accrued more on the circuit. Chidwick has been incredibly consistent over the past decade, making the top 50 in the year-end POY standings each and every year since 2015. He is well positioned to continue that streak, as he currently sits inside the top five in the standings with eight final-table finishes already recorded in 2024.

The 34-year-old from the city of Deal has already accu-

mulated 11 seven-figure tournament scores so far in his career, with his largest cash yet coming on British soil. He placed fourth from a field of 54 entries in the highest buy-in event ever held: the £1,050,000 buy-in *Triton Million* charity invitational in London, earning \$5,380,200 for his deep run.

Sam Trickett is also near the top of this list thanks, in large part, to a deep run in a seven-figure buy-in event. Trickett was the runner-up in the first-ever \$1 million buy-in, the 2012 *WSOP Big One For One Drop*. He earned \$10,112,001 for his second-place showing in that historic event, accounting for nearly half of his \$21.8 million in lifetime cashes.

Trickett is far from a one-hit-wonder, though, having made five seven-figure scores during his career including three in one year back in 2011. The former soccer player from Nottingham is not as busy traveling the circuit these days, but has popped up at a few high-stakes festivals in recent years, and could still add to his impressive career stats.

Brighton's **Ben Heath** is the only other English player with more than \$20 million in lifetime earnings. Heath has racked up \$21.7 million in total cashes, with six titles won including a *WSOP* bracelet. Like Trickett, he has five seven-figure scores under his belt, most recently taking fifth in the *WPT World Championship* for almost \$1.6 million. ♠

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2024 Card Player Player of the Year

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Rank	Player	Points	Titles	Final Tables	Earnings
1	Barny Boatman	2,160	1	1	\$1,390,824
2	David Coleman	2,156	3	6	\$683,889
3	Oliver Weis	2,100	1	1	\$1,047,816
4	Jesse Lonis	2,079	0	6	\$745,815
5	Stephen Chidwick	1,828	1	8	\$1,003,667
6	David Kaufmann	1,800	0	1	\$869,130
7	Luca Marki	1,750	0	1	\$655,290
8	Blaz Zerjav	1,700	1	2	\$471,106
9	Alexander Queen	1,680	1	1	\$613,063
10	Raminder Singh	1,657	1	5	\$499,034
11	Punnat Punsri	1,641	1	8	\$405,836
12	Alex Foxen	1,545	1	7	\$834,075
13	Shahabaldin Shirazi	1,530	1	2	\$325,911
14	Aleksejs Ponakovs	1,440	0	1	\$620,838
15	John Pannucci	1,400	0	1	\$429,836
15	Sergey Lebedev	1,400	0	1	\$468,018
17	Kristen Foxen	1,394	1	6	\$621,550
18	Konstantin Held	1,368	1	1	\$361,310
18	Matthew Higgins	1,368	2	2	\$389,149
18	Ram Faravash	1,368	1	1	\$435,560
21	David Peters	1,324	2	4	\$560,325
22	Mateusz Moolhuizen	1,320	1	1	\$508,496
23	Jeremy Becker	1,302	1	6	\$181,863
24	Daniel Smiljkovic	1,288	0	4	\$476,759
24	Daniel Dvoress	1,288	2	5	\$1,060,419
26	Vincent Meli	1,280	1	2	\$180,246
27	Mohammed Nuwwarah	1,272	2	2	\$200,835
28	Mohamed Mokrani	1,260	1	1	\$342,500
29	Daniel Negreanu	1,250	1	5	\$450,850
30	Daniel Martin	1,200	0	1	\$460,000

Final Table Takedown: Dan Lowery Captures 15th WSOP Circuit Ring

By Craig Tapscott



Dan Lowery is a real threat to win most any tournament event he enters. The Arkansas businessman and part-time player capped off 2023 with a huge victory in the *WPT World Championship \$10,000 Seniors High Roller* at Wynn Las Vegas a few days after turning the big 50 for nearly \$400,000.

But it's been on the *World Series of Poker Circuit* that Lowery has really shined. The excitement on the tour the last few years has been the back-and-forth battle between Lowery and Ari Engel for most gold rings. At present, Engel is on the top with 17 (read more on pg. 26) to Lowery's 15.

Lowery picked up his maiden *WSOP Circuit* cash back in 2010 and had a couple runner-up finishes before scoring his first win in the summer of 2013. Since then he's added another 14 titles with rings at stops all over the map. Lowery has won at Harrah's New Orleans, Imperial Palace Biloxi, Harvey's Lake Tahoe, Horseshoe Council Bluffs, Choctaw Durant, Hard Rock Tulsa, Horseshoe Tunica, Graton Casino in the Bay Area, and even two rings in the islands at the Hilton in Aruba and Casino Royale in St. Maarten.

His most recent title, however, came at Harrah's Cherokee in North Carolina, beating out a massive field of 3,577 in the \$400 monster stack event, taking home \$148,416. The RunGood ambassador, married father of four, and owner of D&H Wood Products now has \$3.1 million in career earnings.

Craig Tapscott: You've been on quite the tear over the last

year or so. I'm curious. How has your game evolved?

Dan Lowery: I feel I've stayed on pace with the ever-evolving trends in poker. I understand GTO enough to exploit those that I feel are playing fundamentally sound, and I definitely get creative. The extent of my study is discussing hands and strategy with good players in my inner circle.

