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Vol. 37/No. 9
April 17, 2024

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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

SOCCER LEGEND NEYMAR UNFAIRLY CRITICIZED FOR HIS INTEREST IN POKER

By Sean Chaffin



Soccer superstar Neymar Jr. just can't seem to get away from the poker table. At least that's the allegation coming from French soccer luminary Emmanuel Petit, who says that poker has affected the Brazilian player's efforts on the pitch.

Neymar, who now plays for Al Hilal in the Saudi Pro League, has been a regular at the poker tables through the years. The PokerStars ambassador and regular at the *World Series of Poker* and other tournaments throughout the world appears to have drawn some concerns that he would rather be raking pots than scoring goals.

"I'm a huge fan of Neymar as a player when he used to love football," Petit recently told *Essentially Sports*. "This guy, even while he was playing for Paris Saint-Germain the last two years, his mind was not a hundred percent committed to football. He was more committed to poker, you know. Poker tournament than football games."

The soccer star began playing poker in 2014 and has embraced the game. He has officially cashed for \$32,000 in live tournament winnings, but plays cash games as well. In 2018, he took sixth in a \$1,400 side event at the *Brazilian Series of Poker* for \$21,072.

In 2021, Neymar signed on as an ambassador with PokerStars, a move to not only reach soccer fans but also to appeal to a growing Brazilian poker scene. The deal was his second partnership with the brand.

"When I'm not playing football, I love playing cards,"

Neymar said in announcing the deal.

On the pitch, Neymar has played for some of the world's most successful clubs including Santos in Brazil, FC Barcelona, and Paris Saint-Germain. He's scored more than 200 goals and also appeared on the Brazilian World Cup team in 2014, 2018, and 2022. The forward also captained the 2016 team that won the Olympics.

Despite so much talent, some Debbie downers have wondered if he has been fully committed to soccer. Neymar has also been plagued by injuries at times, affecting his availability.

"After losing the first leg 1-0 to Bayern Munich in the UEFA Champions League last year, the Al Hilal player was seen at the *European Poker Tour Paris*, raising fans' fury who called him unprofessional," *Essentially Sports* reported. "It was also what the 1998 World Cup winner was talking about."

Despite the criticism, Neymar has been a sought-after player since he began his professional career in 2009. He signed a two-year \$418-million deal with Al Hilal after the team also paid a reported €90 million (\$98 million) transfer fee.

Several soccer pros have been known to play poker. Spain's Gerard Pique has been spotted at European poker tournaments and Germany's Max Kruse scored a *World Series of Poker* bracelet in 2022. PokerStars has also had past sponsorships with Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo and legendary English striker Teddy Sheringham. ♠

PENNSYLVANIA BILL INTRODUCED FOR ONLINE POKER COMPACT

By Sean Chaffin

Pennsylvania may soon be joining the country's Multi-State Internet Gaming Agreement (MSIGA), allowing for online poker shared liquidity markets with other states. The Keystone State may be late to the party, but with almost 13 million people, it would be a nice boost to the player pool.

Rep. George Dunbar (R) has introduced the bill allowing the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board (PGCB) to join the interstate gaming compact.

"I have always thought it was a really good idea," Dunbar told *Poker Industry Pro*. "Liquidity is a big deal in poker."

The effort comes as Dunbar also noted that Gov. Josh Shapiro (D) could sign an executive order for the state to push toward entering the MSIGA. The compact currently includes Delaware, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, and West Virginia. However, no operators are currently offering online poker in Delaware or West Virginia.

Currently, only two operators are offering interstate online poker. PokerStars pools players in Michigan and New Jersey while WSOP.com groups players in Nevada and New Jersey, although that also included Delaware until that market saw a change in operators that left poker players out of the game for now.

If one operator ever went live in all possible states, including Pennsylvania, the combined markets could create a possible player pool from a total population of 38.3 million people.



Pennsylvania is the largest with 13 million, followed by Michigan with 10.1 million and New Jersey with 9.3 million. Nevada adds another 3.1 million, with West Virginia at 1.8 million and Delaware at 1 million.

New York legislators are also currently considering legalizing online gaming, including poker. Adding the Empire State could bring another 19.8 million people, for a total possible poker state population of 58.1 million. Even more states are also considering online poker and gaming legislation, including Maryland (6.2 million people) and Hawaii (1.4 million people).

Dunbar told *Pokerfuse* that he believes the governor isn't aware of the issue and would sign the bill. Former Gov. Tom Wolf (D) wasn't interested in the issue, Dunbar said. So far, the plan seems to have bipartisan support.

"It's always bipartisan, all gaming legislation works like that," Dunbar told *Pokerfuse*. ♠

RHODE ISLAND OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES ONLINE GAMING

By Sean Chaffin

Rhode Island became the seventh legalized online casino gaming state when betting went live in March. The Ocean State is added to a list that now includes New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Connecticut, and West Virginia - and Nevada also allows online poker.

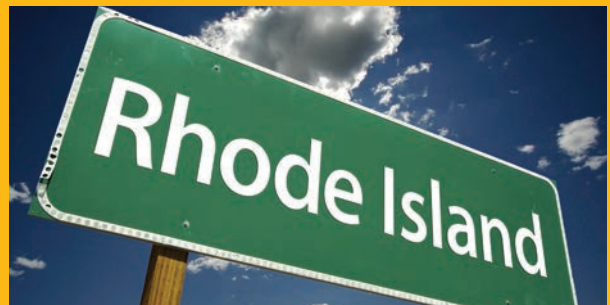
The launch comes after the state legalized mobile sports betting in 2018. Rhode Island follows a similar gaming setup as Delaware, allowing for a sole operator. Bally's now runs sports betting and online casino gambling in the state as well as in Delaware. Rhode Islanders can now gamble legally for real money on slots, live dealer games, and table games through desktop and mobile devices.

"The live gaming product is very exciting," Bally's President of Rhode Island operations Craig Eaton told WJAR. "Not many states do that at all. So, depending on demand we are ready and have room to grow."

The launch followed a four-day technical trial that began on March 1. Bally's currently offers about 170 online slots and online table games, according to the company.

The Rhode Island Department of Revenue estimated that iGaming could bring in around \$25 million annually in new tax revenue for the state by 2025. Backers of the plan were pleased to see the launch after iGaming was officially approved in June 2023.

"I was proud to sponsor the legislation authorizing iGam-



ing in Rhode Island, and I am excited for its implementation," Senate President Dominick Ruggerio (D) said. "iGaming will ensure that Rhode Island remains at the forefront of the competitive gaming industry, reinforcing a critical revenue stream for the state while providing an alternative form of entertainment."

While online poker was approved as part of the legislation, Bally's doesn't currently offer the game. It's unknown if the company will eventually launch an online poker product. Currently, Bally's is also considering an acquisition proposal to take the company private.

Adding poker would require some help from a shared liquidity market with other states. The state only has a population of 1.1 million, meaning a viable in-state-only market may not be possible. ♠

STUDY PREDICTS MAJOR GROWTH FOR EUROPEAN GAMING MARKET

By Sean Chaffin

The European gambling market is poised for major growth in the coming years, with online gaming a key component, according to a new study. The report also details the strength of the UK gaming market as a key driver of development.

Conducted by the firm Research and Markets for the European Gaming and Betting Association (EGBA), the study noted that the European market generated revenues of \$115.4 billion in 2023. The market is expected to see a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) greater than 5% during the forecast period, which stretches out to 2029.

The innovation and growth the online gaming industry has seen over the last five years is becoming a major part of the continent's success. Online gaming revenue has grown every year for the last six years from \$10.7 billion in 2018 to \$17.4 billion in 2022.

"The migration from offline to online gambling was inevitably accompanied by increased revenue associated with online gambling in Europe," the report notes. "Growing hardware and software innovations, the rising popularity of casino and sports betting gambling, and enhanced internet penetration are driving the European casino gambling market."

The report also points to mergers over the past few years to help gaming companies increase its market stake and

improve profit margins with the adoption of advanced technologies. Developing innovative regional products to gain a competitive advantage and compete with established players has also paid dividends.

Some of the innovations the study sees as adding to online gaming companies' high-tech offerings include blockchain, virtual reality, and advanced Internet technology. The UK has been a particularly bright spot for the continent and should see more growth in the coming years.

"The United Kingdom is a major European country where casino gambling is highly popular and has registered positive growth over the years," *Research and Markets* reports.

"The major casino gambling games such as roulette, blackjack and poker, dice games, and slot machines are popular over others in the United Kingdom. Compared to other countries in Europe, the United Kingdom has higher disposable income, and positive regulations by the government towards gambling games have propelled the market."

The news in Europe follows another recent report detailing the growth expected for online poker in the coming years. In related news, recent headlines also point to the possibility that the gaming company Entain may be considering a sale of PartyPoker to help boost the company's stock price. ♠

TOURNAMENT POKER MAKES ITS RETURN TO MACAU

By Sean Chaffin

Macau has been a hotbed for high-stakes poker over the last decade, with big names like Phil Ivey and Tom Dwan heading to the Chinese gaming mecca for some of the biggest games on the planet. But much of that action, including tournaments, dried up over the last few years following the COVID pandemic.

However, tournament poker has returned with two major additions to the city's poker scene. Sands China has announced a new tournament heading to The Venetian in Macau, and the *World Poker Tour* also unveiled plans for a new festival heading to the island in June.

"Macau has long been a sought-after destination for us, wanting to deliver the *WPT* experience to the region," said *WPT* CEO Adam Pliska. "Thank you to AGAE (Allied Gaming and Entertainment) and Wynn Macau for helping us expand our global footprint. We look forward to an incredible event."

The Venetian will host the upcoming *Macau Masters*, a \$384 buy-in event featuring four days of action with three starting flights. The Venetian, MGM China, and Wynn Macau all offer poker on the island.

The last of those will host a *WPT* event this summer and builds on the brand's partnership with the tour after hosting the *WPT World Championship* at Wynn Las Vegas the last two years. The property is promising even bigger events.



The *WPT Macau* festival runs June 18-24, with the HK\$40,000 (\$5,112) buy-in championship event set for June 20-24. A HK\$200,000 (\$25,563) high roller is also set for June 19-20. Tour officials said AGAE helped facilitate the collaboration between *WPT* and Wynn Macau. The group will also assist in the marketing, production, and management of the series.

"This marks *WPT's* inaugural physical presence in Macau after over two decades of operation," AGAE CEO Yinghua Chen said. As we expand our Allied Experiential Entertainment business, this collaboration represents another exciting advancement, leveraging our extensive resources and expertise in hosting world-class events to create unforgettable experiences in this dynamic market."

The tournament additions come as the island has seen a major uptick since mainland China lifted COVID restrictions. Macau recently retook its perch as the world's top gambling destination. ♠

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AHEAD OF THE PACK

CHRIS BREWER SPRINTS UP THE ALL-TIME MONEY LIST

By Sean Chaffin



One text stood out for Chris Brewer in the days after winning the \$250,000 Super High Roller last summer at the *World Series of Poker*. The former University of Oregon track athlete checked his phone and saw a message from his former coach congratulating him on the big win. Brewer ran for the university while also learning how to play poker along the way.

“You’re probably the only person to ever win a *WSOP* bracelet and a Wheel,” legendary track coach Andy Powell noted in the text.

The message referred to the famed “Wagon Wheel” trophy given to winners at the annual Penn Relays, a marquee event for relay runners. The trophy debuted in 1925 and the circular design features a wooden exterior with a bronze center depiction of University of Pennsylvania founder Ben Franklin with four athletes. The trophy is one of the most-coveted awards in collegiate track and field, and Brewer scored one with a win in 2013 as part of Oregon’s 4x1 mile relay team.

The message brought a smile to his face. “I appreciated that support,” Brewer noted of his two worlds colliding.

After taking the success from the track to the poker table, the 31-year-old poker pro has become one of the best in the game and is looking to continue the success after a banner year in 2023 that included two bracelets and plenty of massive wins.

Running Cold, Then Running Hot

Originally from San Diego, California, Brewer and his fiancée recently moved from Las Vegas to New Jersey after he accepted a “real job,” and his girlfriend also took a new job in New York. The move means a bit less poker in Las Vegas, but it’s also easy to jump on a plane for major tournaments. He can also now get in more of the action on the East Coast as well.

But the real job didn’t last long, and that may have been a great decision if 2023 is any indication. Brewer had a monster year on the felt including his first two *WSOP* bracelets. Last February, Brewer kick-started the year with two high roller wins at the *EPT Paris* for more than \$1.4 million. (He nearly went back-to-back this February in the very same event, settling for \$630,000 and second place.)

Six-figure cashes then followed on the *Triton* tour and in PokerGO’s *U.S. Poker Open*. In May, Brewer grabbed a victory and runner-up finish in the *Triton Cyprus* series for a total of more than \$500,000.

But in June at the summer series, Brewer really caught fire. That started with a third-place finish in the \$25,000 Heads-Up Championship for \$192,513, and then a min-cash in the \$50,000 High Roller for \$102,479. He then came out on top in the \$250,000 Super High Roller for a massive \$5.3 million. Brewer followed that up by grabbing another win in the \$10,000 No-Limit 2-7 Lowball

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Championship for \$367,599, a title coveted by many pros.

After several deep runs at the series dating back to 2015, it was nice to snag his first two bracelets.

“It was fun,” he says. “I think the two are very different. The first bracelet in the \$250K was a really significant accomplishment where I achieved something I’ve been trying to do. I’m of the belief that almost everything results-wise is just luck, so mostly I just got lucky and won. But it still felt like, ‘Hey, finally one went my way,’ and that was great.”

“The second bracelet, which was the \$10K... I’m not a good mixed game player. I’m not a good deuce-to-seven no-limit player. I just kept getting dealt good hands and I got to win. But I’m not great at the game. I just played a tournament that seemed fun, and I got lucky.”

It was a fitting bit of luck for a man that many had previously considered to be among the unluckiest on the high roller circuit. While Brewer has racked up results, he’s also been the victim of some unfortunate runouts in key spots in some of the year’s biggest events.

With the wins, Brewer now has more than \$22.8 million in tournament earnings, which is good for no. 38 on the all-time money list. However, he doesn’t chalk up his recent trips to the winner’s circle as simply improving his game. Variance plays a big part of that, he believes, and things just seem to be going his way more often lately.

“I think it’d be fun to narrow it down and say that there was something I did that caused me to win,” he says. “Maybe I played a little better. I believe it, I work hard. I hope I improve every year, but mostly I just think that I started to win all-ins. That was the big difference. I was really happy that it went well, but I just try to keep that in line with all this stuff. When it comes to live poker, we’re playing something that you’re meant to have a sample size of

playing something like 10,000-plus tournaments and we’re playing 200 a year.”

