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*Alexandros Kolonias Discusses His Rise
To Tournament Poker's Highest Levels*

FORMER TENNIS PRO KEEPS RACKING UP MILLIONS IN CASHES

PLUS

**JOE MCKEEHEN WINS HIS
THIRD WORLD SERIES OF
POKER BRACELET**

**POKER LEGEND PHIL IVEY
SETTLES \$10.1 MILLION
LAWSUIT WITH BORGATA**

**FINAL TABLE
TAKEDOWN WITH
SHIVA DUDANI**



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22



14



16



Features

22

Alexandros Kolonias Discusses His Rise To Tournament Poker's Highest Levels
By Erik Fast

The Inside Straight

8

Poker News Recap

12

Player Of The Year Update

14

Poker Stories Podcast
With Kenny Hallaert
By Card Player News Team

16

Final Table Takedown: Shiva Dudani
Chicago-Based Poker Pro Breaks Down
Thought Process From Key Hands En
Route To His Second World Series Of
Poker Circuit Title
By Steve Schult

18

Table Talk: Chance Kornuth Reveals Start
Date For Upcoming High-Stakes PLO
Match Against Phil Galfond
By Erik Fast

Strategies, Analysis & Commentary

26

Let's Talk About Game Theory
By Greg Raymer

27

A Beginner's Lesson In Counting Outs
By Jonathan Little

29

Learning During the Pandemic: Part I
By Steve Zolotow

30

Is Phil Hellmuth's Ego Really Too Big... Or
Has He Become A Victim Of 'Brat' Hazing
By Houston Curtis

32

Deuce To Seven Triple Draw Lowball: Big
Blind Defense
By Kevin Haney

Also In this Issue

4

About Us

35

Tournament Schedules

38

Poker Leaderboards

Tournament Hand Matchups

11

Jeff Platt vs. Ian Steinman
vs. James Nadolski

18

Ian Steinman vs. Jeff Platt

27

Ian Steinman vs. Jeff Platt

29

Joon Kim vs. Eric Baldwin



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the INSIDE STRAIGHT

News, Reviews, and Interviews From Around the Poker World

POKER LEGEND PHIL IVEY SETTLES \$10.1 MILLION LAWSUIT WITH BORGATA

By Steve Schult

The Phil Ivey-Borgata baccarat saga finally concluded in July after more than a six-year legal battle.

According to court documents filed July 2 in the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, the two parties have come to an agreement on the \$10.1 million that the 10-time *World Series of Poker* bracelet winner owed the Atlantic City casino.

The filing stated that after an oral argument on Sept. 17, 2019, the court referred the parties to the court's mediation program where an agreement was reached. Predictably, the details were not disclosed.

The battle in the courtrooms stemmed from several epic high-stakes baccarat sessions in 2012. Ivey and his partner, Cheung Yin "Kelly" Sun, beat the Borgata out of \$9.6 million. After it was revealed that the duo was using a controversial technique called "edge sorting," the casino filed suit against Ivey and Sun.

The technique allowed the pair to spot manufacturing defects on the cards and gain an edge over the casino. Ivey and Sun used the same technique in the UK at London's Crockfords casino and won £7.8 million, but the casino wouldn't pay out the money. Ivey sued the casino and lost.

Borgata, on the other hand, paid Ivey and Sun and were forced to use the legal system to try and get the money back.



"Borgata sued for \$15.6 million two years after Ivey's massive win."

Borgata sued for \$15.6 million two years after Ivey's massive win. The total included hundreds of thousands of dollars in comps and the \$5.4 million the casino's legal team figured the casino would have beaten Ivey for if he had been playing straight up.

In 2016, the judge decided that Ivey would be forced to pay the casino \$10.1 million, after factoring the \$500,000 Ivey won playing craps after his baccarat session.

Unfortunately for Borgata, Ivey's bank accounts in New Jersey were completely empty and Atlantic City's highest-grossing casino was unable to seize the funds. A letter from Wells Fargo confirmed that Ivey had no money in his bank account. Borgata's legal team claimed that the money was transferred to a Mexican bank account.

In 2018, Borgata sought approval from the courts to cross state lines and go after Ivey's assets in Nevada. The court ruled in favor of Borgata in February 2019.

A few months later, at the 2019 *WSOP*, Ivey cashed four times for a total of \$133,398, including an eighth-place finish in the \$50,000 *Poker Players Championship* for \$124,410. Borgata seized it at the conclusion of the series.

With Borgata seizing Ivey's winnings, it looked like the days of Ivey playing American poker tournaments were over since he would basically be playing without any chance of being paid. But the conclusion of the saga gives him the option of playing all the major American events. Whenever they resume. ♠



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JOE MCKEEHEN WINS HIS THIRD WORLD SERIES OF POKER BRACELET

By Erik Fast

The first-ever *World Series of Poker Online* kicked off at the start of July. As of July 15, the inaugural internet-based running of the *WSOP* has seen 14 gold bracelets awarded. A total of 18,472 entries have been made so far in the series, which will span across two online sites and feature 85 gold bracelet events in total. A total of \$11,966,865 has been paid out during the first fortnight of *WSOP* action, with 71 events still yet to play.