I love to observe what the better, young players are doing. Some of it works and some of it doesn't, and I take bits and pieces from them to implement into my game.

Most of all, I've worked on my mental game. Focus and Zen are key for a successful tournament player. The highs are never as high as the lows are low. We seem to only be as good as our last win or big score, and those are often few and far between.

CT: Do you have a goal to catch Ari Engel in regard to *WSOP Circuit* rings?

DL: As far as circuit rings are concerned, I'd love to be on top of the counts just one time. That's no easy task with the obligations I have at home with work and family. I've played way more in the last 15 months than I ever have in my career, but I doubt I ever play the volume needed to contend with a great player like Ari.

CT: What are your goals in poker at this point in your career?

DL: One of the main goals that interest me is winning a *WSOP* bracelet. I played 15 total bracelet events in 2012-2013 combined going 0-15. Then I didn't go to Vegas for

© WSOP



almost six years for personal reasons. I played a handful of events in 2019 and got my first *WSOP* cash in a bracelet event. Since then, I have made a deep run in the main event and made two final tables, but I've only played 6-8 bracelet events in each of the last three years.

So, I've only played approximately 35-40 total bracelet events lifetime. Crazy to think to be honest. But this summer I plan to play 25-30 events. I feel my experience in big fields will put me in more spots to have a chance at that coveted prize.

My bigger passion is seeing and playing in other countries with friends, and to visit venues I haven't played at here in the states. I want to continue to support *RunGood Poker Series*, as Tana Karn and company has done so much for the recreational player. Also, I want to continue to help grow and support women in poker. Overall, I just want to compete mostly in mid-stakes tourneys and enjoy myself.

CT: What do you love most about poker and why?

DL: I love the competition. I've said time and again that winning a nightily feels as good as winning six-figures. And that's the truth. The only reason the bigger scores are more memorable is because of the bigger rails and support from friends we often experience when we are deep in a bigger tourney.

I also love the camaraderie. I have so many people that come to congratulate me or wish me luck! Some simply just strike up a conversation in the hall or at the table because I'm relatable. I'm relatable to the guy that has 2-3 kids at home and just wants to make a few extra bucks. I'm relatable to the married man who has the support of his wife and sees that I'm just like him. I'm relatable to the old guy who doesn't get respect at the table because he's not a 20-something young gun with an entourage on breaks. I feel I've always been approachable and try to be fun at the table when I can.

Event: WSOP Circuit Harrah's Cherokee

Buy-In: \$400 • **Entrants:** 3,577

Prize Pool: \$589,050

First-Place Prize: \$148,416

HAND NO. 1

Stacks: Dan Lowery – 421,000 (105 BB) Villain – 170,000 (42.5 BB)

Blinds: 2,000-4,000 with a 4,000 big blind ante

Players Remaining: 480 on day 1A

Players: 9

Craig Tapscott: Please set the stage for us about this event?

Dan Lowery: There were three flights for this event. I was willing to fire an average of two buy-ins per flight; and obviously taking more spots in the first flight than I might've taken in later flights.

CT: What was the dynamics of the table you were at during this hand?

DL: I had been in total control of the table from the time I had arrived, which was my second buy-in. I had accumulated 421,000 in chips by the end of registration. This was level 13. I was sitting with 105 bigs, which puts me in a spot I generally thrive in. My stack gave me playability from all angles and I was comfortable building and maintaining a big stack.

CT: How soon was this hand after registration?

DL: It was the first orbit after registration ended. This hand was against a solid, capable player who I've not played any significant hands with, so far. But I'd been observing him pretty intently since I sat down.

CT: What were the key takeaways you gathered from observing this opponent?

DL: I noticed he played position well. I don't think he ever defended from blinds, and he opened or three-bet anytime he



entered a pot. I observed two hands he had gone to showdown with where he won both, but controlled the betting in each of these two hands. He had down-bet in one with 8-8 on an A-Q-J two-tone board then checked down a winner against 10♥ 7♥ that had flopped a gutter and flush draw. The other, he raised small when his opponent donk bet into him on 6-5-4. They checked this one down and he won A-K over A-7 when neither improved.

CT: Did he know who you were at all?

DL: I didn't recognize him, but that's not to say his friends hadn't given him a heads up on me. Sometimes my image hurts me, but it also helps me. People love to play back at me, but I experience that in almost every tourney I play. I generally know how to combat that type of aggression as well. Plus, I have it way more often than they expect. "Everyone has a plan till they get punched in the mouth" as Mike Tyson would say.

Villain raised from mid-position to 9,000. Lowery reraised from the small blind to 24,000 holding K♠ Q♠. Villain called.

Flop: 10♠ 9♠ 3♦

Lowery bet 18,000, and Villain raised to 38,000.

DL: We have a gutter and a back door flush draw.

CT: What's your take on his range?

DL: I feel like he could easily have a set here, but we will know more by his turn action.

Turn: 5♥

Lowery checked, and Villain checked behind.

DL: At this point I felt his raise on the flop was to control the pot. Perhaps he had a hand like 6-6 to 8-8 and maybe even J-J. He has all the straight combos, and some big aces. I definitely didn't feel he had any big pairs or sets when he checked back a harmless turn.

River: 3♥

CT: This river was no help to you. Did you find a way to take the pot away?