Club Poker To Super High Rollers

Like many players, Brewer learned how to play poker in college. While training for the Olympic trials, a group of teammates held \$5 home games. He enjoyed the game and soon moved up to playing at a nearby club called Full House Poker, occasionally for a tournament and then adding some cash games. He could be found regularly playing low-stakes games when not on the track or studying.

“I was like, ‘I liked this game and I think I can get better than these other people,’” says Brewer. “It was just like a fun hobby and I started winning pretty consistently. That kind of snowballed into something. The first hand I played was freshman year and I started playing regularly in my junior year of college. By my fifth year when I graduated, I played 20 hours a week and was making \$40 or \$50 an hour in a \$1-\$2 game.”

Brewer earned a degree in business and minored in mathematics, but instead of heading into a management job or finance, he moved right into poker. That knack for numbers at least paid off in the world of no-limit hold’em. After moving back to San Diego, he became a regular at Ocean’s 11 Casino and added in some games at the Bike and elsewhere on the Southern California cash-game scene.

He prides himself in managing his bankroll well and some of that business education may have helped in the long run.

“I do like to gamble and I can have a degenerate streak, but I’ve never had anything that’s been too costly,” he admits. “I don’t have a ton of really expensive tastes. I don’t like drinking or partying that much, so I never had too many issues with managing my bankroll.”

“Managing” his bankroll involved some pretty aggres-



sive shot taking and a desire to play the biggest game in the room. On *Card Player's* Poker Stories Podcast, Brewer reminisced about the times he emptied his box at the casino to chase soft spots in big games.

Unlike on the track, Brewer wasn't interested in setting a comfortable pace and instead preferred to race out in front of his competition. In fact, during the pandemic he found himself playing online stakes as high as \$1,000-\$2,000, at one point dragging a single pot worth \$560,000.

"I've always tried to play big and to move up in stakes as fast as possible," Brewer admitted. "That was the thing I would do irresponsibly. I just was and still am very into doing the things I like, and succeeding at them. I just got lucky that I like poker so much. It was easy for me to focus on doing the things that would help me in that."

It's been a long journey from those low-stakes games back in Oregon, but Brewer is a testament to hard work and staying focused. He now regularly plays at some of the highest stakes around, but certainly remembers his poker roots.

Brewer still stays in touch with the owner and some other players at the Full House club. Years later, he's still a member of a fantasy football league with players he met there.

"I have a soft spot for it," he says of the club. "It was where I started playing. It was like an amazing setup too. The way poker works in Oregon is that they can't take a rake, so they're all membership clubs. It was like \$150 a year membership. And the room was super clean and nice, so I have great things to say about it."

When not playing poker, Brewer loves the NFL and doing some snow skiing. He also enjoys spending time with his fiancée Julie. One thing some might be surprised to know about him, he says, is that he also loves Broadway musicals and the move to New Jersey has made seeing shows much

easier. The couple have attended about 10 productions over the last year and Brewer even chats with Erik Seidel on occasion while at the poker table about their favorite productions.

Looking at his poker resumé, the \$250,000 event bracelet win certainly stands out as his favorite. Beyond getting his first piece of *WSOP* gold, Brewer just enjoyed the entire scene. It was such a big moment and his friends were in attendance showing support.

"It was one of the best tournaments I've ever played, so that was really satisfying," he says. "I usually feel there was something I was disappointed in the execution of. Either I made an actual mistake, or I feel I should have gotten more exploitatively. This was a tournament where I was very satisfied with my decisions. I specifically remember getting all-in with like six players left, and had this thought that I didn't care what the result was because I was so content with the way I'd executed. I can't say that's the thing I feel very often. It was just a day that everything clicked."

Poker Coaching And The High Roller Scene

Looking ahead, Brewer has lofty ambitions to become one of the best players to ever play the game. But he doesn't think achieving big *WSOP* numbers or piling up high roller wins necessarily reflects a player's skill. He doesn't believe there will ever be enough results that can prove that.

"Hellmuth has the most bracelets, but Hellmuth isn't close to one of the best poker players to ever play [in terms of skill]," he says. "He is just a guy who got lucky in a specific format of tournaments. So you don't want to be like Hellmuth and shouting from the rafters. I'm not claiming he's losing, but he's run above EV. My goal is to keep improving and feel like I had a good process throughout."

Brewer is constantly working on his game and spends much of his time studying, but when playing in a series, he



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leaves the studying behind – instead focusing on reviewing the day’s play and mentally considering some adjustments.

“When I ran track and I went to a meet, I didn’t try to get my whole workout on the day of the race,” he says. “Those are separate – competing and training. So when I’m traveling I look at and study almost nothing the entire time. But in between stops, I try to treat it as if I have a job from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and just do poker stuff.”

That involves using solvers to run experiments and tests “to try and see if my ideas about poker are true.” He enjoys considering his own concepts and strategies about the game and describes using a bit of the scientific method that often involves extreme scenarios to see if he’s on the right track. There are many options beyond what many might call “standard” play, Brewer says, that many players and experts haven’t tested.

He also believes all those years running on the track have helped him with concentration but admits that his competitive drive means that losing also upsets him more than most.

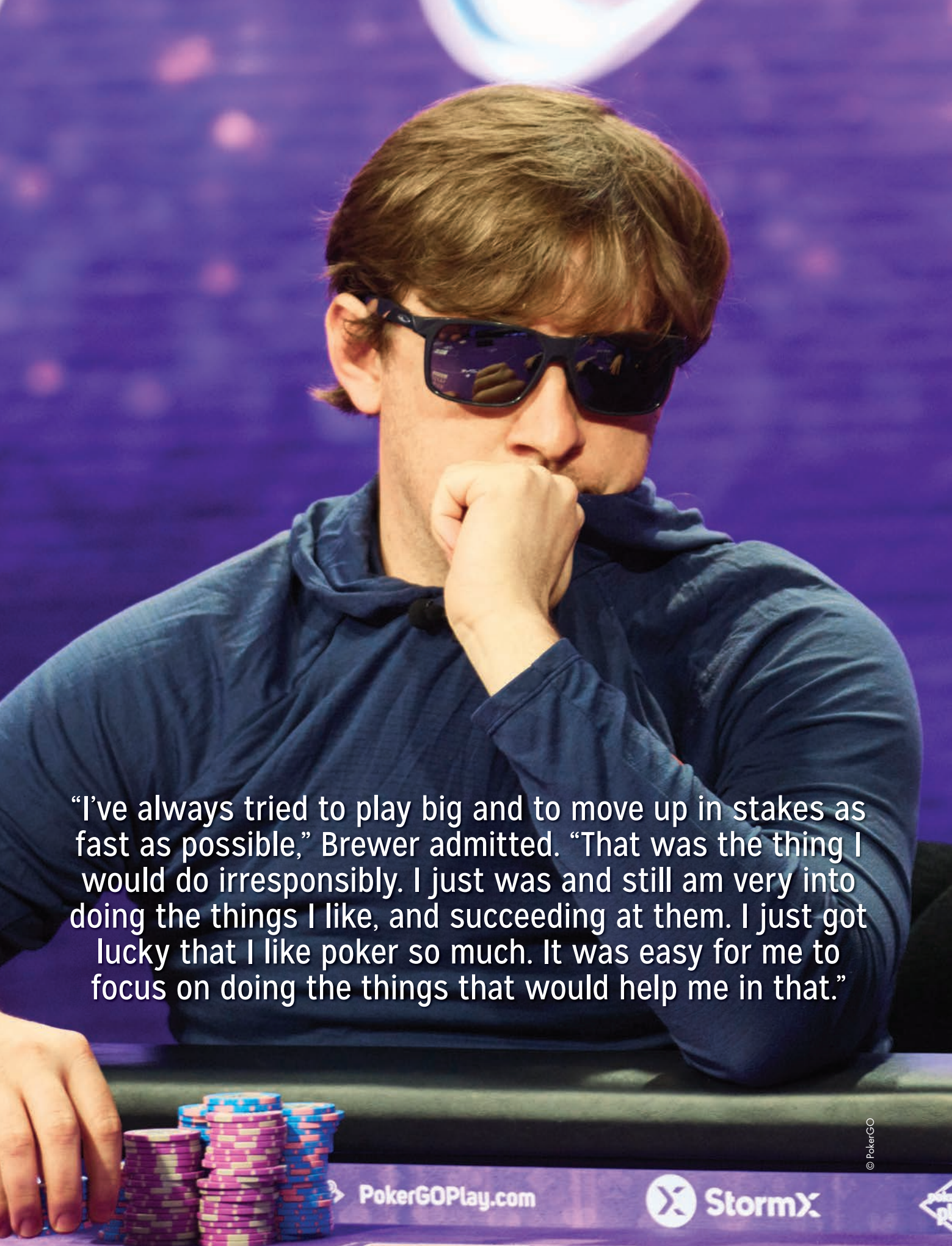
Beyond his own play at the tables, Brewer enjoys coaching other players looking to improve their own skills. Some of his time has been spent doing some private coaching

in recent years, and he also recently signed a deal with Jonathan Little’s PokerCoaching.com to create some training content.

“I find that it’s a really beneficial process for myself,” he says of teaching others the game. “One, having to go through and teach something makes you reinforce ideas that you have, and having to actually explain them is really good. And two, I just love being able to share knowledge about poker, so I have a lot of fun doing it.”

As a regular in *PokerGO Tour* and *Triton* events, Brewer is no stranger to playing against some of the best nosebleed-stakes grinders in the game. He enjoys hanging out and talking poker with players from the *Triton* series and also those who regularly play in the *EPT* high rollers, and appreciates the passion and intensity that comes with playing at such high stakes.

“We talk poker all the time,” he says. “We’re a bunch of guys who found a game that we love and get to make money playing it. I really think that’s one of the biggest things that lets people succeed, just actually enjoying playing poker. You have to want it if you’re going to play at the highest stakes. It has to be something you want to do, all the time.” ♠



“I’ve always tried to play big and to move up in stakes as fast as possible,” Brewer admitted. “That was the thing I would do irresponsibly. I just was and still am very into doing the things I like, and succeeding at them. I just got lucky that I like poker so much. It was easy for me to focus on doing the things that would help me in that.”

Top Tournament Scores

Chris Brewer has earned nearly \$23 million in live tournaments, almost all of which has come in the last four years. His run started in December of 2020 with three big scores in Wynn Las Vegas \$10,000 events, and he followed that up in the spring with six final tables at Aria, dipping his toes into high roller events. By the summer, he was regularly playing in \$25,000 buy-ins and after securing a trophy at the *Poker Masters* in the fall, Brewer was officially a full-fledged member of the high roller community.

In the short time since, he has 49 six-figure-or-better scores, and has racked up 14 wins, including a *Triton* victory, two *WSOP* bracelets, three *EPT* side events, and even a *WPT Online* title. He now sits in the top 40 on poker's all-time money list and is on pace to crack the top 20 as early as 2025. Not bad for a guy who started out in low-stakes cash games.



Date	Event	Place	Payout
June 2023	\$250,000 WSOP High Roller NLH	1st	\$5,293,556
Oct. 2023	\$125,000 Triton Monte Carlo NLH	4th	\$1,450,000
Feb. 2023	€50,000 EPT Paris High Roller	1st	\$1,026,686
Aug. 2023	\$200,000 Triton London NLH	7th	\$770,000
Feb. 2024	\$50,000 EPT Paris High Roller	2nd	\$629,964
July 2023	\$25,000 Triton London NLH	2nd	\$600,647
Nov. 2023	\$50,000 Triton Monte Carlo NLH	4th	\$585,000
March 2024	\$100,000 Triton Jeju NLH	8th	\$543,000
June 2022	\$25,000 WSOP High Roller NLH	4th	\$442,213
March 2023	\$25,000 Triton Vietnam NLH	3rd	\$435,500
Sept. 2021	\$25,000 Poker Masters	1st	\$427,500
Aug. 2021	\$50,000 Hard Rock Open High Roller	1st	\$420,670
Aug. 2022	\$5,000 Hard Rock Open Main Event	3rd	\$412,375
May 2022	€20,000 Triton Madrid Short Deck	1st	\$390,600
Feb. 2023	€25,000 EPT Paris High Roller	1st	\$382,183
July 2023	\$10,000 WSOP 2-7 Lowball Draw	1st	\$367,599
April 2021	\$50,000 Hard Rock Open High Roller	3rd	\$295,365
May 2023	\$25,000 Triton Cyprus PLO	1st	\$292,449

MAX HOFFMAN CROWNED POKERGO MIXED SERIES CHAMPION

Hoffman Fends Off Former Champion Dan Zack

By Erik Fast



Dan Zack secured the first-ever *PGT Mixed Games* series champion honors when the festival was first run in February of 2023, cashing in five of the eight events for the title. The three-time bracelet winner came incredibly close to being crowned as the series champion for a second time, but ultimately finished runner up in the final standings for the 2024 series.

In the end it was **Max Hoffman** who ended up on top after cashing in five of the ten events offered in the third running of this series. The Massachusetts native racked up \$376,300 in total prize money to fend off Zack, securing the championship trophy and a \$10,000 leaderboard bonus in the process.

Hoffman ended with the most cashes and the most earnings of any of the 48 players who finished in the money during the festival. His 331 total *PokerGO Tour* points gave him a 44-point lead over Zack in the final standings.

More than \$5 million in total prize money was awarded during the series, which ran from Feb. 28 through March 8 inside the PokerGO studio at Aria Resort and Casino on the Las Vegas Strip.

Hoffman's campaign started with a fifth-place showing in the \$5,000 eight-game event for \$31,150. He then scored back-to-back runner-up finishes, earning \$100,800 in the \$10,000 triple stud mix and \$103,400 in the \$10,000 triple draw mix.

He cashed for a third day in a row in the \$10,000 dealer's choice, finishing sixth for another \$28,200. But he saved the

best for last, taking fourth in the \$25,000 10-game championship for a career-best score of \$112,750.

Hoffman now has more than \$582,000 in total lifetime earnings, with six of his 19 total recorded lifetime cashes coming in *PGT Mixed Games* events. Five came this time around, with one last October in the second running of this series. Those six finishes account for \$432,300, or just shy of three-quarters of his career haul so far.

Here's a look at how all the action went down.

PokerGO's Own Mori Eskandani Takes A Trophy

A total of 87 entries were made in the \$5,100 H.O.R.S.E. kickoff tournament, creating a prize pool of \$435,000 that was paid out among the top 13 finishers. Among that baker's dozen, Russia's **Maksim Pisarenko** took home the largest slice of the pie. Pisarenko defeated five-time bracelet winner Benny Glaser heads-up to secure the trophy and the top prize of \$117,450.