The largest event of the early going was the \$3,200 no-limit hold'em high roller tournament. 2015 *WSOP* main event champion Joe McKeehen defeated a field of 469 entries to secure his third *WSOP* gold bracelet and the top prize of \$352,985, the biggest payday of the series thus far. In doing so McKeehen became just the 104th player in poker history to win three or more bracelets. His first *WSOP* victory came when he topped the 6,420-player field to win \$7,683,346 and the title of world champion. Two years later he secured his second piece of hardware in the \$10,000 limit hold'em championship, earning \$311,817 and bracelet number two.

This event attracted 368 unique players, who collectively re-entered a total of 128 times to create a final prize pool of \$1,507,840 by the time registration closed. The top 63 finishers made the money, with Chris 'camdi' Ferguson ultimately being knocked out on the stone bubble. With his elimination the remaining players all locked up at least a \$6,031 payday.

Among the notable players to make deep runs in this event were Daniel 'centrfieldr' Lupo (58th – \$6,031), Maria 'bluerat' Konnikova (56th – \$6,031), Ali 'sasukeuchiha' Imsirovic (52nd – \$6,484), Ryan 'protential' Laplante (29th – \$8,293), Yong Keun 'LUCKYSPEWY1' Kwon (23rd – \$9,650), Loren 'BabyJesus' Klein (18th – \$11,460), recent bracelet winner Ryan 'joeyisamush' Depaulo (16th – \$11,460), Blake 'CheetahGirl' Bohn (15th – \$14,023), Farid 'GatoVolador' Jattin (14th – \$14,023) and Shankar 'burgersssss' Pillai (10th – \$17,491).

2016 *WSOP* online bracelet winner Clayton 'nevarlucky' Maguire held the chip lead when the eight-handed final table was set, while McKeehen sat in third chip position. The first elimination of the day took place when David 'newjerz05' Jackson got all-in with K♦ Q♦, only to run into the A♠ A♦ of fellow short stack Lee 'SoccerDJ' Vlastaris. Jackson paired his king on the flop but was unable to improve any further and hit the rail in eighth place (\$28,951).

Nathan 'innate9' Russler was the next to fall. He got his last chips in preflop with A♦ 5♥. Vlastaris called with A♣ Q♣. Both players paired their ace, but Russler's inferior kicker resulted in his being knocked out in seventh place. He earned \$38,601 for his strong showing in this event.

Maguire came into the final table with the lead but fell toward the bottom of the pack during six-handed play. In his final hand he shoved for just under 13 big blinds from the small blind holding J♦ 3♦. Frank 'thewholefunk' Funaro called from the big blind with A♥ 7♦. Both players paired their lower card and Funaro's sevens were enough to send Maguire home as the sixth-place finisher with \$52,624.

Despite scoring two early knockouts at the final table,



2015 *WSOP* main event champion Joe McKeehen defeated a field of 469 entries to secure his third *WSOP* gold bracelet and the top prize of \$352,985, the biggest payday of the series thus far.

Vlastaris was the next to run out of chips. He called off his last 1.7 million from the big blind with J♥ 10♥ facing a small-blind shove from Funaro, who held A♣ 3♥. Funaro made nines and threes by the end, which was good enough to eliminate Vlastaris in fifth place (\$72,979).

Zhi Hong 'Jaydestar17' Huang's run in this event came to an end when he got all-in on a Q♠ 4♥ 3♣ flop holding 6♦ 4♦. He was called by Funaro, who held 10♦ 10♣. The 9♥ turn and Q♣ river kept the pocket tens ahead and Huang finished fourth, earning \$103,136.

Roland 'prngls12' Israelashvili was the next player to get involved in a big preflop confrontation. He shoved all-in for around 17.5 big blinds with A♥ 9♠ from the small blind. Funaro picked up 6♥ 6♣ in the big blind and made the call. The board ran out K♠ K♥ 2♣ 10♥ 3♠ and Israelashvili was knocked out in third place (\$148,975). This was his sixth cash and second final-table finish of the series.

Funaro took nearly a 3:1 chip lead over McKeehen going into heads-up play for the bracelet, but McKeehen found an early double up when both players flopped top pair on a seven-high board and all of the chips went in. McKeehen had the superior kicker and made two pair on the turn. The river didn't change anything and he doubled into the lead.

McKeehen was able to extend that advantage to a lead of roughly 3.5:1 by the time the final hand arose. He min-raised to 320,000 from the button with A♦ 9♥ and Funaro three-bet shoved all-in for 2,759,541 with 7♦ 6♦. McKeehen called and the K♠ 8♦ 4♥ 4♣ Q♣ runout secured him the pot and the title. Funaro earned \$219,089 as the runner-up finisher. ♠



Indiana Regulators Force Eldorado And Caesars To Sell Three Casinos

By Steve Schult

Gaming regulators in Indiana are forcing Eldorado Resorts and Caesars Entertainment to sell three properties if the two companies want approval for their pending \$17.3 billion merger.

The Indiana Gaming Commission made the announcement in July, citing concerns over “economic concentration” of the state’s casino market. Currently, the two companies own five of the state’s 13 casinos, which combine for upwards of 60 percent of the state’s casino tax revenue.