DL: When the river paired the three, I knew I couldn't take the hand to showdown. I felt like I would be called with most pairs. Most hands with any value at all he's just checking back. I didn't feel a check-raise was ever going to be believable either. So, I took a pretty unorthodox line and bet 4,000 (1 BB).

CT: Explain a little more about why you bet one big blind.

DL: This bet will almost always just get a call from his good value hands, but might make him turn all his mediocre hands that beat me into a bluff. I got what I wanted when he...

Villain raised to 39,000.

DL: This bet left him with roughly 70,000 behind.

Lowery raised to 74,000.

DL: This blew his mind with a min-raise to 74,000 total,

which would have him putting in half of his remaining stack for a call. But it also laid him close to 7-1 pot odds.

CT: What was your final take on his hand?

DL: I banked on him having missed draws, ace highs, and one-pair hands, no bigger than a nine. He took about 60 seconds before sliding his cards face down toward the middle.

Villain folded. Lowery won the pot of 245,000.

CT: How did you finish the day?

DL: I actually went on to bag the chip lead on day 1A with 2,275,000.



Stacks: Dan Lowery – 16,000,000 (40 BB)
 Villain – 15,500,000 (39 BB)
Blinds: 200,000-400,000 with a 400,000 big blind ante
Players Remaining: 20
Players: 7

Lowery raised to 850,000 from the cutoff holding Q♥ Q♣.

DL: My opponent in this hand was a loud, friendly guy on the button who has been double fisting white claws all night. He three-bet me...

Villain reraised to 1,900,000.

CT: What was your immediate thought after the Villain raised?

DL: I didn't feel like he would be folding to a four-bet from me. So, I decided not to bloat the pot since I would be playing out of position. We both had large stacks that were relatively the same size.

Flop: J♥ 10♥ 2♦

Lowery checked. Villain checked.

DL: I don't really love the flop as it came out. Surprisingly, he checked back, and I wasn't sure what to make of that at this point in the hand.

Turn: K♣

Lowery bet 2,000,000.

DL: What was your thinking behind when you lead out on the turn?

DL: I was mainly looking for info and not yet for value. He only took about ten seconds to call, and his drunken babble persisted.

Villain called.

River: 5♥

DL: The river completed a heart draw.

Lowery bet 3,100,000.

DL: I bet 3,100,000 into the 8,800,000 pot. I knew he shouldn't be raising me without at least A♥ Qx, because our stacks at this point are so valuable. But I was actually afraid of him going for it in his drunken state.

CT: Was that part of your decision to bet the river?

DL: Yes. That was part of the reason I lead instead of checking as well. I also felt me leading turn and river told a good enough story that he could fold a couple hands that beat me, as well as hero call with one or two that I beat.

Villain folded. Lowery won the pot of 11,900,000.

CT: Did he fold right away?

DL: Not at all. He tanked over three minutes and finally folded after saying he couldn't beat any of my two pairs, sets, straights, or any flush. I truly felt he folded the best hand, but I told the best story. I had convinced him that I was going for value on river with my bet.

Follow Lowery on Twitter/X @danmflowery. ♠

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2024 European Poker Tour Paris
 €5,300 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Barny Boatman
 530,000



Winning Percentage
 Before Flop: 32%
 After Flop: 18%



Lewis Spencer
 1,130,000



Winning Percentage
 Before Flop: 68%
 After Flop: 82%

PREFLOP

With 61 players remaining, an eight-handed table, and blinds of 10,000-15,000 with a big blind ante of 15,000, Barny Boatman raised to 30,000 from the lojack. Lewis Spencer called from the hijack.



Boatman bet 25,000, and Spencer raised to 65,000. Boatman three-bet to 165,000, and Spencer folded.

COMMENTARY:

While many hands played during the final days of the 2024 *European Poker Tour Paris* main event had a bigger impact on the final result, this hand from day 3 put the poker world on notice that Barny Boatman had come to play. The 68-year-old British poker pro kicked off the action with a min-raise from the lojack holding A-10 suited. Lewis Spencer, a fellow UK resident with winnings of more than \$1.9 million in prior tournaments, made the call from the hijack with pocket jacks. The flop brought a pair of nines and a seven. With one heart on deck, Boatman had added some backdoor flush and straight possibilities to go with his ace high. He kept his foot on the gas, firing 25,000 into the pot of 100,000. Spencer responded to the quarter-pot bet with a raise to 65,000. Boatman then unleashed a three-bet to 165,000, which amounted to a third of the chips he held going into the flop. Boatman likely hoped to leverage a tight image, forcing folds from Spencer's 7-X holdings and pocket pairs below the nines on board. It's unclear whether or not Boatman expected to force out hands as strong as overpairs like Spencer's pocket jacks, but that is what ultimately came to pass in this instance. Spencer mucked his hand and the pot was sent to Boatman. Spencer went on to make the final three tables in this event, eventually hitting the rail in 21st place (\$37,500). This was already his seventh cash of the year, with more than \$153,000 accrued so far in 2024. Boatman was not among the biggest stacks at the end of day 3, but did manage to top the counts by the end of day 4. Look for more from him in the next hand matchup on page 42.

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START BLUFFING!

By Jonathan Little

One of the most common mistakes many amateur poker players make is that they only bet when they have a strong hand. They assume that the way to win at poker is to wait for a premium hand and then pile their money into the pot, hoping some oblivious whale pays them off.