This was the second-largest score yet for Pisarenko, trailing only the \$189,840 payday he was awarded as the third-place finisher in the 2019 *EPT Sochi* main event. He now has nearly \$740,000 in total lifetime earnings.

Multi-time bracelet winners John Monnette (7th), Mike Gorodinsky (6th), and Daniel Negreanu (5th) all ran deep in this first event.

Longtime mixed-games crusher **John Hennigan** was the next player to come out on top. The *World Poker Tour* champion and six-time bracelet winner captured his 13th career title, besting a field of 89 entries in the \$5,100 eight-game



mix event.

The 53-year-old took home \$120,150 for the win, the 20th score of six figures or higher on his resume. He went on to cash three more times during this series, accumulating \$256,900 in earnings along the way and finishing fourth in the series-long points race. Hennigan now has more than \$9.4 million in lifetime tournament earnings.

This event also marked Hoffman's first final-table appearance. Accomplished pros including bracelet winner Nick Guagenti (4th), Ken Aldridge (3rd), and five-time bracelet winner Adam Friedman (2nd) all ran deep.

Mori Eskandani has made a massive impact on the poker world. The PokerGO President was inducted into the Poker Hall of Fame in 2018 due to his instrumental role in the production of many of the most celebrated poker television programs in the game's history.

But while Eskandani is best known for his work on shows like *High Stakes Poker* and *Poker After Dark* and his coverage of the *WSOP*, the 68-year-old is also an experienced player with more than \$1 million in career tournament earnings to

his name.

The largest score on Eskandani's résumé was earned during the series, beating a field of 63 entries in the \$10,200 H.O.R.S.E. event for his seventh career title and \$201,600. Prior to this victory, which was his first on the *PokerGO Tour*, Eskandani's largest payday was a \$128,000 cash as the champion of a \$10,500 high roller at Aria back in 2019.

Eskandani had to contend with some of the most accomplished players in the game down the stretch. With the other eight players having combined for 24 *WSOP* bracelets. Kickoff event winner Maksim Pisarenko finished sixth, while bracelet winner Jerry Wong placed fifth. Six-time bracelet winner Daniel Negreanu landed in fourth place, with five-time bracelet winner Benny Glaser in third and six-time bracelet winner Jeremy Ausmus taking runner up.

Dan Zack Finds Another Win

Dan Zack kicked off his bid for a second *PGT Mixed Games* series title by taking down the \$10,200 10-game event. The New Jersey native outlasted a field of 61 for \$195,200.

Zack survived to heads-up play against fellow three-time bracelet winner Jim Collopy, outlasting a final table that included the likes of John Hennigan (7th), two-time bracelet winner Chris Vitth (6th), three-time bracelet winner Mike Gorodinsky (5th), and bracelet winner Dylan Weisman.

The next two events on the agenda each featured three variations on a game type. The first of these two 'triple' events was the \$10,200 triple stud, which included a mix of seven-card stud, stud eight-or-better, and razz.

John Racener, a bracelet winner and 2010 *WSOP* main event runner-up, overcame a field of 42 entries for the win. Racener sat in third chip position heading into the second and final day of this event, with none other than Hennigan in the lead.

Adam Friedman would take fourth for \$46,200, felling to Max Hoffman in a hand of stud after all the chips went

TOURNAMENTS



Jerry Wong



Philip Sternheimer



Dan Shak



Alex Livingston



Walter Chambers

in on sixth street. Three-handed play saw plenty of swings, but eventually Hennigan was knocked out for \$63,000 at his third cash of the series.

Hoffman jumped out to a big lead heads-up, with Racener having just over a single big bet at one point. The Floridian was able to mount a big comeback, however, to secure the title.

Hoffman earned \$100,800 as the runner-up, but just a day later had a shot at redemption. This time around it was the \$10,200 triple draw mix event, which sported a rotation of badugi, triple draw deuce-to-seven lowball, and triple draw ace-to-five lowball.

Once again, Hoffman fell just short of the title, which was hoisted by bracelet winner **Jerry Wong**. He earned \$164,500 as the last player standing from the 47-entry field.

This was his second of four cashes made during the series, for a total of \$260,150. The 2016 *WSOP* main event eighth-place finisher finished in third in the final series standings.

Hennigan placed fourth for \$49,350. This was his fourth cash of the series, which left him in fourth place in the

rankings at the festival's end. Hennigan led the points race heading into the final four events but would add no further deep runs while Hoffman and Wong still had a couple left in them.

Hoffman's Big Push Down The Stretch

The penultimate \$10,200 event on the schedule was the dealer's choice. The tournament included a selection of 20 games to choose from, with all of the most commonly spread variants, as well as some less frequently seen games like badeucy, badacey, and no-limit five-card draw high.

From the 47 entries, it was Germany's **Philip Sternheimer** who emerged victorious with the title and the top prize of \$164,500.

Sternheimer defeated a stacked final table that included all-time bracelet leader Phil Hellmuth (5th), two-time bracelet winner Maxx Coleman (4th), five-time bracelet winner Adam Friedman (3rd), and six-time bracelet winner Daniel Negreanu (2nd). Hoffman lodged his fourth final-table finish of the series, placing sixth for \$28,200.

Negreanu earned \$103,400 as the runner-up. The very next event saw him make another podium finish, placing third in the \$10,200 big bet mix event. He was one of 37 entries in the mixed event that included no-limit hold'em, pot-limit Omaha, pot-limit Omaha eight-or-better, five-card pot-limit Omaha eight-or-better, no-limit five-card draw, pot-limit 2-7 triple draw, and no-limit 2-7 single draw.

This time he earned \$55,500 as the third-place finisher. With 252 *POT* points for taking fifth, fourth, third, and second during the series, he wound up in fifth place in the final standings.

Dan Shak was the player who ultimately came away with the trophy. The 64-year-old hedge fund manager and highly successful tournament player earned \$133,200, bringing his career totals to more than \$14.5 million. This was also his



first victory inside the *PokerGO* studio.

Shak had to contend with two previous winners from this series at the final table in John Racener (6th) and Jerry Wong (5th). Wong ultimately finished third in the points race with four cashes and one title, earning 261 points and \$260,150 along the way.

Shak then faced a three-handed battle against Negreanu and Jeremy Ausmus, who had finished runner-up in an earlier event. Ausmus cashed for \$88,800 as the second-place finisher and finished ninth overall by series' end.

The highest buy-in event of the series was the \$25,300 10-game championship. The tournament drew 41 entries to create a prize pool of \$1,025,000. Canada's **Alex Livingston** nabbed the title and the single largest payout awarded during the series with \$324,465.

This was the fourth-largest cash ever for the bracelet winner and 2019 *WSOP* main event third-place finisher. He now has more than \$8.5 million in career earnings, which was his first in a *PGT* event. He came incredibly close back in the October running of this same series in 2023, but ultimately finished as the runner-up. This time around, he was able to beat bracelet

winner Dylan Weisman heads-up to grasp the trophy.

John Racener finished fifth to set up a final four that featured Livingston, Weisman yet again, and somehow both Zack and Hoffman, who were each still battling for the overall series title.

A no-limit deuce-to-seven lowball hand spelled the end of Hoffman's run, with his 8-7-4-3 draw unable to hold against the 9-8-4-2 draw of Weisman. Hoffman drew an ace, while Weisman picked up an eight to make a 9-8 low. Hoffman earned \$112,750 and 113 points to put him in the lead, but Zack would overtake him with a top-two finish.

Zack ultimately fell in third place, though, earning \$153,750 and 92 points when his 7-6-4-3-2 ran into the 7-5-4-3-2 of Weisman in a round of triple draw. Zack finished with \$348,950 in total earnings and 287 points for the series, good for second in the final standings.

Walter Chambers finished sixth for his second cash of the festival. He then hopped right into the final tournament on the schedule, the \$5,100 no-limit single draw deuce-to-seven lowball event and topped a field of 28 entries to earn \$63,000 and the title. ♠

PGT Mixed Games – Aria Resort & Casino – Las Vegas, NV

Event	Player	Payout (POY)	Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$5,300 HORSE Feb. 28-29 Entrants: 87 Prizepool: \$435,000	1 Maksim Pisarenko	\$117,450 (384)	\$5,300 8-Game Mix Feb. 29 - March 1 Entrants: 89 Prizepool: \$445,000	1 John Hennigan	\$120,150 (384)
	2 Benny Glaser	\$76,125 (320)		2 Adam Friedman	\$77,875 (320)
	3 Dennis Maschke	\$54,375 (256)		3 Ken Aldridge	\$55,625 (256)
	4 Andrew Kelsall	\$39,150 (192)		4 Nick Guagenti	\$40,050 (192)
	5 Daniel Negreanu	\$30,450 (160)		5 Max Hoffman	\$31,150 (160)
	6 Mike Gorodinsky	\$21,750 (128)		6 Christopher Claassen	\$22,250 (128)
	7 John Monnette	\$17,400 (96)		7 Patrick Moulder	\$17,800 (96)

TOURNAMENTS

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,600 HORSE March 1-2 Entries: 63 Prizepool: \$630,000	1 Mori Eskandani	\$201,600 (360)
	2 Jeremy Ausmus	\$126,000 (300)
	3 Benny Glaser	\$88,200 (240)
	4 Daniel Negreanu	\$63,000 (180)
	5 Jerry Wong	\$47,250 (150)
	6 Maksim Pisarenko	\$34,650 (120)
	7 Talal Shakerchi	\$25,200 (90)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,600 8-Game Mix March 2-3 Entries: 61 Prizepool: \$610,000	1 Daniel Zack	\$195,200 (360)
	2 Jim Collopy	\$122,000 (300)
	3 Dylan Weisman	\$85,400 (240)
	4 Joshua Rhodes	\$61,000 (180)
	5 Mike Gorodinsky	\$45,750 (150)
	6 Christopher Vitch	\$33,550 (120)
	7 John Hennigan	\$24,400 (90)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,600 Triple Stud March 3-4 Entries: 42 Prizepool: \$420,000	1 John Racener	\$151,200 (300)
	2 Max Hoffman	\$100,800 (250)
	3 John Hennigan	\$63,000 (200)
	4 Adam Friedman	\$46,200 (150)
	5 Scott Lake	\$33,600 (125)
	6 Dzmityr Urbanovich	\$25,200 (100)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,600 Triple Draw March 4-5 Entries: 47 Prizepool: \$470,000	1 Jerry Wong	\$164,500 (300)
	2 Max Hoffman	\$103,400 (250)
	3 Scott Lake	\$68,150 (200)
	4 John Hennigan	\$49,350 (150)
	5 Felipe Ramos	\$37,600 (125)
	6 Hal Rotholz	\$28,200 (100)



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,600 Dealer's Choice March 5-6 Entries: 47 Prizepool: \$470,000	1 Philip Sternheimer	\$164,500 (300)
	2 Daniel Negreanu	\$103,400 (250)
	3 Adam Friedman	\$68,150 (200)
	4 Maxx Coleman	\$49,350 (150)
	5 Phil Hellmuth	\$37,600 (125)
	6 Max Hoffman	\$28,200 (100)
	7 Jerry Wong	\$18,800 (75)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,600 Big Bet Mix March 6-7 Entries: 37 Prizepool: \$370,000	1 Dan Shak	\$133,200 (240)
	2 Jeremy Ausmus	\$88,800 (200)
	3 Daniel Negreanu	\$55,500 (160)
	4 Walter Chambers	\$40,700 (120)
	5 Jerry Wong	\$29,600 (100)
	6 John Racener	\$22,200 (80)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$26,000 10-Game Mix March 7-8 Entries: 41 Prizepool: \$1,025,000	1 Alexander Livingston	\$324,465 (420)
	2 Dylan Weisman	\$290,535 (350)
	3 Daniel Zack	\$153,750 (280)
	4 Max Hoffman	\$112,750 (210)
	5 John Racener	\$82,000 (175)
	6 Walter Chambers	\$61,500 (140)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$5,300 2-7 Draw March 8 Entries: 28 Prizepool: \$140,000	1 Walter Chambers	\$63,000
	2 Felipe Ramos	\$39,200
	3 Jonathan Krela	\$22,400
	4 John Riordan	\$15,400

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TIM KRAUSKOPF WINS POKERATLAS TOUR MAIN EVENT AT RESORTS WORLD LAS VEGAS

10-Event Series Draws Nearly 2,100 Entries And Pays Out More Than \$865,000

By Erik Fast



The 2024 *PokerAtlas Tour* stop at Resorts World Las Vegas is now in the books, with more than \$865,000 in total prize money paid out across the 10-event series that ran from March 7-18.

Benton Blakeman Bests 526-Entry Field In Kickoff Event

Cash game player **Benton Blakeman** defeated a field of 526 entries in the \$500 buy-in kickoff event to earn \$42,460.

The strong turnout saw the \$200,000 guarantee narrowly surpassed by a handful of entries, resulting in a final prize pool of \$201,920 that was paid out among the top 45 finishers. This was the largest score yet for Blakeman, who now has \$274,421 in lifetime earnings.

“Oh man, it was tough. I’ve been playing cash in between so it’s been like four or five days straight of 12-13 hour days. I don’t play many tournaments so this is different. I maybe play three or four tournaments a year,” said Blakeman.

Blakeman was in the middle of the pack when the final table began, but he was able to score a double-up with eight players remaining to start his rise to the top.

He took out Wade Citro in fourth place to join contention for the chip lead, but by the time the heads-up final began he was facing a deficit against Thomas Symonds.

Blakeman turned the tables in time for the final hand, with Symonds all in holding $A\spadesuit J\diamondsuit$. Blakeman had him covered and dominated with $A\diamondsuit Q\heartsuit$ in the hole, and the board bricked out for the queen-kicker to play.

More Winners Emerge During The First Week of Action

A total of 91 entries were made in the \$25,000 guaran-

teed \$400 no-limit hold’em ‘Giant Stack’ event, resulting in a final prize pool of \$30,030 that was paid out among the top 12 finishers. **Xiang Zou** walked away with the largest chunk of the prize money, taking home \$9,000 as the champion. This was the largest live tournament score yet for Zhou.

The \$10,000 guarantee for event no. 3 on the schedule was also surpassed. A total of 63 entries were made in the \$260 no-limit hold’em tournament, creating a prize pool of \$12,913. The top eight finishers cashed, with **Jackson Holtgraves** ultimately walking away with the title, the trophy, and the top prize of \$4,121.

This was the third recorded live tournament title for Holtgraves, who now has nearly \$151,000 in lifetime cashes to his name. His largest came when he final tabled the 2022 *WSOP Circuit Choctaw* main event, earning \$44,451 for a seventh-place finish.