Eldorado owns Tropicana casino in Evansville, while Caesars is in control of Harrah’s Hoosier Park Racing & Casino, Horseshoe Hammond, Caesars Southern Indiana and Indiana Grand Racing & Casino.

The impact of this unprecedented transaction is greater upon Indiana than any other state,” the IGC said in a statement.

The IGC didn’t specify which three casinos needed to be sold, but they did specify that the new company could not reduce staff at the remaining casinos for the next three years. According to an *Associated Press* report, Eldorado CEO Thomas Reeg said that the Tropicana casino, Caesars Southern

Indiana and Horseshoe Hammond were the three likely casinos up for grabs.

The two Caesars properties are both regular stops on the *World Series of Poker Circuit*. With its proximity to Chicago, the Hammond property regularly draws some of the biggest fields the *WSOP Circuit* sees.

The move comes less than a week after Nevada regulators approved the deal as is. Last month, the United States Federal Trade Commission gave its stamp of approval as well. The FTC approved the deal after the two companies sold three casinos in Atlantic City, Lake Tahoe and Louisiana to Rhode Island-based Twin River Worldwide Holdings.

Approval from regulators in Indiana and New Jersey are a few of the last hurdles standing in the way of completing the deal.

Last summer, Eldorado sold three casinos in West Virginia and Missouri parting ways with a Louisiana property last January. Around the same time, Caesars sold a Reno casino as well to help reduce the new company’s economic footprint. ♠

COVID-19 PANDEMIC CAUSES MORE JOB LOSS IN CASINO INDUSTRY

By Steve Schult

Most of America’s casinos have reopened, albeit in a limited capacity, but the COVID-19 pandemic is still wreaking havoc on the gaming industry as thousands of layoffs were announced in several larger markets.

Casinos in Las Vegas, Louisiana and Mississippi announced in mid-July that nearly 3,000 casino workers will be laid off in the coming months. The majority of the layoffs came from properties owned by Penn National Gaming.

An undisclosed number of workers at Penn National’s M Resort and Tropicana Casino received notice that they would be out of work effective Aug. 15. The two casinos are the only Nevada properties owned by the gaming giant.

The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act requires businesses with at least 100 full-time employees to give advance notice of mass layoffs or a closing.

The other Las Vegas layoffs came from independently owned Las Vegas Strip casinos.

Sahara Las Vegas also laid off an undisclosed number of employees and Treasure Island let go of another 414 staff members, according to a *Las Vegas Review-Journal* report. A spokesman for Sahara told the daily newspaper that unclear future of the business, thanks to the pandemic, was the reason for the layoffs.

The trend is the same in the southeast as casinos on the Mississippi gulf coast have laid off 1,219 employees who were previously furloughed.

Boomtown Biloxi laid off 149 workers, IP Casino Resort Biloxi let go of 903 and Hollywood Casino in Bay St. Louis added another 167 to the total, according to the Biloxi Sun-Herald. Penn National Gaming owns the Boomtown Casino chain and stated in its WARN filing that all

of the layoffs were due to the public health crisis.

“These layoffs at Penn National Gaming are the unfortunate result of COVID-19 related business circumstances that were sudden, dramatic and beyond our control,” the company wrote in the WARN notice.

The most recent round of Louisiana casino layoffs come almost exclusively from Penn National properties.

Boomtown New Orleans, Margaritaville Resort Casino in Bossier City, Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel in St. Mary Parish and L’Auberge Casino locations in Baton Rouge and Lake Charles are laying off another 1,375 employees, according to a report from Lafayette’s *The Daily Advertiser*. Penn National owns four of the five casinos listed. Cypress Bayou Casino is owned by the Chitimacha tribe.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, nearly 3,000 Louisiana casino employees have lost their jobs. ♠

2020 GLOBAL GAMING EXPO EVENT IN LAS VEGAS HAS BEEN CANCELED

By Erik Fast

The American Gaming Association and their partner Reed Exhibitions officially announced the cancellation of the Global Gaming Expo. G2E has grown into the gaming industry's top global gaming industry event since it first was held in 2001. It has been a mainstay of the fall conventions in Las Vegas ever since, annually drawing nearly 30,000 attendees from around the globe.

This year's trade show was scheduled to run Oct. 5-8. While organizers have announced that no in-person G2E event will be held in 2020, they did reveal that there will be a series of virtual G2E events held throughout the remainder of the year.

The announcement indicated that event is scheduled to return to Las Vegas in 2021, with the plan being for the event to run from Oct. 4-7 at the Sands Expo and Convention Center.

"In light of continued uncertainty around a viable marketplace at a physical G2E show, global travel restrictions, and currently unknown guidance on large public gatherings this fall, we have come to the unfortunate conclusion that we simply cannot hold an in-person G2E this year," said AGA President and CEO Bill Miller. "Health and safety



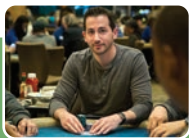
have always been our top priority and the uncertainty created by the ongoing pandemic makes this the prudent decision ahead of critical deadlines for exhibitors planning to participate."