In reality, if you only put significant money in the pot with your premium hands, your competent opponents will almost never pay you off unless they happen to also make an extremely strong hand.

Suppose your opponent raises to three big blinds out of her 100 big blind stack from middle position and only you call on the button. The flop comes 8♥7♥4♦. Your opponent bets four big blinds into the 7.5 bb pot.

Some players only raise in this spot with exactly 6-5, 8-8, 7-7, 4-4, and 8-7.

While there is nothing wrong with raising with these premium hands since it is nearly impossible for your opponent to have a better hand, she can easily fold her entire range, meaning you will never get value.

To solve this problem, you should bluff from time to time. The hands that are best to bluff with are those that also have some chance to improve to the best hand on the turn or river. In this case, the best bluffs are flush draws and straight draws.

If your goal is to be balanced (as it often should be against decent opponents), you can raise with about two times as many semi-bluffs as value hands because many of your semi-bluffs will improve to premium hands on the turn or river.

So, in this situation, in addition to raising with your premium made hands, you should raise with many of your draws such as 10-9, K-6 suited, 5-4 suited, and flush draws.

If you are known to have a tight image, your opponent will play poorly by folding far too often (because she will incorrectly assume that you are only raising with premium hands). If your opponent is a calling station, that is fine too, because your premium hands will extract a lot of value and your draws will complete by the river some portion of the time.

If you bet the flop and your opponent calls, it is usually wise to continue betting on the turn with most of your range. As on the flop, this will make you difficult to play against because your opponent will have no idea whether or not you



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have a premium hand or a semi-bluff. The same goes for the river.

It is important that you develop a strategy such that any action you take is not obviously strong or weak. If your opponents know your flop bets are always strong, you make their life easy. You win when your opponents make mistakes, so develop a strategy that will result in them making as many mistakes as possible.

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Jonathan Little is a two-time WPT winner and the 2024 PokerGO Cup 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.

What To Study First?

By Steve Zolotow

More and more players are becoming attracted to poker, and most of them are playing no-limit hold'em. Some of them become quite serious about the game and spend a lot of time studying.

Study is extremely beneficial. Beginners who study can improve very rapidly. Players should continue to study as they advance. Most of the

top experts continue to study, often using solvers to analyze complicated situations.

But there is a big gap in their studies. No-limit hold'em is one variety of poker. Poker is a gambling game. Perhaps, they devote a little time to poker theory or to other variations. However, they have completely forgotten to study gambling! Good gam-

blers usually triumph over good game players. Good gamblers win more and seldom go broke.

A lot of gambling decisions are purely mathematical. Everyone should know about expected value (expectation) and equity. It is essential to learn these concepts which enable correct decision making.

Do you know what odds are, and

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how they relate to winning percentages? Do you know the difference between getting (taking) odds and giving (laying odds)? If you are getting 3 to 1 odds on a bet, how often must you win to break even? If you are laying 2 to 1 odds on a bet, how often must you win to break even?

These ideas are basic to gambling on casino games, sports betting, etc., but they are essential to playing intelligent poker. Concepts like MDF (minimum defensive frequency) underlie much of what solvers do. If you don't understand them, you will continually make bad decisions.

Civil War veteran and writer Ambrose Bierce once said, "The gambling known as business looks with austere disfavor upon the business known as gambling."

Knowing the basics of gambling will help you make better decisions in business or investing, especially if you are trading (speculating) in stocks, bonds, options, commodities, or bitcoins.

It is interesting to learn what martingale systems are, and why they fail, and also the intricacies of gambler's ruin. When poker players talk about

GTO or Game Theory, they seem to think that Game Theory is a poker tool, not a mathematical method for making decisions.

I am writing this shortly after the Super Bowl, which was won by Kansas City in overtime. The numerous pages of Super Bowl odds and props made for a variety of situations in which gambling knowledge combined with handicapping ability probably allowed astute bettors ample opportunities to find bets with plus equity and bad gamblers to throw away a lot of money.

Also interesting were the coaching decisions. When the game went into overtime, San Francisco won the coin toss and elected to receive. This is clearly correct under regular season rules, but playoffs have different rules about overtime. Under playoff rules, this was a terrible decision from a gambling point of view. It appears their coach either didn't know the rules, or hadn't given this playoff overtime situation any thought.

Afterwards one of the Chiefs players mentioned that they had discussed it, and decided what to do in all situations. This discussion included what to do if the other team managed to score

a touchdown and go up by 7 on their first possession. (KC decided that if they came back with their own touchdown, it was right to go for a 2-point conversion.)

Another gambling (mathematical) decision that frequently arises in football games, and which coaches often get wrong, is when to 'go for it' on fourth down.

In summary, I strongly advise you to add some study of gambling and its underlying mathematics to your poker study (or NFL coaching job.) ♠



Steve 'Zee' Zolotow aka The Bald Eagle or Zebra is a very successful gamesplayer. He has been a full-time gambler for over 40 years. With

two WSOP bracelets, over 60 cashes, and a few million in tournament cashes, he is easing into retirement. He currently devotes most of his Vegas gaming time to poker, and can be found in cash games at Aria and Bellagio and at tournaments during the WSOP. When escaping from poker, he spends the spring and the fall in New York City where he hangs out at his bars: Doc Holliday's, The Library, and DBA.