The first non-hold’em event on the schedule was the \$400 Omaha eight-or-better tournament. With 92 entries, the prize pool swelled to \$30,360. The top 12 finishers made the money, with four-figure payouts for the final eight.

This event eventually concluded via a chip chop between two Canadian players who were both named Adam. The pair then did a flip for the trophy, with **Adam Leiber**man winning that hand to secure first-place honors.

Adam Schwartz, longtime poker podcast host, secured the largest payout as the chip leader at the time. He earned \$7,915 to increase his career tournament earnings to over \$250,000. David Levi and Kao Saechao, who each have seven figures in career tournament earnings, both made the



final table but bowed out early.

The next tournament to wrap was the \$400 H.E.R.O.S. event. The 93-entry turnout built a prize pool of \$30,690. The final eight finishers earned four-figure payouts, with the largest being the \$9,736 secured by eventual champion **Daniel Anton**.

This was the second-largest payday secured by Anton, who also won a mixed-game event during the 2022 *Grand Summer Series* for \$11,935. He now has \$90,836 in total career cashes.

Mystery Bounty Winner Joseph Koreski Headlines Later Champions

The third-largest guarantee of the series belonged to the \$400 no-limit hold'em mystery bounty tournament. Only the kickoff event (\$200,000) and the main event (\$300,000) sported larger guaranteed prize pools.

A total of 564 entries were made across the six starting flights that ran from March 11-13, surpassing the \$150,000 guarantee to create a total prize pool of \$186,120. Of that,

\$129,720 was placed into the main prize pool while \$56,400 was set aside for mystery bounty payouts.

The last player standing was **Joseph Koreski**, who earned \$22,970 from the main prize pool plus bounties after striking a heads-up deal with Doyoon Hyun (2nd – \$20,760). This was the largest score yet for Koreski. *WSOP* bracelet winner Cole Ferraro finished third for \$11,560.

Nicolas Milgrom won the third and final non-hold'em event of the festival. The French-born player based out of Las Vegas overcame a field of 80 entries in the \$400 Omaha eight-or-better and stud eight-or-better mixed tournament, earning \$9,072 for the win. This was already the third live tournament title of 2024 for Milgrom, who also took down two Omaha eight-or-better events in February. He now has more than \$206,000 in lifetime earnings after this latest victory. \$400 H.E.R.O.S. event winner Daniel Anton finished fifth for \$1,650.

While the \$800 buy-in main event ran, there were two final \$260 buy-in no-limit hold'em tournaments, each of which sported a \$10,000 guarantee. The first drew 62 entries to end with a final prize pool of \$12,710. The top eight finishers made the money, with the largest share going to eventual champion **Scott Sisler**.

This was the second title won in 2024 for Sisler, who came out on top in a \$250 buy-in at the *Missouri State Poker Championship* in late February for a similar payday. He now has more than \$485,000 in career tournament earnings to his name.

The final tournament to get underway saw another 62 entries made at \$260 each. The \$12,710 prize pool was again split among the final eight. Canada's **Justin Quimette** secured the top prize of \$4,580 after defeating bracelet winner William Givens heads-up for the title.

Quimette grew his career earnings to more than \$515,000

TOURNAMENTS



Daniel Anton



Nicolas Milgrom



Scott Sisler



Justin Quimette

in the process. Just four days prior to this win, he also took down a \$600 buy-in event a bit further down the Las Vegas Strip.

Main Event Draws 459 Entries, Ends Via Five-Way Deal

The festival concluded with the completion of the \$300,000 guaranteed \$800 buy-in no-limit hold'em main event. The field of 459 entries built a final prize pool of \$321,300, with the largest share going to eventual champion Tim Krauskopf.

"It's wonderful, the trophy is one of the big parts of it," Krauskopf told PokerAtlas reporters after coming out on top. "It's hard to take too much credit for it. You play a big stack, and then you play a little bit [of the] bully. You limp in, because you can afford the limp, and then if you hit you can really do some damage and inflict some pain. And then once you get a couple, they're afraid of your bets. So I was able to get a couple of bluffs through too."

Krauskopf is based out of the Chicago area and usually plays cash games at the \$3-\$5 and \$5-\$10 levels. This foray into the tournament streets ended up quite fruitful, as he was awarded \$45,968 as the chip leader at the time of a five-way deal that brought this event to a close.

In addition to the impressive trophy and the prize money, Krauskopf also earned 360 *Card Player* Player of the Year points for the win.

This event played out over the course of five days, with four starting flights and a final day to play down to a champion. Just 38 players remained in contention when that final day began, with Krauskopf leading the pack. He was still out in front by the time the final table was set thanks to the elimination of two-time bracelet winner David Jackson in 10th place.

Armen Minasyan's A-K was outrun by the K-Q suited of Graham Mathews to narrow the field to eight. Krauskopf then won an all-in with J-6 suited against the J-5 of short stack Jimmy Svardhagen (8th) to further grow his stack.

Brian Kim (7th) was the next to fall, with his 7♠ 4♠ unable to overcome the 9♦ 3♦ of David Wade in an all-in confrontation.

A classic preflop race led to the final knockout of the event, with Mathews' 7-7 facing the A♦ Q♣ of Krauskopf. The board came down Q♣ Q♥ 6♥ 10♠ 4♣ and Krauskopf made trip queens to win the pot and send Mathews to the rail in sixth place (\$11,630).

The final five then hashed out a deal that brought the event to an end.

About Resorts World

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

The \$4.3 billion property features a 117,000 square foot casino, and a 59-story hotel with three distinct Hotels. Las Vegas Hilton, Conrad Las Vegas, and Crockfords Las Vegas combine for nearly 3,500 total rooms.

The casino floor features 1,400 slot machines, 117 table games, and of course, the 30-table poker room.

In addition to gaming, the property offers plenty of other world-class entertainment options, with the 5,000-person Resorts World Theater, the Zouk Nightclub, and the Ayu Beach House. There are also more than 50 dining and drinking establishments on site.

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

PokerAtlas Tour - Resorts World - Las Vegas, NV

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$800 Main Event March 14-18 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 459 Prizepool: \$321,300	1 Tim Krauskopf	\$45,968 (360)
	2 Danny Chen	\$35,833 (300)
	3 Ross Miller	\$33,844 (240)
	4 Thanh Duong	\$28,990 (180)
	5 David Wade	\$25,465 (150)
	6 Graham Mathews	\$11,630 (120)
	7 Brian Kim	\$9,770 (90)
	8 Jimmy Svardhagen	\$8,030 (60)
	9 Armen Minasyan	\$6,430 (30)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$400 Mystery Bounty March 11-14 \$150,000 GTD Entries: 564 Prizepool: \$186,120	1 Joseph Koreski	\$22,970 (336)
	2 Doyoon Hyun	\$20,760 (280)
	3 Cole Ferraro	\$11,560 (224)
	4 Mark Dickstein	\$7,930 (168)
	5 Daniel McBrien	\$6,090 (140)
	6 Dong Gun Kim	\$5,080 (112)
	7 Benjamin Boston	\$4,240 (84)
	8 Prasad Vemulapally	\$3,400 (56)
	9 Ronnie Lamb	\$2,570 (28)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$500 Kickoff March 7-10 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 526 Prizepool: \$201,920	1 Benton Blakeman	\$42,460 (420)
	2 Thomas Symonds	\$29,860 (350)
	3 Muelas Ro	\$19,200 (280)
	4 Wade Citro	\$12,500 (210)
	5 Andre Kim	\$9,630 (175)
	6 Yiming Cao	\$7,970 (140)
	7 Jonathan Dimmig	\$6,680 (105)
	8 Nikhil Gera	\$5,460 (70)
	9 Christie Yau	\$4,260 (35)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$400 Omaha 8 March 11 Entries: 92 Prizepool: \$30,360	1 Adam Lieberman	\$7,505 (86)
	2 Adam Schwartz	\$7,915 (72)
	3 Dennis Axel	\$3,640 (58)
	4 Thomas Eaglestaff	\$2,350 (43)
	5 Paul Kim	\$1,820 (36)
	6 Keith Sanders	\$1,440 (29)
	7 Mohammad Jazayeri	\$1,210 (22)
	8 Kao Saechao	\$1,060 (14)
	9 David Levi	\$960 (7)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$400 NLH March 10 \$25,000 GTD Entries: 91 Prizepool: \$30,030	1 Xiang Zou	\$9,000 (86)
	2 Jason Hodges	\$6,233 (72)
	3 Harold Hyatt	\$3,604 (58)
	4 Jay Park	\$2,327 (43)
	5 Anatoly Zharnitsky	\$1,802 (36)
	6 Steve Stolzmann	\$1,426 (29)
	7 Frank Caravas	\$1,201 (22)
	8 Sean Hampson	\$1,051 (14)
	9 Danny Chen	\$953 (7)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$400 HEROS March 12 Entries: 93 Prizepool: \$30,690	1 Daniel Anton	\$9,736 (86)
	2 Benjamin Miner	\$5,331 (72)
	3 Joshua Turner	\$4,183 (58)
	4 Deborah Cheek	\$2,378 (43)
	5 Mark Gregorich	\$1,841 (36)
	6 Carol Fuchs	\$1,458 (29)
	7 Volodymyr Kondratenko	\$1,228 (22)
	8 Randy Holland	\$1,074 (14)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$260 NLH March 10 Entries: 63 Prizepool: \$12,913	1 Jackson Holtgraves	\$4,121
	2 Nicole Schwartz	\$3,261
	3 Sergei Saakian	\$1,711
	4 Brian Richardson	\$1,162
	5 Ryan Heitzman	\$904
	6 Scott Hermann	\$710
	7 Philip Riley	\$581
	8 Douglas Kim	\$463

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$400 Omaha/Stud 8 March 13 Entries: 80 Prizepool: \$26,400	1 Nicolas Milgrom	\$9,072 (77)
	2 Pierre Dotson	\$4,999 (64)
	3 Tony Charles	\$3,221 (51)
	4 Gebrehiweb Guitom	\$2,178 (38)
	5 Daniel Anton	\$1,650 (32)
	6 Paul Herrera	\$1,320 (26)
	7 Steven Girouard	\$1,188 (19)
	8 Walter Smiley	\$1,056 (13)

TOURNAMENTS

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
\$260 NLH March 16 \$10,000 GTD Entries: 62 Prizepool: \$12,710	1 Scott Sisler	\$4,580
	2 Tywon Petty	\$2,690
	3 Israel Nachman	\$1,680
	4 Oscar King	\$1,140
	5 Alan Friedman	\$890
	6 Chiori Gannon	\$700
	7 Armen Minasyan	\$570
	8 Robert Scott	\$460

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
\$260 NLH March 17 \$10,000 GTD Entries: 62 Prizepool: \$12,710	1 Justin Ouimette	\$4,580
	2 William Givens	\$2,690
	3 Anthony Irwin	\$1,680
	4 Anatoly Zhartnisky	\$1,140
	5 James Hoak	\$890
	6 Robert Scott	\$700
	7 Alexander Tafesh	\$570
	8 Alexander Ford	\$460



Looking for ladies events? Check out Card Player's Women In Poker page, a comprehensive resource that has upcoming tournament schedule details, as well as information and recaps about past event winners.

Visit cardplayer.com/women for more!

NEEL MURTHY, ERIK SEIDEL, AND JESSE LONIS AMONG BIG WYNNERS

By Erik Fast



The 2024 *Wynn Millions* \$3,500 buy-in no-limit hold'em championship event attracted 1,180 total entries, surpassing the \$3 million guarantee by nearly \$750,000. The top 151 finishers made the money, with six-figure payouts for the final six.

The largest score went to **Neel Murthy**, who emerged victorious with the title and the top prize of \$502,856.

This was the second-biggest cash of Murthy's tournament career, trailing only the \$668,590 payout he secured as the runner-up in a 2016 *Asia Championship of Poker* event. The California resident now has more than \$1.6 million in total tournament earnings.

Thanks to this win, Murthy has shot up the POY standings. The 1,440 points he was awarded were enough to move him into 31st place on the leaderboard.

This tournament featured three starting flights and four more days of action inside the poker room at Wynn Las Vegas. Plenty of big names ran deep, including bracelet winner Anthony Spinella (17th), bracelet winner Paul Hizer (14th), 2023 *WSOP* main event runner-up Steven Jones (13th), two-time bracelet winner Martin Zamani (10th), and bracelet

winner Dominick Sarle (7th).

The final day began with five players remaining and Murthy well out in front. Jesse Kandola was the first to fall, with his tens and sixes with an ace kicker running into the turned trip sixes of Haim Gabay. Kandola earned \$165,379 as the fifth-place finisher.

Paul Lozano Martin was the next to hit the rail. He got all-in on a 4♣ 3♣ 2♠ flop with A♥ 4♦ against the 5♥ 2♥ of bracelet winner Chris Frank. The 6♣ turn gave Frank a straight and the Q♣ river confirmed Martin's elimination. He cashed for \$223,372.

A classic race spelled the end of Gabay's run. He got the last of his stack in with J♥ 10♥ facing the 9♦ 9♣ of Murthy. Murthy remained ahead through the turn, then spiked a nine on the end to improve to a set. Gabay earned a career-best score of \$301,369 as the third-place finisher.

Heads-up play began with Murthy holding nearly a 3:1 lead over Frank. An early double for the German saw him take a slight lead. At that point, the two made a deal that saw Frank lock up \$500,000, while Murthy was guaranteed \$477,856. The title and \$25,000 in remaining prize money were still up for grabs as part of the agreement.

Murthy won a key pot with pocket queens to move back into the lead and then began to pull away. In the final hand, Murthy moved all-in after a Q♥ J♣ 2♣ 4♥ J♥ runout. Frank called with J♠ 5♦ for trips, but Murthy revealed 7♥ 3♥ for a flush. Frank earned the half million that he bargained for as the runner-up, increasing his lifetime earnings to more than \$3.3 million.

Murthy was far from the only big winner at this series, which is still ongoing as this issue goes to press. Several players secured trophies and six-figure paydays at the festival in recent weeks, including the champions of the four \$10,500 buy-in high-roller events.

The first was a no-limit hold'em affair that saw 10-time bracelet winner **Erik Seidel** best a field of 80 entries to earn \$250,000 and 480 POY points. Seidel beat a final table that included reigning POY winner Bin Weng, former POY winner Eric Baldwin, and perennial POY contender Alex Foxen.

The following day, **Jesse Lonis** topped a field of 58 entries in another no-limit hold'em high roller, earning \$193,140 and 300 points. Lonis beat Ethan "Rampage" Yau heads-up for the title, which came at his eighth final table of the year. With 2,799 total points and nearly \$1.2 million in to-date POY earnings, the two-time bracelet winner has claimed the fourth-place spot on the POY leaderboard.