"As the country works to reopen, the American gaming industry continues to adapt and provide the safest possible experience for our employees and customers while continuing to support the communities in which we operate. We look forward to the moment when we can convene together again with our colleagues from across the world and celebrate the resilience that our industry is known for," concluded Miller.

More information about the upcoming G2E virtual events in the works is expected to be released by the AGA in the coming weeks. ♠

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2020 World Series of Poker Online
\$800 No-Limit Hold'em Knockout Deepstack



Jeff Platt
1,734,321 chips

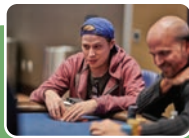
Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 19.0%
After Flop: 7.0%
After Turn: 2.0%



James Nadolski
1,520,684 chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: N/A
After Flop: N/A
After Turn: N/A



Ian Steinman
2,295,790 chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 80.0%
After Flop: 93.0%
After Turn: 98.0%



PREFLOP

With 19 players remaining and blinds of 30,000-60,000 and an ante of 7,500, Jeff Platt raised to 122,500 from early position. Ian Steinman called from the cutoff and James Nadolski called out of the big blind.



Nadolski checked. Platt bet 155,200. Steinman called. Nadolski folded.



Platt checked. Steinman bet 282,500. Platt called.



Platt bet 225,500. Steinman raised to 677,500. Platt called.

ANALYSIS

In this hand poker commentator and former NBA reporter Jeff Platt hit a one-outer on the river to win a massive pot against four-time *World Series of Poker Circuit* gold ring winner Ian Steinman, who had played pocket aces quite deceptively. The hand began with Platt raising from early position with his red sevens. Steinman elected to just call with pocket aces from the cutoff, perhaps hoping to induce a squeeze from James Nadolski in the big blind. Instead Nadolski just called and the three saw an eight-high, all-spade flop. Platt made a smallish continuation bet and Steinman, with the nut flush draw and the largest overpair, decided to just call. Nadolski got out of the way and the turn brought a blank. Platt pumped the brakes with a check. Steinman made a value bet of 282,500 into the pot of 760,400 and Platt called, likely figuring that Steinman could try to take control of the betting lead with a number of hands that included a single high spade. As it turns out, with Steinman having a larger pair and the flush draw, Platt could only win this pot at showdown by hitting his one and only out: the 7♣. As it turned out, that was precisely the card that appeared on the river. Platt elected to bet small, allowing room for Steinman to raise as a bluff with any missed flush draws he might have. Steinman did raise, making it 677,500 to go and Platt made the quick call. Platt was streaming his play in this event on Twitch and said of his decision to just call the raise, "There's no reason to three-bet over the top because then he's only calling with a flush." Platt took down the massive pot to climb into the chip lead.

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

2020 Card Player Player of the Year

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Place	Players	Points	Final Tables	Winnings
1	Vincent Wan	2,280	1	\$909,420
2	Farid Jattin	2,177	6	\$1,205,493
3	Anton Suarez	2,100	1	\$1,000,000
4	Cary Katz	2,095	8	\$2,420,543
5	Kahle Burns	1,956	6	\$2,923,988
6	Ngoc Hoang	1,900	1	\$909,420
7	Aaron Van Blarcum	1,896	8	\$1,854,522
8	Sam Greenwood	1,881	6	\$1,357,807
9	Tim Adams	1,857	6	\$5,904,777
10	Brian Altman	1,848	3	\$542,866
11	Michael Addamo	1,806	5	\$2,143,310
12	Pablo Silva	1,800	1	\$1,000,000
13	Christian Rudolph	1,750	1	\$620,000
14	James Romero	1,736	2	\$745,000
15	Erik Seidel	1,686	5	\$669,649
16	Eric Afriat	1,680	1	\$394,120
17	Alex Foxen	1,597	6	\$1,603,559
18	Nino Ullmann	1,540	2	\$370,609
19	Stephen Chidwick	1,537	6	\$1,043,973
20	Gareth Pepper	1,520	1	\$690,000

A Look At Players Making Waves On The Live Tournament Circuit

51 Kristen Bicknell - 51st Place (1,048 points)



Two-time *World Series of Poker* bracelet winner Kristen Bicknell earned a pair of scores in early March that propelled her up the 2020 *Card Player* Player of the Year race standings. The Canadian poker pro got the ball rolling with a victory in a \$2,140 buy-in six-max no-limit

hold'em event at the *L.A. Poker Classic* series. She defeated a field of 148 entries in that tournament to win \$71,970 and 288 POY points. Just two weeks later Bicknell navigated her way through a 290-entry field in the \$5,200 buy-in *Bay 101 Shooting Star* no-limit hold'em main event to make the final day in second chip position with 10 players remaining. A ten-way deal was ultimately made in this event which saw Bicknell awarded \$141,520 and 760 POY points as the second-place finisher. This was the 15th six-figure live tournament score of the 33-year-old's career. The points she earned in the event were enough to see her climb into 51st place in the overall POY rankings.