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2024 European Poker Tour Paris
€5,300 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Eric Afriat
5,190,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 39%
After Flop: 51%
After Turn: 34%



Barny Boatman
3,830,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 31%
After Flop: 42%
After Turn: 66%



Hans Erlandsson
2,730,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 30%
After Flop: 8%
After Turn: Folded

PREFLOP

With 19 players remaining, a six-handed table, and blinds of 30,000-60,000 with a big blind ante of 60,000, Eric Afriat raised to 130,000 from the cutoff. Hans Erlandsson called from the cutoff, and Barny Boatman called from the big blind.



Boatman checked, and Afriat bet 250,000. Erlandsson folded, and Boatman called.



Boatman checked, and Afriat bet 750,000. Boatman called.



Boatman checked, and Afriat moved all-in. Boatman called all-in for 2,640,000.

COMMENTARY:

This hand pitted Barny Boatman against three-time *World Poker Tour* champion Eric Afriat, who went for a big bluff on the end after semi-bluffing his way to the river with overcards and a flush draw. Afriat was the first to raise, making it just over a min-raise with K-Q suited. Hans Erlandsson came along with a small pocket pair and Boatman made the call from the big blind with J-9 suited. The jack-high flop with two diamonds drew a check from Boatman, who opted to pot control with his top pair and weak kicker from out of position in a multi-way hand. Afriat bet just over half pot with his diamond draw. Erlandsson bowed out with two overcards to his fives on deck already and Boatman made the call. The 2♣ on the turn put a second flush draw on board and Boatman checked a second time. Afriat sized up, firing 750,000 into the pot of 980,000. Boatman hung around to the river, which brought the board-pairing 2♠. Boatman's third check was met with an all-in move from Afriat, which amounted to just over a pot-sized shove. Boatman went into the tank for about 50 seconds before making the big call with his jacks and deuces and a nine kicker. His hand was indeed best and he took down the biggest pot of the tournament to surge into the chip lead. Afriat later said to Boatman that it was a 'crazy call' for his tournament life with ten minutes left in the day. Boatman, with his signature charm, replied, "Yes, but it's my tournament life, not my actual life." Afriat went on to finish sixth in this event for \$282,582, the sixth-largest score of his career.

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GT-NO: Go Node Lock Yourself

By David Sklansky

If you are one of those players who relies a lot on your computer to come up with a winning poker strategy, you are probably also using a technique where you tell your computer/solver some things about your opponents' play.

If those things are different than GTO, your solver will adjust its counterstrategy recommendations away from pure GTO to a new strategy that would improve upon that initial GTO strategy. It will still be a Game Theory Optimal strategy, but it will be based on the assumptions you gave it.

Note though that the computer will assume that the opponent will still be playing GTO when it is not forced to do otherwise. For instance, if you got a top pro like Doug Polk to somehow agree to not play pocket aces of the same color against you, he will adjust how he plays his other hands to ameliorate that handicap.

This is pretty standard stuff for the modern pro. It's called node locking. And if you do it well, your results will eventually be better than if you stick to original GTO.

One danger of course is that you are not accurate when you attribute proclivities to an opponent. Some players use generic data obtained from something called Mass Data Analysis (MDA) to come up with opponent's proclivities rather than treat each opponent differently.

Another problem stems from the fact that the solver assumes that the opponent is an expert except when he is forced by the node locking to play a situation badly.

But in real life you are not playing a handicapped proposition bet with Doug Polk, but rather someone who is making a lot more mistakes than the one you have node locked.

But this column will not be about using node locking to help your computer tell you how to exploit bad players. Lots of stuff about that subject is written elsewhere. Rather it is about an unusual way to use it.

I speak of asking the computer to node lock your OWN play of certain hands to see how it adjusts your optimum strategy when you restrict yourself in that way. There are two completely different reasons to consider doing that.

One of those reasons would be that you are an expert player who is playing good players. This subject was recently debated on the Two Plus Two Forums where posters estimated how much the merely good player would lose against two experts. Many posters thought it would be a lot. And most of them gave a reason that used chess as an analogy.

They pointed out that the best grandmasters, when playing a routine master, would purposely play a move slightly worse than optimum. A different move than if they were playing another grandmaster. Their reason for doing that was that the master would find himself in unknown territory that he hadn't previously studied, and would screw it up worse than the grandmaster to a degree that was greater than their usual difference in skill.

The same thing is probably true in poker. There are undoubtedly plays that are not GTO that, besides exploiting bad players, would also confuse good players. The expert with a computer could experiment with these plays by node



locking himself, having his opponent play his standard game, and asking the computer to come up with the best way to take advantage of the confusion he has created. I will leave it to the computer aficionado experts to work out the details.

The other time to consider node locking yourself would be if you know that you are not an expert or if you know that you are a bit more risk averse than Mr. GTO wants you to be. You still could have the best of it in your game because there are some amateurs who figure to lose more to you than what you give up with your weaknesses.

An example might be that you don't want to call a raise from the big blind as often as you theoretically should. That could be the right move for you because you can't deal with the variance, or because you are self-aware enough to realize you don't handle tricky situations well on the later rounds when you are first to act.