Jim Collopy took fourth place for \$63,800, but he would add to that in a big way with the lone pot-limit Omaha high roller on the schedule. Collopy overcame a field of 50 entries to earn \$175,000 and 300 points. The three-time bracelet winner now sits in 62nd place in the 2024 rankings thanks to his six final-table finishes.

The final high roller drew 59 entries for a no-limit hold'em showdown, with **Lucas Foster** beating Niko Koop heads-up to earn \$196,470 and 300 points as the eventual champion. Other notable winners from the series have included **Cherish Andrews** and **Shuofei Geng** who both took home six-figure payouts. ♠

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TOURNAMENTS



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Wynn Millions – Las Vegas, NV



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$3,500 Championship March 7-13 \$3,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,180 Prizepool: \$3,746,500	1 Neel Murthy	\$502,856 (1,440)
	2 Christopher Frank	\$500,000 (1,200)
	3 Hiam Gabay	\$301,369 (960)
	4 Paul Lozano Martin	\$223,372 (720)
	5 Jesse Kandola	\$165,379 (600)
	6 Pedro Ingles	\$122,721 (480)
	7 Dominick Sarle	\$91,730 (360)
	8 Daniel Maor	\$69,947 (240)
	9 Jeremy Felicetti	\$54,467 (120)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$2,200 NLH 6-Max March 5-7 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 468 Prizepool: \$936,000	1 Cherish Andrews	\$182,927 (720)
	2 Timothy Chang	\$119,677 (600)
	3 Matthew Liu	\$91,949 (480)
	4 Michael Holtz	\$73,106 (360)
	5 Sundiata DeVore	\$55,381 (300)
	6 Niko Koop	\$41,325 (240)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,100 NLH March 12-14 \$400,000 GTD Entries: 572 Prizepool: \$554,840	1 Shuofei Geng	\$101,789 (840)
	2 Spencer Champlin	\$70,457 (700)
	3 Matthew Salsberg	\$52,483 (560)
	4 Jason Wheeler	\$41,452 (420)
	5 Huifang Zheng	\$32,124 (350)
	6 Adam Swan	\$24,395 (280)
	7 Vincent Wong	\$18,231 (210)
	8 Anthony Danna	\$13,437 (140)
	9 Rommel Liscano	\$10,188 (70)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,500 NLH March 12 Entries: 80 Prizepool: \$800,000	1 Erik Seidel	\$250,000 (480)
	2 Alex Foxen	\$160,000 (400)
	3 Taylor Wilson	\$112,000 (320)
	4 Ariel Mantel	\$80,000 (240)
	5 Eric Baldwin	\$59,600 (200)
	6 Scott Henry	\$46,000 (160)
	7 Victoria Livschitz	\$36,400 (120)
	8 Alex Keating	\$30,000 (80)
	9 Bin Weng	\$26,000 (40)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,500 NLH March 13 Entries: 58 Prizepool: \$580,000	1 Jesse Lonis	\$193,140 (300)
	2 Ethan Yau	\$123,250 (250)
	3 Filipp Khavin	\$88,450 (200)
	4 Jim Collopy	\$63,800 (150)
	5 Taylor Wilson	\$47,850 (125)
	6 Jeremy Ausmus	\$36,250 (100)
	7 Adam Hendrix	\$27,260 (75)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,500 PLO March 14 Entries: 50 Prizepool: \$500,000	1 Jim Collopy	\$175,000 (300)
	2 Sam Soverel	\$112,500 (250)
	3 Caleb Furth	\$80,000 (200)
	4 Dylan Weisman	\$57,500 (150)
	5 John Riordan	\$43,000 (125)
	6 Amir Mirrasouli	\$32,000 (100)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,500 NLH March 15 Entries: 59 Prizepool: \$590,000	1 Lucas Foster	\$196,470 (300)
	2 Niko Koop	\$125,375 (250)
	3 Sam Soverel	\$89,975 (200)
	4 Shannon Shorr	\$64,900 (150)
	5 Frank Lagodich	\$48,675 (125)
	6 Michael Berk	\$36,875 (100)
	7 Bin Weng	\$27,730 (75)



SOHEB PORBANDARWALA EARNS 12TH CAREER WSOP CIRCUIT RING

By Erik Fast



Soheb Porbandarwala dominated down the stretch in the *World Series of Poker Circuit Horseshoe Hammond* \$1,700 main event.

The poker pro from Connecticut survived a 986-entry field to make the final table with a big chip lead. He then proceeded to score all but one knockout on the last day as he sprinted to victory. For the win, he was awarded \$257,725 and his 12th career *WSOPC* gold ring.

“It’s like watching *ESPN* in the old days and there’s just a cooler every single hand and one person’s winning all of them; it was like that. I had a premium every single time someone decided to do something. If I didn’t, I got there,” Porbandarwala told *WSOP* reporters.

This was the third *WSOPC* main event title for

Porbandarwala. It was also his largest payday yet, topping the \$239,820 he earned for the 2020 *WPT Online Poker Open*. He now has more than \$2.4 million in recorded winnings to his name.

The sizable turnout for this tournament saw the \$1 million guarantee easily surpassed. The \$1,493,790 final prize pool was ultimately paid out among the top 148 finishers.

One of the notables that ran deep included bracelet winner and two-time *WPT* champion Kevin Eyster (30th), who was fresh off a win in the \$2,200 buy-in event at this stop. Former champion of this event Shiva Dudani made another deep run, finishing in 47th.

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Soheb Porbandarwala	\$257,725 (912)
2 Bradley Coultas	\$159,277 (760)
3 Jonathan Seely	\$119,402 (608)
4 Adam Greenberg	\$90,360 (456)
5 Richard Bai	\$69,039 (380)
6 Hussain Sajwani	\$53,529 (304)
7 Eric Adelstein	\$41,489 (228)
8 Brian Altman	\$32,639 (152)
9 Brian Batt	\$25,933 (76)

HAN FENG TAKES DOWN WSOP CIRCUIT HARD ROCK TULSA

By Erik Fast

Han Ming Feng has won the 2024 *World Series of Poker Circuit Hard Rock Tulsa* \$1,700 main event. The Houston, Texas resident bested a field of 472 entries to secure his first *WSOPC* gold ring and the top payout of \$144,413.

This was the largest tournament score yet for Feng, topping the \$119,048 he earned as the runner-up in a \$1,100 buy-in event last summer during the *Venetian DeepStack Championship Poker Series*. He now has more than \$439,000 in total tournament earnings to his name.

“It’s hard to explain. I just knew I was going to win,” Feng told *WSOP* reporters. “I willed it into existence in a way.”

In addition to the money and the hardware, Feng also earned 720 POY points for the win. This was his second title and third final-table finish of the year, having also taken down a \$1,500 buy-in *MoneyMaker Poker Tour* event in his hometown of Houston back in January for \$54,100.

The top 71 finishers made the money in this event, with five figures or more for the top 12 spots.

Ring winner Eric Bunch was the first to fall at the final table in eighth. Two-time ring winner Schuyler Thornton ran A-6 suited into the A-Q of ring winner Harvey Castro to finish sixth.

Three-time *WPT* champion Brian Altman was cooled out in fifth place for \$36,227, while Castro followed him out the door in fourth for \$48,284. Castro took down the 2023 *WSOPC Choctaw* main event last summer for \$275,660.

Jared Ward earned \$89,255 as the runner-up. This was his second-largest payday, trailing only the \$102,200 he took home for winning a \$1,100 event during the 2021 *Choctaw Poker Classic*.



Player	Payout (POY)
1 Han Ming Feng	\$144,413 (720)
2 Jared Ward	\$89,255 (600)
3 Bryce Laymance	\$65,217 (480)
4 Harvey Castro	\$48,284 (360)
5 Brian Altman	\$36,227 (300)
6 Schuyler Thornton	\$27,550 (240)
7 Hector Aguilar-Gutierrez	\$21,241 (180)
8 Eric Bunch	\$16,605 (120)
9 Travis Riggs	\$13,165 (60)

CIRCUIT RESULTS

All payouts in USD.



© GUKPT

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
GUKPT Grosvenor Casino Coventry, United Kingdom £1,500 NLH Feb. 28-Mar. 3 Entries: 620 Prizepool: \$1,033,086	1 Nick Marchington	\$189,062 (840)
	2 Tony Harmon	\$153,820 (700)
	3 Simon Higgins	\$105,548 (560)
	4 Yucel Eminoglu	\$101,059 (420)
	5 Stuart McNally	\$44,466 (350)
	6 Barrie Greenan	\$29,954 (280)
	7 Majid Iqbal	\$26,019 (210)
	8 Adriano Perez	\$22,278 (140)
	9 Chris Da Silva	\$18,666 (70)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Mystery Bounty Gila River Lone Butte Chandler, AZ \$800 NLH KO Feb. 29-Mar. 3 Entries: 648 Prizepool: \$466,904	1 Riley Dieckhoff	\$87,880 (420)
	2 Robert Mitchell	\$49,386 (350)
	3 Joshua Dubinsky	\$34,030 (280)
	4 Todd Dubin	\$27,479 (210)
	5 David Brownworth	\$16,147 (175)
	6 Damian Feria	\$14,570 (140)
	7 Gerald Farha	\$12,016 (105)
	8 Bill Turner	\$34,062 (70)
	9 Thomas Campobello	\$11,790 (35)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Escalator Series Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood, FL \$600 NLH Feb. 28-Mar. 3 \$400,000 GTD Entries: 1,062 Prizepool: \$552,240	1 Barrington Bowen	\$84,325 (480)
	2 Brandon Ageloff	\$72,000 (400)
	3 Joe Bartholdi	\$42,500 (320)
	4 Mike Chiappetta	\$31,400 (240)
	5 Yury Parad	\$23,800 (200)
	6 Brandon Miller	\$19,120 (160)
	7 Harrison Brown	\$15,840 (120)
	8 Dylan Kahn	\$12,565 (80)
	9 Shamica Lamar	\$9,350 (40)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,700 NLH Mar. 7-10 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 418 Prizepool: \$627,000	1 Steven Karp	\$107,218 (720)
	2 Arthur Peacock	\$106,217 (600)
	3 Kevin Schulz	\$57,530 (480)
	4 Alexander Charron	\$38,555 (360)
	5 Joseph Levitt	\$29,650 (300)
	6 Christopher Lewis	\$24,700 (240)
	7 Ernest Bush	\$20,650 (180)
	8 Matthew Zarcadoolas	\$16,690 (120)
	9 Gil Aboodi	\$12,775 (60)



© Kings of Tallinn

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Kings of Tallinn Olympic Park Casino Tallinn, Estonia €1,100 NLH Feb. 28-Mar. 3 €500,000 GTD Entries: 914 Prizepool: \$933,907	1 Edgaras Kausinis	\$131,792 (912)
	2 Mantas Tamulevicius	\$114,450 (760)
	3 Aleksis Naski	\$114,450 (608)
	4 Benjamin Gros	\$59,732 (456)
	5 Even Rislov	\$43,164 (380)
	6 Greger Aktell	\$33,082 (304)
	7 Wissam Polus	\$25,179 (228)
	8 Paul Newey	\$19,402 (152)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Unibet Open Pasino Aix-en- Provence Aix-en-Provence, France €550 NLH Feb. 29-Mar. 3 Entries: 663 Prizepool: \$339,962	1 Majid Chafik	\$55,045 (420)
	2 Roman Wieviorka	\$36,052 (350)
	3 Lucas Trincherro	\$26,160 (280)
	4 Pierre Basile	\$19,838 (210)
	5 Omar Lakhdari	\$15,151 (175)
	6 Senol Ardic	\$11,772 (140)
	7 Sebastien Gallice	\$9,374 (105)
	8 Mickael Haddad	\$7,630 (70)
	9 Jeremy Palvini	\$6,322 (35)

TOURNAMENTS



© Asian Poker Tour

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Asian Poker Tour Chinese Texas Poker Taipei City, Taiwan NT\$70,000 NLH Mar. 3-9 NT\$65,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,182 Prizepool: \$2,296,978	1 Daisuke Ogita	\$414,209 (960)
	2 Guo Xi	\$243,840 (800)
	3 Justin Chu	\$171,520 (640)
	4 Seungmook Jung	\$128,512 (480)
	5 Li Sun	\$98,464 (400)
	6 Jung Liao	\$72,800 (320)
	7 Pitipong Posri	\$55,488 (240)
	8 Safwane Bahri	\$39,552 (160)
	9 Steve Ng	\$30,688 (80)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Asian Poker Tour Chinese Texas Poker Taipei City, Taiwan NT\$150,000 NLH 8-Max Mar. 9-10 NT\$11,000,000 GTD Entries: 160 Prizepool: \$695,296	1 Stanley Weng	\$161,696 (468)
	2 Dicky Tsang	\$109,504 (390)
	3 Moonho Seo	\$72,992 (312)
	4 Tsz Chan	\$59,808 (234)
	5 Martin Sedlak	\$47,968 (195)
	6 Quang Hung Ha	\$37,184 (156)
	7 Leo Pang	\$27,520 (117)
	8 Park Yu Cheung	\$20,224 (78)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
DeepStack Venetian Las Vegas, NV \$800 NLH Mar. 8-11 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 318 Prizepool: \$219,420	1 Kurt Jewell	\$38,218 (240)
	2 Homan Mohammadi	\$36,046 (200)
	3 Vien Chau	\$22,173 (160)
	4 Jay Fredricksen	\$16,224 (120)
	5 Andrew Moreno	\$12,069 (100)
	6 Simone Oddo	\$9,130 (80)
	7 Graham Mathews	\$7,026 (60)
	8 Gregory Kolo	\$5,501 (40)
	9 Calais Campbell	\$4,383 (20)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit Hard Rock Catoosa, OK \$400 NLH Mar. 8-10 Entries: 1,070 Prizepool: \$535,100	1 David Flippo	\$57,087 (384)
	2 Bryce Laymance	\$35,284 (320)
	3 David Kelley	\$25,812 (256)
	4 Todd Tucker	\$19,143 (192)
	5 Shawn Sparks	\$14,395 (160)
	6 Yongil Park	\$10,978 (128)
	7 Daniel Butler	\$8,493 (96)
	8 Devin Arnone	\$6,666 (64)
	9 Daniel Lowery	\$5,309 (32)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WPT Rolling Thunder Thunder Valley Lincoln, CA \$500 NLH Mar. 9 \$100,000 GTD Entries: 563 Prizepool: \$242,090	1 Mitchell Collins	\$45,460 (420)
	2 Joshua Steinberg	\$30,265 (350)
	3 Paul Rezendes	\$22,270 (280)
	4 Juan Olmos	\$16,570 (210)
	5 Mark Egbert	\$12,465 (175)
	6 Charisse Case	\$9,480 (140)
	7 Steven Gnatovich	\$7,285 (105)
	8 Chauncey Hill	\$5,665 (70)
	9 Antonio Rangole	\$4,450 (35)