78 Matthias Eibinger - 78th Place (885 points)



Austrian poker pro Matthias Eibinger is one of 21 players to have cashed for seven figures or more in live poker tournaments so far in 2020. The 27-year-old from Graz has made three final tables already this year, accumulating \$1,251,538 in cashes along the way. Eibinger

kicked things off with a seventh-place showing in a \$25,000 AUD no-limit hold'em high roller at the *Australian Poker Open*. He earned \$40,538 and 105 points for that deep run. In March he made two final tables at the *partypoker MILLIONS Super High Roller Sochi* festival. He placed third in a \$25,000 buy-in for \$203,000 and 280 points. Just four days later he finished as the runner-up in a \$100,000 buy-in event, earning \$1,008,000 and 500 points after falling just short of the title. With 885 total points, Eibinger now sits in 78th place on the POY leaderboard.

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POKER STORIES PODCAST

With Kenny Hallaert

Poker Stories is a long-form audio podcast series that features casual interviews with some of the game's best players and personalities. Each episode highlights a well-known member of the poker world and dives deep into their favorite tales both on and off the felt.

To listen, visit www.cardplayer.com/poker-podcasts or download it directly to your device from any number of mobile apps, such as Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Google Play, or Spotify. Catch up on past episodes featuring notables such as Doyle Brunson, Daniel Negreanu, Justin Bonomo, Nick Schulman, Barry Greenstein, Michael Mizrachi, Bryn Kenney, Mike Sexton, Brian Rast, Chris Moneymaker, Maria Ho, Joe Cada, Freddy Deeb, and many more.



Age: 38

From: Hansbeke, Belgium

Live Tournament Earnings: \$4.1 Million

Online Tournament Earnings: \$6.5 Million

Top Live Tournament Scores

July 2016	WSOP \$10,000 Main Event	6th Place	\$1,464,258
Nov. 2017	WSOP Europe High Roller For One Drop	10th Place	\$345,303
June 2017	WSOP \$5,000 Six-Max	3rd Place	\$238,855
Jan. 2011	EPT Deauville Main Event	6th Place	\$210,962
June 2015	WSOP Colossus	5th Place	\$182,348

Kenny Hallaert is one of Belgium's top poker pros, having won more than \$4.2 million in live tournaments, along with another \$6.5 million online playing under the name 'SpaceyFCB.' The 38-year-old recently won his third *SCOOP* title online, and has four *World Series of Poker* final table appearances on his resume, along with four deep runs in the main event. In 2016, he finished sixth for nearly \$1.5 million.

Hallaert is currently no. 3 on Belgium's all-time money list, but despite his success, he never gave up his day job. He started his poker journey while working as an electrician, and then later took a marketing job at a local casino. He was tasked with bringing players to the property, and as a result helped to popularize live tournaments in Belgium. Eventually Hallaert took over duties as Tournament Director, and he has since worked *EPT* events for PokerStars, as well as tournaments for Unibet.

Highlights from this interview include working as an electrician, playing card games at the bar with mom, Dutch poker, how a football accident made him a better player, bringing tournaments to Belgium, his unusual path to tournament director, why he never gave up his day job, the mental game, Ivey the end boss, a brutal but important bad beat, burning a house down in Monte Carlo, the silver lining of a sixth-place finish, a lottery ticket in the *WSOP*, finishing the job he signed up for, bathroom stall gaps, double-cooked fries, factory work, the unbeatable Niklas Astedt, three-betting with industrial techno, and getting away with graffiti.

The Transcript Highlights

On The Brutal Bad Beat He Suffered In Monte Carlo

Julio Rodriguez: I want to talk about your success at the *World Series of Poker*, but first, I want to bring up something that I saw in person. I was in Monte Carlo in 2010... one of the worst trips I ever took in my life, they lost my luggage, and I ended up wearing an 'I Love Monte Carlo' t-shirt for a couple days... but, I believe you had a worse trip.

Kenny Hallaert: Yeah. I mean, talk about [bad] trips.

JR: I was covering this hand. It was the [*EPT Grand Final*] main event, and it was deep. I want to say it was the second-to-last day of the tournament. Even though it was at an outer table, the two chip leaders in the tournament were there....

KH: I can tell you that there were exactly 37 players left. (laughing) I do remember for sure.

Monte Carlo and me have a love/hate relationship. Back in 2009, I was playing in my first *EPT* there, I had managed to qualify online. The biggest buy-in I had played up to that point was €1k, but this was €10k with the big boys. I had a good day 1, and on day 2 I drew the same table as Daniel Negreanu, which was kind of a poker dream come true. We were a couple hours into the day and I managed to bust him. I have to say he was an 80-percent favorite, but I hit my two-outer or whatever it was. I win some other pots, and before I realize it, I was chip leader.

I had my eye on the €20k min-cash, which was huge for me at the time, especially as a satellite winner. But somewhere on day 3, I got aces in pre against pocket fours, he happens to hit his four. I was left with 20 big blinds, three away from the money. Two hands later, I get in jacks vs. kings, [eliminated on the bubble].

JR: Well, at least you can say you made the money the next year.

KH: (laughing) Well, and it helped that I also won a side event that year, so that [explains the love/hate relationship] with Monte Carlo. I was disappointed, but it was still a good trip overall. Over the next year, I played some more *EPTs*, and qualified a few times, buying in for a couple, but never got the main event cash. That changed in 2010 back at Monte Carlo.