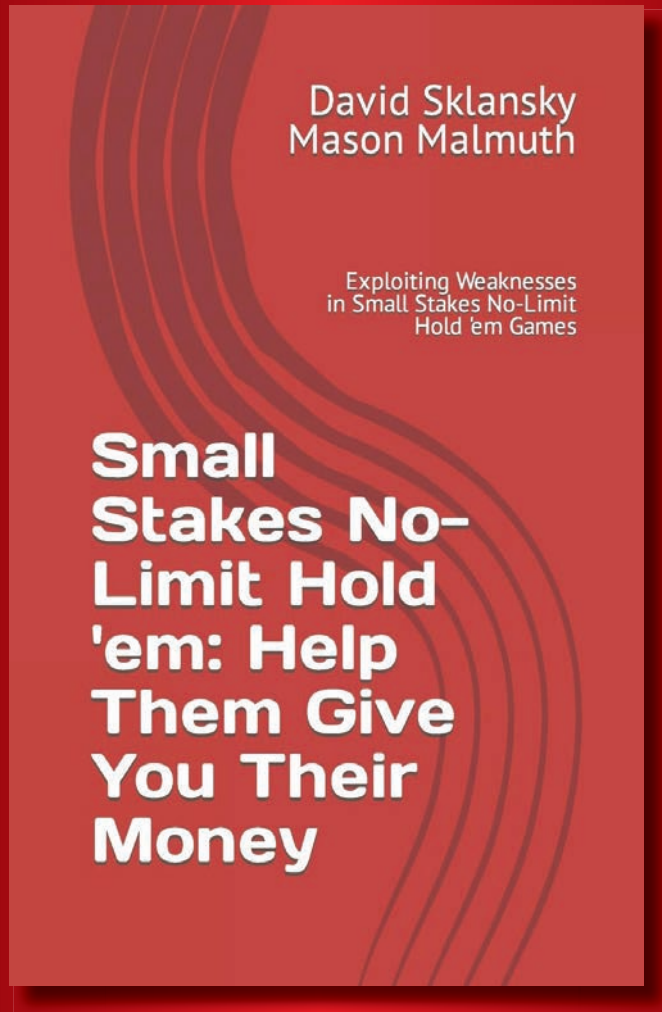
In any case, if you know you will play that way and you know how to use these solver things, then why not node lock yourself to learn how to adjust your play given your tighter big blind calling requirements?

Similarly, if you know that you are averse to calling big bets on the river with mediocre "bluffcatchers," you can node lock yourself into calling, perhaps half as often as GTO recommends. If so, the solver will adjust your earlier play, undoubtedly by tightening up your starting requirements, having you move in sooner, and in other ways. It may, for example tell you to fold A-Q offsuit under the gun (as our latest book suggests contemplating, if you are a semi beginner). ♠

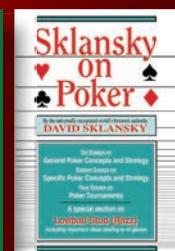
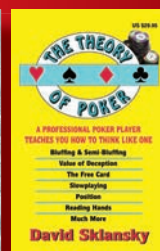
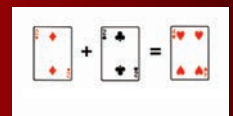


David Sklansky is the author of *The Theory of Poker*, as well as nearly two dozen other guides on gambling, poker, and other games. The three-time WSOP bracelet winner's latest book, *Small Stakes No-Limit Hold'em: Help Them Give You Their Money*, is now available on Amazon. You can contact Sklansky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

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SEVEN CARD STUD: PLAYING MEDIUM PAIRS WITH SUITED, CONNECTED KICKERS

By Kevin Haney

Medium pairs can be difficult holdings to play in Stud High. When accompanied with a bad kicker, e.g. (4♥ 9♣) 9♦, the hand is somewhat marginal. If there are not too many high cards behind us we can test the waters with an open, but a reraise puts us in a bad spot. In many cases we should fold, but won't feel great about it, especially against an aggressive opponent.

If instead we hold a kicker higher than the most likely higher pair we can usually chase to the river and see who wins. Somewhere in the middle are those holdings accompanied with straight-flush possibilities. With them we can assume more risk on third street as we can more often continue profitably in the face of aggression, however, may not be able to go the entire way. Let's take a look at a few different scenarios assuming we are playing against relatively skilled and aggressive competition in a medium- or high-ante structure.

General Third Street Playing Guidelines

When dealt a hand like (8♠ 9♠) 8♣ we should immediately check all of the other cards exposed on board and ascertain if our hand is hurt or helped by what we see. What's most important here is that all of your eights are

live. Having all of the nines available is also helpful, but it is not nearly as critical as it would be if you were playing a small pair with a big kicker.

The primary value of your side-card is more focused upon its ability to make a flush or straight, therefore we also need to examine how many spades, sevens, and tens are out on third street.

Playing live hands is critical in Stud, but that is always a relative consideration depending on the circumstances you face. The key question you should always ask yourself is, "Am I live enough for this particular situation?"

For example, if it's folded to you in late position with only the bring-in left to act the (8♠ 9♠) 8♣ is an automatic complete even if your hand is mostly dead. Conversely, if you are in early position with many higher cards lurking behind you your hand needs to be very live in order to open. Most cases fall somewhere in the middle, and in those situations we should tend to open unless we have a good reason not to.

In higher-ante games we need to slow our opponents down, and often play aggressively against late position openers who may not have very much. For example, if we suspect that an aggressive player with a queen showing might be trying to grab the antes we should reraise unless eights and spades are somewhat dead.