© Winamax

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Winamax Tour Paris Expo Porte de Versailles Paris, France €500 NLH Mar. 12-17 Entries: 3,448 Prizepool: \$1,583,144	1 Jeremy Cauchard	\$185,300 (600)
	2 Hugues Girard	\$137,340 (500)
	3 Karim Lehoussine	\$97,010 (400)
	4 Cyril Belkebir	\$67,580 (300)
	5 Adem Agoudjil	\$47,960 (250)
	6 Sunday Ogunjobi	\$35,425 (200)
	7 Sidoine Pachot	\$27,795 (150)
	8 Denis Xiong	\$22,890 (100)
	9 Nicolas Hameau	\$19,293 (50)

TOURNAMENTS

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Circuito Argentino de Poker	1 Gonzalo Gottlieb	\$68,756 (336)
	2 Gaspar Neuman	\$42,058 (280)
	3 Mateo Tocho	\$26,973 (224)
Casino Buenos Aires Buenos Aires, Argentina	4 Nicolas Betbese Pueta	\$18,731 (168)
	5 Sebastian Lobo	\$14,486 (140)
\$1,500 NLH Mar. 11-12 Entries: 185 Prizepool: \$249,750	6 Nicolas Paniagua	\$10,989 (112)
	7 Alberto Varni	\$8,492 (84)
	8 Ezequiel Kleinman	\$6,244 (56)
	9 Luciano Macchiarelli	\$4,695 (28)



© WSOP

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit	1 Budwey Salhab	\$123,316 (480)
	2 Thomas Winschel	\$76,207 (400)
Turning Stone Verona, NY	3 Nicholas Brackett	\$57,176 (320)
	4 Shaun Deeb	\$43,322 (240)
\$400 NLH Mar. 14-17 \$350,000 GTD Entries: 2,793 Prizepool: \$921,690	5 Andrew Ashcroft	\$33,152 (200)
	6 Alexander Kierpiec	\$25,625 (160)
	7 Rudolph Dirubbo	\$20,008 (120)
	8 Brandon Congdon	\$15,784 (80)
	9 Jared Bouchard	\$12,580 (40)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Tampa Poker Classic	1 Thomas Robertson	\$59,500 (384)
	2 Ryan Hogan	\$39,730 (320)
Seminole Hard Rock Tampa, FL	3 Mario Valbuena	\$29,370 (256)
	4 Ray Mancini	\$21,930 (192)
	5 Randy Levin	\$16,540 (160)
\$400 NLH Mar. 13-17 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 1,082 Prizepool: \$357,060	6 Eric Tarikas	\$12,610 (128)
	7 Parminderjit Mehmi	\$9,720 (96)
	8 Phillip Krnyaich	\$7,560 (64)
	9 Ross Corless	\$5,950 (32)



© MSPT

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
MSPT Riverside Casino Riverside, IA	1 Jake Wilding	\$133,320 (840)
	2 George Dietz	\$81,308 (700)
	3 Richard Alsop	\$60,482 (560)
	4 Loren Rice	\$44,873 (420)
\$1,110 NLH Mar. 14-17 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 672 Prizepool: \$650,340	5 Joshua Reichard	\$33,818 (350)
	6 Mark Fink	\$25,363 (280)
	7 Steve Dill	\$19,510 (210)
	8 Ian Nelson	\$15,608 (140)
	9 Kevin Berthelsen	\$11,706 (70)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Destination RunGood	1 Pablo Valdivieso	\$67,805 (365)
	2 Nikhil Sunku	\$39,690 (304)
bestbet Jacksonville, FL	3 James Leonard	\$24,075 (243)
	4 Daniel Zuheir	\$15,010 (182)
	5 Charles Campos	\$10,330 (152)
\$400 NLH Mar. 14-17 \$100,000 GTD Entries: 961 Prizepool: \$312,325	6 Keaton Lamb	\$8,765 (122)
	7 Ondrei Ronhaar	\$7,510 (91)
	8 Charles Clement	\$6,270 (61)
	9 Dee Oakes	\$5,330 (30)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
EUREKA	1 Fabian Bartuschek	\$63,656 (264)
	2 Vlado Banicevic	\$43,328 (220)
Kings Casino Rozvadov, Czech Republic	3 Alf Oennestam	\$28,613 (176)
	4 Lukasz Golczyk	\$23,599 (132)
	5 Nisad Muratovic	\$18,955 (110)
€2,200 NLH Mar. 17-18 Entries: 128 Prizepool: \$265,088	6 Dorian Melchers	\$14,846 (88)
	7 Jakub Koleckar	\$11,134 (66)
	8 Patrik Jaros	\$8,219 (44)
	9 Abdelhakim Zoufri	\$6,360 (22)



WSOP CIRCUIT MONEY LIST

Rank	Player	Tour Earnings
1	Maurice Hawkins	\$2,499,049
2	Daniel Lowery	\$1,804,905
3	Kyle Cartwright	\$1,572,466
4	Chris Ferguson	\$1,362,090
5	Brad Albrinck	\$1,310,817
6	Joshua Reichard	\$1,228,557
7	Roland Israelashvili	\$1,147,142
8	Nick Pupillo	\$1,143,901
9	Ryan Jones	\$1,132,363
10	Ari Engel	\$1,081,518

Recent *World Series of Poker Circuit Horseshoe Hammond* main event champion **Soheb Porbanderwala** now has more than \$955,000 in recorded *WSOPC* cashes, which leaves him just a bit shy of making the top 10 on the tour's all-time earnings list. (Read more about his victory on page 34.)

The only player with multiple millions in *WSOPC* cashes is 15-time ring winner **Maurice Hawkins**. The former title leader for the tour retains the top spot on this leaderboard thanks to his nearly \$2.5 million in scores accrued across 148 in-the-money finishes in ring events. While he is no longer the tour's title leader, thanks to Ari Engel's recent spree that has increased his ring count to a record 17, Hawkins is still tied for second on that list with fellow 15-time winners **Daniel Lowery** and Joshua Reichard.

Hawkins has recorded five six-figure scores on the tour, with his largest being a \$279,722 payday earned as the champion of the 2016 Harrah's Cherokee main event. In late February he made the same final table yet again, this time

finishing third for another \$178,870.

Although he leads the ring chase, Engel just cracked the top 10 list for earnings with nearly \$1.1 million.

As for Lowery, he is the tour's second-highest-earning player ever with more than \$1.8 million in career cashes. Like Hawkins, Lowery's top score came in a *WSOPC* main event win. He took home \$258,784 as the 2017 *WSOPC Choctaw* champion, just one of five six-figure scores he has secured in ring events. His 155 total tour cashes are the sixth-most of any player.

Kyle Cartwright rounds out the top three. The nine-time ring winner has accrued nearly \$1.6 million across 65 *Circuit* cashes.

Six-time bracelet winner and three-time ring winner Chris Ferguson still sits in fourth place with almost \$1.4 million in cashes, despite the fact that he only has one in-the-money finish (a \$2,947 min-cash) since 2008. ♠

Stats via WSOP

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As of
3/19/2024

2024 Card Player Player of the Year

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Rank	Player	Points	Titles	Final Tables	Earnings
1	Punnat Punsri	3,409	2	10	\$2,635,836
2	Michael Watson	3,036	2	8	\$3,550,508
3	David Coleman	3,006	3	7	\$1,326,789
4	Roman Hrabec	2,955	1	4	\$5,084,866
5	Jesse Lonis	2,799	1	8	\$1,191,955
6	Adrian Mateos	2,790	1	5	\$2,067,920
7	Sergio Aido	2,590	0	2	\$2,590,804
8	Daniel Dvoress	2,548	2	7	\$1,814,419
9	Elton Tsang	2,400	1	2	\$6,315,000
10	Biao Ding	2,324	1	5	\$4,238,954
11	David Peters	2,304	2	5	\$1,350,325
12	Dimitar Danchev	2,280	2	3	\$1,230,403
13	Stephen Chidwick	2,168	1	9	\$1,321,167
14	Barny Boatman	2,160	1	1	\$1,390,824
15	Oliver Weis	2,100	1	1	\$1,047,816
16	Jean Noel Thorel	2,060	0	3	\$3,250,678
17	Seth Davies	1,953	0	6	\$1,023,150
18	Alex Foxen	1,945	1	8	\$994,075
19	Sirzat Hissou	1,889	0	4	\$1,182,452
20	Spencer Champlin	1,816	0	4	\$306,738
21	David Kaufmann	1,800	0	1	\$869,130
22	Dan Smith	1,755	1	3	\$1,359,000
23	Luca Marki	1,750	0	1	\$655,290
24	Blaz Zerjav	1,700	1	2	\$471,106
25	Alexander Tkatschew	1,680	0	2	\$1,128,090
25	Alexander Queen	1,680	1	1	\$613,063
25	Mario Mosbock	1,680	1	1	\$1,191,196
28	Seth Gottlieb	1,668	0	2	\$952,000
29	Daniel Negreanu	1,660	1	7	\$609,750
30	Raminder Singh	1,657	1	5	\$499,034

WPT AMBASSADOR XUAN LIU ON HIGH-STAKES CASH GAMES

By Craig Tapscott



Xuan Liu was born in Toronto, Canada, and attended the University of Waterloo as a Chartered Financial Analysis major. The popular university has a reputation for being a robust venue for campus poker games, and over the years has produced a number of poker champions. It was there that Liu built her poker prowess in local casinos, home games, and various online sites.

Liu exploded onto the professional tournament scene in 2011 when she finished third for \$524,705 at the *PokerStars EPT San Remo* event. A few months later, she padded her roll with \$600,000, taking fourth place at the *PokerStars Caribbean Adventure* main event. She eventually became a *World Poker Tour* champion, taking down the 2016 CAD\$2,500 *Fallsview Poker Classic* for \$232,114. Liu has also scored wins on the *Italian Poker Tour* and *Asia Pacific Poker Tour*.

Over the last few years, she has been a regular on many popular live-stream cash games, including Hustler Casino Live, Bally Live, and Poker at the Lodge, as well as a fun battle with Doyle Brunson on PokerGO's *High Stakes Poker*.

Liu sat down with *Card Player* to discuss playing cash games, her role as an ambassador for the *World Poker Tour*, and becoming the first player to play poker in all of Canada's 10 provinces.

Craig Tapscott: You have recently shared some of your struggles with high-stakes cash on social media. Can you talk about the obstacles you've had to overcome to move up in stakes?

Xuan Liu: It felt like an entirely different game and situation almost every time I played. All the players knew me, and I didn't know most of my opponents during these games. It was rough.

CT: What was one of the aspects of the games that was tough for you?

XL: I would say when the stand-up game was introduced into the games. I enjoy that game on a meta-level. However, almost every significant pot that I lost last year was due to some stand-up game factor.

(Editor's note: The stand-up game, or nit game, requires a bounty to be paid to every player at the table by the last player to win a pot. When players are trying to avoid losing the stand-up game, ranges tend to be much wider and bigger pots will usually develop.)

XL: In the beginning, I was probably over-adjusting to it a little too much. The game puts you into the most egregious situations, and you consistently face ridiculously tough decisions. Some of those hands are chronicled on the streams, and some of them are not. But I think I'm much more comfortable in that format now.

CT: What advice would you give to first timers playing the stand-up game?

XL: It's tough to give generic advice for this game. The game is good for the professionals at the table because it forces everybody to think on their feet. But it's also bad for the pros because you're playing in a game where players tend to be more passive-tight. It forces them to play out of their



comfort zone and bumps up the variance for everyone. But obviously, that's good for the rich, casual players.

My advice would be that after a couple of rounds, you will get a good sense of which players are adjusting early in the game and which players are not. That dynamic will allow an excellent player to play a super-exploitive style.

It's mostly about having good fundamentals and doing fast calculations on your feet. Then, quite frankly, if the penalty isn't that high, it's often best to just put your ego aside and eat the penalty much of the time. Otherwise, you're burning chips just trying not to lose.

CT: When you sit down with notoriously wild recreational players, such as Nik Airball at Hustler or Tesla at The Lodge, how do you adjust to their style of play?

XL: Tesla was like a curveball in the Lodge game for everyone at the table. But I knew what type of player he was after the first full day playing with him. Playing with these types of players at high stakes is always a privilege.

The Tesla situation was unique because he gave me more information after the stream ended. He told me he was a big fan and had watched all my streamed footage. He wanted to get into big pots with me, and it didn't matter to him what the result was. If I had known that I would have played differently against him.

There was a big hand when I had aces against Tesla, and I made a super-exploitable fold. I definitely had good odds to call with my aces, but I was facing a double check-raise, which is a very underutilized move. It definitely got into my head.

CT: Why do you think he played that hand the way he did?

XL: I believe he was trying to build up the pot so he wouldn't have any further decisions for himself because his hand was strong enough. Honestly, I didn't even think he could be on that level.

Aside from that, you've got to keep the game fun and the recreational players happy. I don't mind doing that at all. I have fun in these games. Sure, it sucks sometimes when I lose, whether it's running bad or over-adjusting a little bit to these types of players, but I certainly enjoy the challenge.

CT: Have you walked away from a full schedule of tournament play?

XL: I don't play the tour as much as I used to. Last year, I participated in several *WPT* events and a handful of *WSOP* events. I'm not sure if this year will be different. There are always going to be flagship events that I look forward to playing in, such as the *WPT World Championship*.

CT: You've always championed bringing more women into the game. We worked together once on a project with an organization called Poker Power.

XL: I love Poker Power's mission to teach a million women poker. Their team of ladies will always have a special place in my heart. It's all about empowering women to step outside their comfort zone. That message rings true for me.

I feel like there's this space in my life where I want to keep encouraging women to play the game. I've been brainstorming about my next move in that arena lately. I'm sure I will come forward with some content ideas soon.

CT: What's your best advice for women just getting into poker?

XL: Don't be afraid to look silly, even just sitting down at a live game. It is a very courageous thing to do. You should give yourself props for trying anything new. And don't forget to learn from your mistakes.

Secondly, in poker, we know aggression and competition are good. Women are often taught early on that it's not nice to be so cutthroat and aggressive about certain things. I say there's a way you can do it with class.

You don't have to be ruthless at the table. You can do it



without embarrassing your opponents and by giving them dignity. The point is you want everyone to have a good time. It doesn't mean that you're a terrible person if you want to take your opponent's chips.