I was happy to get the monkey off my back, and things went well once we got into the money. I managed to knock out a couple people and build my stack. There were 848 entries, unique entries at the time, and €1.7 million (\$2.2 million USD) up top. We were down to the final 37 players, and I was sitting there second in chips.

JR: I remember your table had all the chips.

KH: The chip leader (Matt Perrins) was also at the table. All of a sudden, I'm getting dealt aces. I remember the hand quite well. I opened from early position, middle position three-bet, and the chip leader in the cutoff four-bets. It gets folded around to me, and I decided to five-bet. The player [in the middle folded, and Perrins moved all-in].

He had kings, I had aces, and [even better], the guy who had folded in between us had A-K. So there was a king out, and we played this massive, five-times average pot. And the turn was a king. Of course, I was really gutted to get one-outed for a pot worth....

JR: I remember thinking that this guy could now go to the bathroom for two days and still make the final table.

KH: The pot was worth roughly... I calculated it afterwards, which I should not have done... €400k. So, basically, it's part of a nice house that just burns up right in front of you.

The eventual winner of the tournament, Nicholas Chouity, was the only other guy to have more chips in that whole tournament than the size of that pot. That's how insanely big that pot was, with 37 left.

JR: I remember writing that hand up.

KH: I was quite upset. I jumped out of my chair, threw my sunglasses to the other side of the room. Literally. Stormed outside.

But, looking back at my whole career. That was probably a very important pot where I learned a lot and gained a lot of experience. Everything was much easier after that pot. Afterwards, it was much easier to take a bad beat. It was a pot that gave me a lot of mental strength. I knew it couldn't get worse than that. I mean, I can't blame the guy for getting it in with kings. There's a factor of luck involved in poker, and it wasn't on my side [in that instance].

That pot was very important for me, moving forward in my career. Especially once I realized that the guy who won it, only finished tenth in the tournament. I think he was a little bit unfortunate as well. It was a good lesson that even if I had won the pot, there was no guarantee that I was going to win the tournament, or even make the top five for that €400k. You could even bubble the final table. ♠



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FINAL TABLE TAKEDOWN

Chicago-Based Poker Pro Shiva Dudani Breaks Down His Thought Process From Key Hands En Route To His Second World Series Of Poker Circuit Title

By Steve Schult



Shiva Dudani makes his living mostly from playing high-stakes pot-limit Omaha cash games in the Chicago area, but towards the end of 2019, took down one of the larger no-limit hold'em tournaments on the *World Series of Poker Circuit*.

Dudani, a poker pro of more than a decade, bested a 989-entry field to earn his second *WSOP Circuit* ring in the Horseshoe Hammond \$1,700 no-limit hold'em main event for \$258,078. The 34-year-old Mumbai native and Chicago resident earned both of his rings in the state of Indiana as he won his first in the \$350 mixed pot-limit Omaha/pot-limit hold'em event at the Horseshoe Southern Indiana stop a decade earlier.

Despite focusing mainly on live cash games, the Iowa State graduate's most recent score brought his career tournament earnings to just shy of \$1 million. Dudani sat down with *Card Player* to break down a few of the hands he played on the final day of the Horseshoe Hammond main event.

World Series of Poker Circuit Horseshoe Hammond Main Event

Buy-In: \$1,700 • Number of Entries: 989 • Prizepool: \$1,498,335 • First Place: \$258,078

HAND
NO. 1



Blinds - 25,000-50,000 with a 50,000 big blind ante
Players Remaining: 12

Concepts: Picking good spots as a big stack with the chip leader on your left.

The Action: Shiva Dudani raised to 115,000 from the cutoff and was called by Evan Bethyo in the small blind and Voytek Glab in the big blind. On the flop, action checked to Dudani, who bet 180,000. Bethyo folded and Glab called. On the turn, Glab checked and Dudani bet 380,000.

Glab called. On the river, Glab checked, Dudani bet 640,000 and Glab folded.

Steve Schult: Evan Bethyo, who at the time was far and away the chip leader of the tournament, was in the small blind. How did his presence affect your opening range from the cutoff? Would you be tighter than normal in this spot because he was in the blinds?

Shiva Dudani: Being sec-

ond in chips in the late stages of a tournament can be tricky. Since Evan was the only person that had me covered, I had to make certain adjustments. Additionally, Evan was clearly a fearless player. Given his limited experience, I felt he might overplay a hand rather than pot control it.

That said, I considered the cutoff the best position to open wide, as it was his small blind where he would likely play tight. If Evan was the button or the big blind, I would be less likely to open with a wide range.

SS: Can you elaborate on what you perceive his range to be when he flats from the small blind?

SD: Considering Evan's chip stack and game flow, I expect Evan to be wider here from the small blind than most other players. I think it is unlikely he would trap with a premium hand, and

I would expect he could be as wide as small pairs, weak aces or even unsuited one-gappers.

SS: Voytek Glab defends the big blind. Given the price he is getting, is his range wider than if he were the lone caller? What kind of range are you expecting him to have here?