Assuming the queen calls our third street raise, we often need to keep betting on fourth and fifth street playing our holding as the best hand until our opponent possibly indicates otherwise. If our opposition calls on fifth street with a board reading (X X) Q♠ 2♥ 7♦ it appears likely that he holds a good pair that he intends to take to showdown. It might not be a pair of queens, but it still can be larger than a pair of eights, thus we aren't losing much by taking the free card on sixth if available.

Even though your check on sixth street implies some weakness, it's not expected that your opponent will often bet on seventh without holding two pair or better. He wouldn't usually try and turn a single small pair into a bluff, nor would he tend to go for relatively thin value with a lone pair of queens.

When checking sixth street your range is heavily weighted toward mediocre pairs that may only call when improving or a drawing hand that never materialized. Thus, he will often check his single pairs hoping for either a check behind from an inferior made holding or to pick off a bluff from a missed draw.

Following this logic, you have an easy bet with any two pair if checked to on seventh street. Once in a blue moon you may "value-own" yourself but that should sometimes happen when you are playing well. If you never bet a worse hand for value, then it is highly likely that you are not value betting enough.

Chasing the possible larger pair

Let's assume that we are again holding the (8♠ 9♠) 8♣ and complete the bet in an attempt to pick up the antes, and we get reraised by a solid player with a K♠ door card.



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A pair of kings is the obvious holding to fear, but it could also be wired pairs (that might not be better than eights), drawing hands, or maybe even just three high cards. However, given that we hold two spades we can slightly discount spade flush draws.

Even if we feel strongly that we are currently behind, we still need to call the raise and generally go to fifth street where we would then re-evaluate the situation. When picking up a four flush, open-ended straight draw, or even just an ace we often have an easy decision to continue the pursuit all the way to the river.

However, if we collect a couple of complete blanks and don't even have a three-flush or backdoor straight draw to fall back upon, it's usually best to just send our hand into the muck. Unless our opponent has been getting completely out of line, we should make the prudent fold before heading into the big bet streets. Sometimes we will occasionally fold the best hand, but one has to do that occasionally, otherwise you would be paying off way too much.

We must continue on fifth street, however, when picking up a few backdoor draws even if we are quite certain that we are up against a pair of kings. For example, assume we got reraised by a definite pair of kings and two possible equity situations depending on whether or not he paired his kicker are shown below:

Villain has not made two pair (84.2% probability)
 (8♠ 9♠) 8♣ 2♦ 10♠ - 36% equity
 (3♠ K♥) K♠ 2♥ 7♦ - 64% equity

Villain has made two pair (15.8% probability)
 (8♠ 9♠) 8♣ 2♦ 10♠ - 16% equity
 (2♠ K♥) K♠ 2♥ 7♦ - 84% equity

The weighted average equity is [(84.2%)(36%)+(15.8%)(16%)] = 32.8%.

While we are an underdog, we cannot fold due to current and implied odds with almost 33% equity against one of the strongest holdings in his range. While we assumed that he had kings, it's certainly possible that he has other holdings that we are currently beating. The 10♠ was quite a good card to catch, and demonstrates the impact of combining multiple backdoor outs.

Medium pairs with straight-flush kickers can be tricky hands to play in Stud with most of the difficult decisions usually occurring on fifth street. When we don't pick up additional possibilities, we might have to fold, and it's inevitable that we will sometimes be folding the best hand. In order to be successful in poker that will occasionally happen, however, it would also be a mistake to fold when picking up straight or flush potential, even if they are backdoor draws. ♠



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 European Poker Tour Paris
 €5,300 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Barny Boatman
 17,250,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
 Before Flop: 41%
 After Flop: 97%
 After Turn: 100%



David Kaufmann
 21,180,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
 Before Flop: 58%
 After Flop: 2%
 After Turn: 0%



PREFLOP

With three players remaining and blinds of 125,000-250,000 with a big blind ante of 250,000, Barny Boatman limped in from the small blind. David Kaufmann checked his option from the big blind.



Boatman bet 275,000, and Kaufmann called.



Boatman checked, and Kaufmann bet 1,000,000. Boatman called.



Boatman bet 1,200,000. Kaufmann raised to 5,000,000, and Boatman moved all-in. Kaufmann folded.

COMMENTARY:

This massive battle of the blinds turned the tides during three-handed play, giving Barny Boatman plenty of cushion between himself and the next-largest stack. While plenty of chips went in by the river, things started off a bit more slowly. Boatman, who was second in chips, limped in from the small blind. Chip leader David Kaufmann checked his option and the flop brought a couple of sevens to give Boatman trips. He led right out with his three of a kind and Kaufmann, who had just queen high and no immediate draw, floated. A ten on the turn gave Kaufmann an open-ended straight draw while improving Boatman to... well, a man with a boat. Boatman made a shrewd check after having been called once, hoping to induce his opponent to make some bluffs and semi-bluffs with an apparent waving of the white flag. Kaufmann obliged, firing a bet of just over three-quarters pot. Boatman opted to check-call, likely with the design of enticing Kaufmann to keep firing with his weakest holdings. The river brought an eight, putting four to a straight on board while giving Kaufmann eights and sevens. Boatman led out on the end, choosing a sizing of slightly more than one-third pot. Kaufmann's Q-8 included relevant full house and top straight blockers. This fact might have helped lead him to turn his two pair into a bluff. He raised the bet from 1.2 million to 5 million, committing more than a quarter of his remaining stack in the process. Boatman thought it over before moving all-in. Kaufmann made the quick fold and the sizable pile of chips in the middle was pushed towards Boatman. A few hours later he dragged the final pot, defeating Kaufmann heads-up to capture the title and the top prize of nearly \$1.4 million. Kaufmann earned \$869,130 as the second-place finisher.