CT: Do women have any edge at the poker table?

XL: There are advantages and disadvantages as a woman at the table. If you're a little awkward and shy like me, pay attention to what the other players are doing. If someone's trying to manipulate you or soft play you to get your attention, etc., focusing on poker fundamentals and improving at the game is best. That's a better approach than thinking, 'I'll wear a lower-cut top today and be a little flirtier.'

Often, you never know who you'll get at the poker tables. But having a solid foundation within your game will help you against any opponent. Trying to exploit men with an aspect of your feminine energy will only work towards a particular kind of man. That approach will probably not be the best use of your time.

But that's the beauty of feminism, right? It's giving a woman the right to choose whichever path they want to lean in with. There's no right or wrong answer.

CT: What tools do you use when you return to the lab to study the game or previous sessions? Do you speak with friends who are great players or jump into a software tool like GTO Wizard, etc.?

XL: I think all those tools are very indispensable. You can't only use one and not the other. Because I'm an introvert, I tend to fiddle with the tools more on my own. I do a lot of self-studying, but I also have multiple coaches.

With the *WSOP* coming up soon, I'll kick my study habits into hyperdrive. I'll tinker with issues I may have here and there. Regarding the high-stakes games I've been playing lately, they're an entirely different approach than tournaments. So, there's never not enough studying to be done, but I'm making more of an effort.

Recently, I challenged myself to study for at least 45

minutes every day. That's helped a lot. I think having a wide variety of people you can work with who approach the game differently is also helpful. Having a GTO bot coach in one corner and a live-oriented coach in the other is great.

CT: Let's talk about your relationship with the *World Poker Tour* and your recent bankroll challenge across the country.

XL: Working with *WPT* and *WPT Global* is a career highlight for me. They are the most reputable brand in the industry. I feel incredibly blessed to work with the live team as well as the online team.

I was pretty burnt out from playing high-stakes poker and was recently leaning towards creating fun content on my YouTube channel. I had the idea to travel around Canada. I wanted to be the first to play poker in every province and territory.

CT: That sounds fun, except for the winter, snow, and cold part.

XL: (laughs) It was. I liked the idea. So, I pitched it to my boss at the *WPT*, [and he wanted to spice it up,] so we changed it to a bankroll challenge. [The idea was] I had to pay for all my expenses with my winnings, starting with only \$2,000.

I had previously thought I would have a budget to travel for hotels and food. That wasn't the case, so this whole challenge was another level of gamification and probably the hardest thing I've ever done.

My expenses had to come from profits I made on the road. I played in casinos and home games all across Canada. I met so many amazing people along the way, and I loved it.

Canada has a very special place in my heart. I hadn't seen all of the country, and now I have. I hope to do more things like that with *WPT Global* in the future, and I'm looking forward to what I have planned for the coming year.

Find Xuan Liu on Twitter/X and Instagram @xxl23 or catch her YouTube channel @XuanLiu. ♠

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GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO BLUFF

By Jonathan Little

During last summer in a \$1,000 buy-in *WSOP* event, we were somewhat early on in day 1 playing 200-400 with a 400 big blind ante with 30,000 effective stacks.

A player who just got moved to my table raised to 1,000 from first position. I called in third position with A♦ 3♦. A tight, aggressive kid called in the lojack and everyone else folded.

It is important to realize that most players who raise from first position tend to have an incredibly strong range (big pairs and strong big cards). However, at the *WSOP*, I tend to be a bit less cautious against early position raisers because many amateurs do not thoroughly understand pre-flop hand values.

The flop came A♣ J♣ 9♥, giving me top pair. The initial raiser bet 1,200 into the 4,000 pot.

This is a situation where many players raise with their top pair to “find out where they stand,” but that is a horrible play.

A much better play is to call, forcing the initial raiser to stay in the pot with all of the hands I beat, such as K-K, Q-Q, K-J, and a few draws. This will allow me to extract additional value on the later betting rounds. Also, if I raise the flop, I give my opponent the opportunity to bluff me off my hand, which would be a disaster.

I called and the lojack folded. The turn was the 4♥. My opponent checked.

When my opponent checks the turn, he will often have K-K, Q-Q, middle pair, or an unpaired hand. I assumed he would continue betting with an ace or a draw (although that may be incorrect). This means that he is probably drawing quite thin.

If I make any sort of substantial bet, he will fold most of his hands that are drawing thin, meaning that when I bet and get called, I will usually be in rough shape. When this situation occurs, the best play is to check behind, opting instead to make a value bet on the river if your opponent checks to you one last time. You will find many players are much more prone to call one reasonably-sized river bet compared to a turn bet plus a river bet.

I checked behind. The river was the A♥, giving me trips and completing the backdoor flush draw. My opponent bet 4,000 into the 6,400 pot.

Calling is the only play that makes sense even though trips are normally a strong hand. Notice that if I raise, my opponent will only call with trips or better. Since he initially raised from early position, if he has trips, it is definitely with a stronger kicker. Although I think I often have the best hand when my opponent bets the river, if I raise and get called, I will usually have the worst hand.

I made the easy call. Fortunately, my opponent turned up K-Q for a total bluff and I won a nice pot.

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2024 Triton Super High Roller Series Jeju
\$50,000 No-Limit Hold'em Seven Max



Punnat Punsri
1,700,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 59%
After Flop: 37%
After Turn: 59%



Henrik Hecklen
2,150,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 40%
After Flop: 62%
After Turn: 41%

PREFLOP

With 38 players remaining, a six-handed table, and blinds of 10,000-25,000 with a big blind ante of 25,000, Punnat Punsri raised to 60,000 from the hijack. Henrik Hecklen called from the big blind.



Hecklen checked, and Punsri bet 105,000. Hecklen called.



Hecklen checked again, and Punsri bet 300,000. Hecklen called.



Hecklen bet 100,000, and Punsri folded.

COMMENTARY:

The *Triton Super High Roller Series Jeju* festival will get a full recap in our next issue, but we can report that the record-breaking series has already made a huge impact on the *Card Player* POY standings. One of the key events from the early part of the festival was the \$50,000 high roller. With 190 entries, the tournament paid out a whopping \$9.5 million to the top 31 finishers. With the \$84,000 money bubble still looming, two-time *Triton* champion Henrik Hecklen squared off against fellow *Triton* winner Punnat Punsri, who raised from the hijack with K-Q as the second-largest stack at the table. Hecklen, who was the only player who had Punsri covered, defended his big blind with 9-8 suited. This stack dynamic may have guided Hecklen's check-call approach after improving to a gutshot straight flush draw, as he might not have wanted to balloon the pot against the other largest stack from out of position. Punsri had continuation bet without any immediate draw on the flop, but picked up a gutshot to Broadway on the turn. He opted to bet just more than 82 percent pot as a semi-bluff. Hecklen again check-called and the river brought a non-diamond deuce. Hecklen was left with nine high and the choice between waiving the white flag and committing a big chunk of his stack to a bluff. He instead landed on a third option, made a bluff that looks like a blocker bet. He fired 100,000 into 965,000. While this offered much better odds for Punsri to bluff catch, it also would cost Hecklen a much smaller portion of his stack when picked off. In this instance, though, Punsri decided against looking his opponent up with king high and Hecklen was able to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. He showed the bluff as he dragged the pot, but ended up bubbling the tournament a short while later when his pocket kings were outrun by the A-K of none other than Punsri.

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

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- Video Classes
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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.

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SIX WAYS TO PLAY BETTER AGAINST THREE-BETS FROM OUT OF POSITION

By Alex Fitzgerald

Flattening a three-bet from out of position is one of the most awkward ways to play a hand. It doesn't feel good to act first on all of the streets in an inflated pot.

Let's discuss six ways you can navigate these precarious situations easier. Note: For all of this advice, we are assuming you are heads-up versus one three-bettor who is in position. You have just called the three-bet out of position. You have not four-bet.

1. Don't Get Overcommitted

When someone three-bets you, they generally have a hand.

I have done thousands of private poker lessons over the last decade. I can tell you it's super difficult to get most people to three-bet enough. I'm not sure why they won't three-bet. Perhaps they just want to see the flop? Perhaps they feel ridiculous if they three-bet and then get four-bet off their hand? Maybe that makes them think, "If I had just called, I could have seen the flop for cheap!"

I couldn't tell you why, but most people struggle to three-bet bluff enough. For this reason, you don't have to overcommit in many of these pots. If your opponent has not been active all day and suddenly they start gunning for you, then what most likely happened is they just picked up a hand. You don't need to play a big pot with them out of position.

2. Are They Even Capable Of Triple Barrel Bluffing?

If you've never seen your opponent get caught bluffing on the river, then it is unlikely that they are capable of triple barrel bluffing.

No one pitches a perfect game. Even great triple barrel bluffs get caught sometimes.

It's easy for someone to three-bet preflop. That's cheap. It's easy for someone to fire on the flop. That's not much more expensive.

A triple barrel bluff is massive. It's hard to teach people how to bluff all their chips off. Most people don't like how uncomfortable that play makes them feel.

If you've never seen your three-betting opponent get out of line, don't give them credit for a tremendous bluff without evidence. They likely just picked up a hand. Don't pay them off if they end up firing down.

3. Did They Check Back On A Coordinated Board?

Let's say you open and your opponent three-bets you.

You call out of position.

The flop comes with flush draws and straight draws. You check and your opponent checks back.

They likely would have bet there with a set, two pair, or an overpair. They would have bet to simultaneously protect their hand and get value from it.

Additionally, they'd often fire if they flopped a draw, because they'd be fine with ending the pot right then. Their draw isn't a made hand, so winning a pot outright is never a bad outcome.

When they check back, their most likely hands are decent high cards and pairs. You can use this information to bluff them more on later streets.

What cards does that range not want to see? Can you overbet on some of these cards? Experiment. You'll like the results.

4. Trap More When You Flop A Good Hand

Let's say you do authentically have a maniac to your left. You've seen this person get caught bluffing before in large pots.

You open A-10 offsuit. The maniac three-bets you. You call. The board comes A♥ 10♥ 5♠. You check. The maniac fires.

Don't raise here. The maniac assumes you will raise with your sets and two pairs. When you just call on that board, they will think to themselves, "Hmmm. I think I like this situation. My opponent would have four-bet A-A and A-K preflop. However, those hands are still in my range. I also believe they would have check-raised their two pairs and sets for protection and to get value from their hand, so I can rule out A-10, A-5, 10-10, and 5-5 here. I believe this player is capped at one mediocre top pair. I bet I can get them to fold that by the river."

Most maniacs depend on you playing your best hands fast. They know most people will check-raise their sets and two pairs because they're terrified of having to call huge bets on later streets versus an aggressive opponent, especially if a lot of the time the turn or river will have scare cards.

However, if your opponent is going to bluff with way too many hands, you can exploit them by trapping them with your best combinations.

Give them the greenlight. Watch them bomb their way through it. Call down.

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5. Check-Raise Prolific Three-Bettors

This play in my experience works against guys at low stakes well.

In low-stakes games, you'll often play against players who have read a few poker books, but they're still trying to put all the pieces together. They know they're supposed to be three-betting more in position, but they're going overboard with the idea. They're three-betting too many hands, which means they're going to miss a number of flops.

Here's a great check-raise you can use against them.

Let's say you open some Broadways without an ace in your hand. You get three-bet by the prolific three-bettor. You call. The board comes with low cards and a flush draw like 6♠ 3♣ 2♦ or 7♦ 5♦ 3♣. You check.

Your opponent fires. You then check-raise the size of the pot with your K-Q or J-10.

This play works a large percentage of the time, because your opponent didn't likely three-bet their low cards. This board probably missed them.

Additionally, you could be playing fast with a set or a draw. Many people would check-raise those hands on this board.

Finally, if you do get called, you can still hit your overcard on the turn and start betting for value. Your opponent likely didn't three-bet 10-3 offsuit or Q-6 offsuit, so those overcard outs are often good. If you turned an ace, however, your opponent likely would have made a number of two pairs, because A-x hands are popular for some players to three-bet raise preflop.

6. Check-Raise Overpairs Versus Regulars

One final play you can use in these spots involves

check-raising overpairs versus aggressive regulars.

Let's say you have pocket aces. You raise. The loose-aggressive regular three-bets you to your left.

Instead of four-betting and allowing him to fold all of his bluffs, you instead just call.

The board comes something innocuous like 9-3-2 rainbow or 10-4-5 rainbow. You check. They fire.

If you check-raise a small amount on these boards, your thinking opponents will be confused. "Wouldn't he just call with a set? There's no real draw to be worried about. He knows I'm going to keep firing if he just calls."

Your check-raise looks like a recreational player who got pissed off and isn't thinking about what they're representing. Because of this, many of your opponents will flat your check-raise on the flop to see what you do on the turn.

This is your opportunity to check on the turn like you're giving up with your haphazard bluff. Let them bluff at you again in an inflated pot. Call down. ♠



Alexander Fitzgerald is a professional poker player and bestselling author who currently lives in Denver, Colorado. He is a WPT and EPT final tablist. He has WCOOP and SCOOP wins online. His most recent win was the \$250,000 Guaranteed on America's Cardroom.

He currently enjoys blasting bums away in Ignition tournaments while he listens to death metal. Free training packages of his are provided to new newsletter subscribers who sign up for free at www.pokerheadrush.com

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

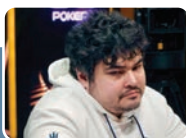
2024 Triton Super High Roller Series Jeju
\$50,000 No-Limit Hold'em Seven Max



Ilya Nikiforov
1,920,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 64%
After Flop: 66%
After Turn: 82%



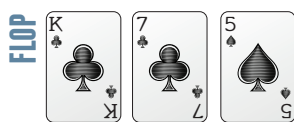
Alex Wice
2,300,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 35%
After Flop: 34%
After Turn: 18%

PREFLOP

With 23 players remaining, a five-handed table, and blinds of 30,000-60,000 with a big blind ante of 60,000, Ilya Nikiforov raised to 120,000 from the cutoff. Alex Wice called from the big blind.



Wice checked, and Nikiforov bet 180,000. Wice called.



Both players checked.



Wice bet 330,000, and Nikiforov folded.