SD: I expect Voytek to defend the big blind with almost all of his hands here.

SS: You take a flop three-handed. In a more general sense, are you forced to play more straightforward in multiway pots? Are there certain board textures that you would be more willing to bet with air three-handed?

SD: This is not a great board to c-bet with air against two sticky opponents, especially with one of them being the chip leader. I would be more likely to c-bet (continuation bet) air on unsuited and unconnected

“Overall, I believe balance is overrated in tournaments such as these.”

boards that contain an ace or a king.

SS: You flop the second nuts, both players check to you, and you bet about half the size of the pot. I've seen some very small sizings post-flop recently. Why did you choose this sizing?

SD: I chose to bet large on this draw-heavy board against these opponents. I believed they would be undeterred by this sizing if they had any hand that they wanted to continue with.

SS: Behtyo folds and Glab calls. What are you starting to narrow his range to?

SD: When Glab just calls, I expect him to have a medium strength hand with some showdown value. A likely hand might be a pair with a weak spade draw. I think it is unlikely he would just call with a made flush or the A♠, as I would expect him to check-raise with those hands. Since he is defending the big blind quite wide, he could have a hand as weak as 4-5 offsuit.

SS: The turn is the

A♣ and it is checked to you again. You still have the second nuts, but how does this card affect his hand strength? Would you have chosen a different size on a different non-spade, non-board pairing turn card?

SD: I do have some history playing with Voytek, as he is a Chicago native. I think he perceives me as a good player/pro and is more likely to take a more cautious line. However, I think he may still check-raise the naked A♠ and try to end the hand.

The ace is most likely a bad card as it is a scare card to most of his hands that contain the pair and a weak spade draw. I think I may have gone larger on a more brickish turn.

SS: When you triple barrel this board, it looks pretty strong. What hands are you hoping to get called by on the end?

SD: I'm just hoping to get called by worse flushes, two pair, or even a stubborn top pair on the flop.

SD: My decision to trap here is player dependent. I had been three-betting Firas quite a bit preflop and he had been folding. Also, I thought this flat might look weak to the blinds and cause them to squeeze. No matter what I decide, I get to play a hand in position with kings, which is a nice situation.

SS: On a seven-high flop, Sadou continues to bet after raising preflop. It's obviously a favorable board for your hand, but why raise now instead of continuing to underrepresent your hand? Would you have raised if the flop was rainbow?

SD: My raise here is definitely non-standard. It is mostly a result of my history versus Firas and how I expect him to play. Since I had been playing aggressive against him, I thought a raise would look very polarized, and he might take a stand as a result.

Additionally, I believe he is the type of player to give up with his bluffs on the turn, so I do not gain anything additional by remaining under-repped. Overall, the best way to

build the pot seemed to be by raising the flop and putting him to a decision for his stack.

SS: Would you be raising flush draws on this flop? Are those the types of hands that would help you balance your range?

SD: Overall, I believe balance is overrated in tournaments such as these. Since I will not be playing frequently with the players or find myself in these specific spots very often, I believe I should just play each hand in the most profitable way, not considering balance.

SS: How would you have played something like 8-8 or 6-6 in this spot?

SD: I would call the flop and give up on the turn if I did not improve or pick up more outs, as I do not expect him to be bluffing me here.

SS: Sadou moves all in for your 1.705 million-chip stack. Is this a standard shove for him?

SD: If I were Sadou, I would call my raise and reevaluate depending on the turn card. It was definitely a difficult spot for him given he had an overpair on the flop.

HAND NO. 2

Shiva Dudani
1,880,000

Firas Sadou
5,550,000

Blinds - 40,000-80,000 with an 80,000 big blind ante
Players Remaining: 8

Concepts: Trapping preflop with big pairs.

The Action: Firas Sadou raised to 175,000 from middle position and Shiva Dudani called on the button. On the flop, Sadou bet 200,000, Dudani raised to 500,000 and Sadou moved

all in for 1,705,000. Dudani called.

SS: Firas Sadou raised from middle position and you just called on the button with pocket kings. How often do you trap with big pairs? Was this a player-specific move?

HAND NO. 3

Shiva Dudani
7,115,000

Patrick Steele
4,285,000

Blinds - 60,000-120,000 with a 120,000 big blind ante
Players Remaining: 7

Concepts: Peeling flop bets against aggressive players and attempting to deny equity realization on the turn.

The Action: Patrick Steele raised to 275,000 from the cutoff and Shiva Dudani called on the button. On the flop, Steele bet 330,000

and Dudani called. On the turn, Steele checked and Dudani bet 480,000. Steele called. Both players checked to river.

SS: Patrick Steele started the hand with more than 4 million chips, you had him covered and there were several stacks shorter than him with around 2 million. Are you going to three-bet more frequently in this formation given the Independent Chip Model (ICM) dynamics in play?

SD: Yes, I would three-bet more frequently as I can leverage my stack against Steele. His busting to me would be an ICM disaster for him. As a big stack, it's very important to target the middling stacks for this reason, even moreso than targeting shorter stacks.

SS: Why did you choose just to call with this hand? What types of hands would you choose to three-bet that you wouldn't normally?