NOTE: WINNING PERCENTAGES DO NOT INCLUDE TIES. ODDS PROVIDED BY CARDPLAYER.COM/POKER-TOOLS/ODDS-CALCULATOR/TEXAS-HOLDEM

SCHEDULES

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	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 4-14	Spring Poker Round Up	Wildhorse Resort & Casino ■ Pendleton, OR
	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 12	Mother's Day Tournament	Ocean's 11 Casino ■ Oceanside, CA
	May 27	Memorial Day Tournament	Ocean's 11 Casino ■ Oceanside, CA
	May 28-July 17	World Series of Poker	Horseshoe Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	May 29-July 8	Summer Poker Festival	MGM Grand ■ Las Vegas, NV
JUNE	June 19-July 24	High Roller Series	Aria PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV

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

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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

SUNDAY

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

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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

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

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COUSHATTA - KINDER

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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)

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BELLAGIO - LAS VEGAS

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

RESORTS WORLD - LAS VEGAS

OREGON

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

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2024 European Poker Tour Paris
 €5,300 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event

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Barney Boatman
 17,250,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
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 After Flop: 97%
 After Turn: 100%



David Kaufmann
 21,180,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
 Before Flop: 58%
 After Flop: 2%
 After Turn: 0%

PREFLOP

With three players remaining and blinds of 125,000-250,000 with a big blind ante of 250,000, Barney Boatman limped in from the small blind. David Kaufmann checked his option from the big blind.



Boatman bet 275,000, and Kaufmann called.



Boatman checked, and Kaufmann bet 1,000,000. Boatman called.



Boatman bet 1,200,000. Kaufmann raised to 5,000,000, and Boatman moved all-in. Kaufmann folded.

COMMENTARY:

This massive battle of the blinds turned the tides during three-handed play, giving Barney Boatman plenty of cushion between himself and the next-largest stack. While plenty of chips went in by the river, things started off a bit more slowly. Boatman, who was second in chips, limped in from the small blind. Chip leader David Kaufmann checked his option and the flop brought a couple of sevens to give Boatman trips. He led right out with his three of a kind and Kaufmann, who had just queen high and no immediate draw, floated. A ten on the turn gave Kaufmann an open-ended straight draw while improving Boatman to... well, a man with a boat. Boatman made a shrewd check after having been called once, hoping to induce his opponent to make some bluffs and semi-bluffs with an apparent waving of the white flag. Kaufmann obliged, firing a bet of just over three-quarters pot. Boatman opted to check-call, likely with the design of enticing Kaufmann to keep firing with his weakest holdings. The river brought an eight, putting four to a straight on board while giving Kaufmann eights and sevens. Boatman led out on the end, choosing a sizing of slightly more than one-third pot. Kaufmann's Q-8 included relevant full house and top straight blockers. This fact might have helped lead him to turn his two pair into a bluff. He raised the bet from 1.2 million to 5 million, committing more than a quarter of his remaining stack in the process. Boatman thought it over before moving all-in. Kaufmann made the quick fold and the sizable pile of chips in the middle was pushed towards Boatman. A few hours later he dragged the final pot, defeating Kaufmann heads-up to capture the title and the top prize of nearly \$1.4 million. Kaufmann earned \$869,130 as the second-place finisher.

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The small blind and the big blind call making it multi-way heading to the flop. The flop comes A♣ 9♠ 7♦ and both your opponents check.

Question 1: Should you check, bet 6,000, bet 12,000, or bet 18,000?

Answer: Checking is not a terrible play, but if you check, you must plan on calling down when facing turn and river aggression.

You usually want to bet with your best made hands and draws, but is this one of your best made

hands? Top pair with a marginal kicker is close, and you want to avoid betting with hands that you will fold if you get check-raised.

With this hand, you are best off betting small for value as well as protection. To extract value from worse pairs, bet on the smaller side because big bets will likely induce folds.

You bet 6,000 and get called by both opponents. The turn is the 3♣ and they check to you.

Question 2: Should you check, bet 7,000, bet 14,000, or bet 28,000?

Answer: When both opponents call, it increases the likelihood that one of them has at least a decent pair or a draw. One of your opponents may have you beat, or both opponents have weak hands that will not call another bet. Considering those two scenarios, checking is the best option on the turn to avoid getting check-raised.

You check. The river is the Q♥ and both opponents check to you.

Question 3: Should you check, bet 7,000, bet 14,000, or bet 28,000?

Answer: Checking and getting to showdown is the easy play, but you leave value on the table by electing to play it safe. When both opponents check the turn and the river, it is likely that neither one of them has a premium hand. Your paired ace is underrepresented, and if either opponent had a decent hand they would usually bet on the river.

Considering your size options, a 50% pot bet of 14,000 can extract calls from paired queens and maybe even a paired nine that decides to bluff catch.

You bet 14,000 and get called by the big blind, who mucks their hand after you reveal yours. Way to get value for your top pair! ♠

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