COMMENTARY:

Alex Wice was once a regular in the tournament streets, but has spent more time making moves as an investor in recent years. With his last live cash made over a decade ago, Wice showed up to this Triton stop in South Korea and proved that he was still comfortable mixing it up with the top players in the game. This hand saw him defend his big blind with 8-6 facing a cutoff raise from Ilya Nikiforov. Wice flopped an open-ended straight draw and check-called Nikiforov's continuation bet. Nikiforov, who hit top pair with a ten kicker on the flop, opted to slow down after the turn brought the 3♥. He responded to Wice's second check with a check back, perhaps deciding that his holding was only worthy of going for two streets of value. The river brought the 2♣, completing the front-door flush draw. Wice had missed his own draw to a straight but opted to represent the other obvious draw. He fired 330,000 into the pot of 690,000, or roughly 44 percent pot. As the big blind defender, Wice could have plenty of two-pair plus holdings on this suited and connected runout composed of mostly medium and low cards. Nikiforov opted to fold his top pair, middling kicker to preserve his remaining stack of nearly 30 big blinds. Wice went on to finish 18th for \$112,000, while Nikiforov took home \$126,000 for his 16th-place showing. This was the third-largest score yet for Nikiforov, who now has seven figures in recorded tournament earnings to his name after this deep run.

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

GT-NO: Game Theory Optimal 101 and 201

By David Sklansky

Although this column will usually focus on tactics that are different than GTO (when you are playing mediocre or bad opponents), there is no denying that it is a powerful tool when you are facing competent opponents who don't usually make major mistakes.

Likewise, it is a powerful tool for THEM when they are against YOU, especially in heads-up pots. Which is why much of my writing in my new book, and elsewhere, talks about manipulating your opponent away from tactics close to GTO that they are using wittingly or unwittingly.

But before continuing on this path in future columns, I think I ought to go into more detail about certain GTO concepts and how they turn into specific techniques. I am talking about situations where the bettor can be assumed to have either an almost certain winner or an almost certain loser.

Nowadays they call this being "polarized." The guy is either bluffing or you definitely have him beat. When this is most likely the situation, there is a specific GTO strategy as to how often to bluff and how often to call.

When we are talking about the last round of betting, the GTO strategy is well known and easy to calculate. It's GTO 101. First-year stuff. But not all readers may be familiar with it so I will explain it as succinctly as I can.



(Side note: When the polarized situation has apparently arisen with more than one round of betting to be played, it's a bit more complicated, but still pretty easy to calculate with a pencil and paper. However, I am not so sure that most of

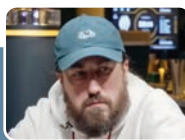
TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2024 Triton Super High Roller Series Jeju
\$50,000 No-Limit Hold'em Seven Max



Ren Lin
3,500,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 88%
After Flop: 80%
After Turn: 89%



Steve O'Dwyer
3,200,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 12%
After Flop: 20%
After Turn: 11%



PREFLOP

With eight players remaining and blinds of 75,000-150,000 with a big blind ante of 150,000, Ren Lin raised to 300,000 from under the gun. Steve O'Dwyer called from the big blind.

FLOP



O'Dwyer checked, and Lin bet 300,000. O'Dwyer called.

TURN



O'Dwyer checked again, and Lin bet 1,000,000. O'Dwyer called.

RIVER



O'Dwyer checked for a third time, and Lin moved all-in. O'Dwyer called.

COMMENTARY:

Steve O'Dwyer and Ren Lin were both among the 30 players who cashed for more than \$5 million in POY earnings last year, with \$5,465,716 for O'Dwyer and \$5,922,976 for Lin. In this hand, the two squared off at the final table of this \$50,000 buy-in event. Lin picked up the best starting hand in hold'em and min-raised as the first to act preflop. O'Dwyer defended his big blind with K-Q and, unfortunately for him, picked up top pair of kings on the flop. He checked and Lin made a continuation bet of two big blinds with his overpair. O'Dwyer made the call and the turn brought an apparent blank. O'Dwyer checked again and Lin sized up to just over 70 percent pot. His fast-playing of his aces might have been targeted at extracting the maximum from just the type of holding O'Dwyer held in this instance, which was top pair with a solid kicker. O'Dwyer came along and the river brought the 5♣. After a third check from O'Dwyer, Lin stuck with the plan and moved all in, an effective shove of 1,600,000. "This would be a huge laydown," noted *Triton* commentator Brian Rast, a six-time bracelet winner and Poker Hall of Fame member. "This is basically the best hand you could conceive of folding." O'Dwyer made the call after about 90 seconds in the tank. He was shown the bad news and sent to the rail in eighth place. He took home \$248,000 for his efforts, increasing his lifetime earnings to more than \$41.4 million. He now sits in 14th place on poker's all-time money list. Lin finished fifth, locking up \$611,000 for his deep run. With a few more cashes during this series, his career earnings now sit at over \$11.2 million.

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POKER STRATEGY

the “new breed” know how to do this and may instead simply rely on their computers and solvers. In any case I am calling this situation GTO and will explain it in part 2.)

Of course, most poker situations are not simply “is he or isn’t he bluffing” which means that to stick to GTO you have to trust your computer. Trust it to come up with plays that can’t be exploited even if its strategy is known to the opponent. That would be GTO 301 and will be rarely discussed by me.

But not because it’s hard to figure out, but rather because you should rarely use it. It’s helpful to know it in order to get an idea how far your strategy deviates from it, but if you are in a game where it must be used often, you should probably change games or quit altogether.

When it is the last round of betting, and you are considering calling someone who is obviously either bluffing or betting a hand you can’t beat, GTO usually insists that you call with a frequency that exactly matches the odds THEY were getting on their bluffs. That frequency depends on how much the player bet.

If they bet the pot, they are getting even money and will break even on bluffs if you call exactly 50% of the time. If they know that you will flip a coin to decide whether to call, they are INDIFFERENT as to whether they should bluff or not.

Telling them your method of deciding won’t help. Not if the coin is fair. If it was instead 51% or 49% and they knew it, they would have a counter strategy that exploits this knowledge. If the bet was half the pot, it would be 2-1 odds on the bluff so you would have to call two-thirds of the time, perhaps calling whenever you get a 1, 2, 3, or 4 on the roll

of one dice.

There is an important exception though. If you think deviation from GTO is probably an improvement.

When it is you who is considering a bluff, you also look at the odds the opponent is getting just as they would, assuming you are both trying to play GTO. And again, the criteria is that you want to make them indifferent even if they know your strategy.

That means that if you bet the pot, you notice that they are getting 2-1 odds which means that your bluffs should be exactly half as frequent as your value bets (which we are assuming can’t lose.) If you bet half the pot, GTO wants the bluff to be one-third as frequent as the frequency of your unbeatable value bets, given he is getting 3-1.

Again, it may occur that the probability your hand is clearly better is high enough that when you add in the probability of a GTO bluff you go over 100%. Which would mean you always bet and they should always fold.

Next column, where I elaborate this concept of GTO in polarized situations with more than one round of betting, you will find that the existence of those future rounds makes the always fold strategy more common than you might think when facing the flop bet of a GTO expert. ♠



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

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2024 Triton Super High Roller Series Jeju
\$50,000 No-Limit Hold’em Seven Max



Punnat Punsri
5,700,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 34%
After Flop: 6%
After Turn: 18%



Phil Ivey
7,200,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 66%
After Flop: 93%
After Turn: 75%

PREFLOP

With 7 players remaining and blinds of 100,000-200,000 with a big blind ante of 200,000, Punnat Punsri raised to 675,000 from the small blind. Phil Ivey called from the big blind.



Punsri checked. Ivey bet 400,000.
Punsri called.



Punsri checked.
Ivey checked.



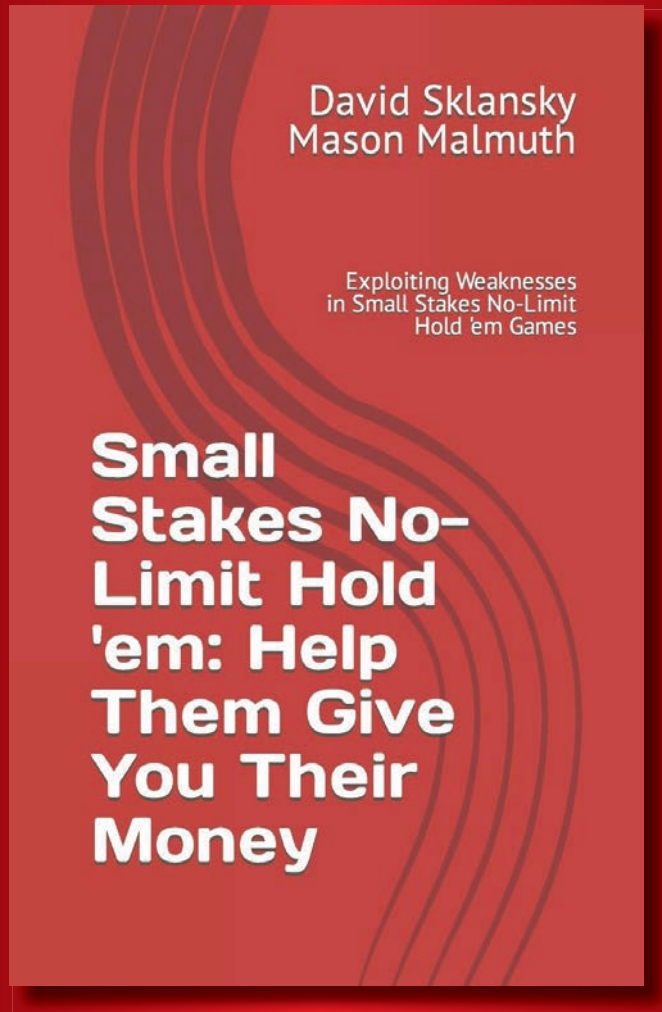
Punsri checked. Ivey bet 800,000.
Punsri check-raised to 3,400,000.
Ivey called.

COMMENTARY:

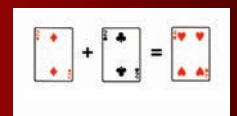
This hand helped position Punnat Punsri for his run to the title in this event. He kicked off the action raising with 10-3 suited when it folded to him in the small blind. Ten-time bracelet winner and five-time *Triton* champion Phil Ivey defended his big blind, calling the raise of nearly 3.4x with K-J. Ivey flopped the nuts, making an ace-high straight. He bet 400,000 into 1,550,000 when checked to. Punsri check-called with bottom pair of tens and backdoor flush possibilities. The J♥ on the turn improved him to a fully-fledged flush draw and he checked again. Ivey checked behind and the 9♥ on the end gave Punsri a flush. He checked a third time and Ivey seemingly decided to go for some more value with his ace-high straight. He bet 800,000 on the end, which amounted to just over third pot. Punsri unleashed a check-raise to 4.25x Ivey’s bet with the third nuts. Ivey was sent deep into the tank as he pondered calling off the majority of his remaining chips. Ivey eventually made the call after more than eight minutes of consideration and was shown the flush. He was left with fewer than 13 big blinds after the hand and was ultimately the next player to be knocked out. He cashed for \$339,000 to bring his lifetime earnings to \$42.4 million. He currently occupies the 12th-place spot on the all-time money list. Punsri was able to ride the momentum to victory in the end, hoisting his second *Triton* trophy as a result. The \$2,010,000 top prize grew the Thai player’s career total to nearly \$15.4 million.

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SCHEDULES

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APRIL	April 1-May 19	DeepStack Extravaganza II	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	April 3-23	WPT SHR Poker Showdown	Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino ■ Hollywood, FL
	April 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
	April 24-May 5	PGT Texas Poker Open	Champions Club Texas ■ Houston, TX
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 17-19	East Coast Poker Championships	Turning Stone Casino & Resort ■ Verona, NY
	May 20-July 31	DeepStack Championship Poker Series	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	May 27	Memorial Day Tournament	Ocean's 11 Casino ■ Oceanside, CA
	May 28-July 1	Grand Poker Series	Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	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

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SUNDAY

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

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MONDAY

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WEDNESDAY

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

FRIDAY

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

SUNDAY

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

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

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RESORTS WORLD - LAS VEGAS

WILDHORSE - PENDLETON
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THURSDAY
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FRIDAY
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SUNDAY
 1:00 p.m. NLH, \$70



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You are eight-handed playing in a \$1-\$3 no-limit hold'em cash game with a \$300 stack. It folds to you in the cutoff with $K\spadesuit 9\heartsuit$.

Question 1: Should you fold, call, raise to \$9, or raise to \$15?

Answer: Facing capable opponents, $K-9$ offsuit is a reasonable hand to fold. However, in low-stakes cash games populated by weak, recreational poker players, you want to play with a looser range than GTO recommends because your opponents will not three-bet often enough pre flop and they will make numerous post-flop mistakes. Raise, especially if you think the players yet to act will play poorly in a passive manner.

You raise to \$9 and both the button and big blind call. The flop comes $K\heartsuit J\clubsuit 3\diamonds$ and the big blind checks.

Question 2: Should you check, bet \$9, bet \$18, or bet \$27?

Answer: It is important to be careful whenever you play

multi-way pots! Holding top pair with a marginal kicker, you are best off checking and seeing how the button proceeds. Checking some strong hands like top pair with marginal kicker is a strong play that will make you more difficult to play against because your opponents will not know if you have top pair or a much weaker hand. Check to look to check-call if the button bets.

After you check, the button bets \$12 (43% pot), and the big blind folds.

Question 3: Should you fold, call, raise to \$36, or raise to \$50?

Answer: Top pair with a marginal kicker is a hand that loves to just call. You may be tempted to check-raise and apply pressure, but not only does this make your hand harder to play, but when you are crushed, you are torching your money. Call and see what develops on the turn.

You call and the turn is the $2\spadesuit$. You check and your opponent bets \$38 (73% pot).

Question 4: Should you fold, call, raise to \$92, or go all-in?

Answer: Just like the flop, check-call. Resist any urge to check-raise because there are few value hands you can get to fold.

You call and the river is the $K\clubsuit$.

Question 5: Should you check, bet \$30, bet \$90, or go all-in?

Answer: While it may be tempting to lead, it is not a good strategy. Considering what your opponent may have, their entire range incentivizes you to check and give them the opportunity to bet. If they have a worse king or a paired jack, they will bet for value, and if they missed their straight draw, they may bluff. You may end up calling off and being shown a better king, but it is better to check-call rather than bet and force your opponent's missed draws to fold.

You check and your opponent bets \$80 (62% pot).

Question 6: Should you fold, call, raise to \$160, or go all-in?

Answer: Although you may be beat, you cannot fold. Your opponent could make this same bet with a worse made hand or a busted draw, forcing you to call. Remember that by having trips you block your opponent from also having trips, so do not be scared to call it off.

Before you execute a raise, always consider the hands your opponent will call with. If you do not think your opponent will call with a paired jack, then there is no point in raising. Between calling and raising, calling rewards you if you have the better hand, while also protecting you from torching your stack. Call and see if you are ahead.

You call and your opponent mucks. While you will never know what they had, what you do know is you scooped a nice pot while minimizing the downside when you happened to be crushed! ♠

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