SD: I would three-bet very wide in this spot with ace or king-high type hands and maybe even some suited one-gappers.

I did not choose to three-bet this particular hand because I felt comfortable playing it post-flop in position and didn't want to get four-bet shoved on in the case that Steele actually did have a very strong hand. Steele also seemed to be on the stickier side and might four-bet a wider range than most of the other players at the table.

SS: Steele bets 330,000 on a 10-high flop with two hearts and you call. You must have thought he would be betting this flop pretty wide. What did you perceive his range to be here? Are you going to be floating him often?

SD: I think Steele would bet this flop very wide. I would float with most overcards, gushot straight

“As a big stack, it's very important to target the middling stacks.”

draws and basically any hand with some turn playability.

SS: The turn is pretty much a brick and he checks. What are the merits of betting in this spot?

SD: This is probably the most interesting decision in the hand. The sole reason for my bet is equity denial. I want him to fold overcards and end the hand here. Winning this pot here is a great result and would increase the chip disparity between us, which increases my leverage.

Additionally, in a similar pot earlier in the tournament, Steele check-raised my turn bet, and I felt that he would not do that again with a weak hand, especially given the chip counts at the time.

SS: He check-calls the turn. Did you expect this? Is his range generally draws

or could he have some bigger pocket pairs?

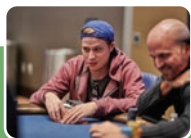
SD: I was hoping Steele would fold the turn, but I was not overly surprised that he called. He could have been playing a variety of strong hands this way in an attempt to use my aggression against me.

SS: What is your plan for the river when he calls? Are you going to try and turn this hand into a bluff or just take it to showdown?

SD: I think bluffing with this hand would be ill-advised on most rivers. When he calls the turn, he is showing a lot of strength. Even if he does call the turn and fold the river with some of his weaker value holdings such as 6-6 or 9-9 or a weak 10-X, bluffing it off and doubling him up would significantly reduce my advantage in the tournament. ♠

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2020 World Series of Poker Online
\$800 No-Limit Hold'em Knockout Deepstack



Ian Steinman
2,373,819 chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: N/A
After Flop: N/A
After Turn: N/A



Jeff Platt
3,969,264 chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: N/A
After Flop: N/A
After Turn: N/A

PREFLOP

With 14 players remaining and blinds of 50,000-100,000 and an ante of 12,500, Ian Steinman raised to 200,000 from the button. Jeff Platt called from the big blind.

FLOP



Platt checked. Steinman bet 155,000. Platt called.

TURN



Platt checked. Steinman checked.

RIVER



Platt checked. Steinman bet 327,500. Platt check-raised to 1,120,000. Steinman folded.

ANALYSIS

Unlike the live-streamed broadcasts from the live *World Series of Poker* in Las Vegas from recent years, the 2020 *WSOP Online* series does not have cards-up coverage. While the *WSOP* is streaming final-table action nightly, players' hole cards are not shown unless the hands go to showdown or one or both of the players are streaming their action on a site like Twitch. In this hand Ian Steinman's holecards remain a mystery. He opened with a min-raise from the button after it folded to him. Jeff Platt picked up A-7 offsuit in the big blind and made the call. The 9-8-8 flop with two spades saw Platt check and call a small continuation bet of 155,000 from Steinman into the pot of 537,500. Platt had backdoor flush outs with the A♠ to go along with his backdoor straight outs and ace high. The K♦ on the turn prompted a check from both players. The J♠ on the river saw Platt check for a third time. Steinman fired a bet of 327,500 into the pot of 847,500. Platt had likely checked with the hope of just showing down his ace high, but when Steinman re-opened the betting, Platt was presented with an opportunity to turn his hand into a bluff. With the best possible spade in his hand and a seven to help block some of the possible straights, Platt decided to check-raise to 1,120,000. Steinman folded relatively quickly and Platt took down the sizable potto chip up to more than 4.7 million and overtake two-time bracelet winner Eric Baldwin for the chip lead.

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

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CHANCE KORNUTH REVEALS START DATE FOR UPCOMING HIGH-STAKES PLO MATCH AGAINST PHIL GALFOND

Two-Time WSOP Bracelet Winner Discusses The Match, His Delayed WPT Final Table, Online Bracelets, And More

By Erik Fast

Chance Kornuth has been staying quite busy in 2020. The two-time *World Series of Poker* bracelet winner has accumulated more than \$7.8 million in lifetime live tournament earnings, and though the lockdown caused by the ongoing coronavirus outbreak has put the live circuit on pause, Kornuth has more than enough to keep him occupied.

For starters, Kornuth is the chip leader at the now extra-delayed final table of the 2020 *World Poker Tour Gardens Poker Championship* \$10,000 buy-in no-limit hold'em main event. He has also been playing a lot of online poker during the past few months, with highlights being a pair of runner-up finishes in a *WSOP* bracelet and a *WSOP Circuit* gold ring event. The online play has helped keep Kornuth sharp while he awaits both the *WPT* final table and his upcoming heads-up pot-limit Omaha match against Phil Galfond as part of the popular 'Galfond Challenge' series of showdowns.

As if all of that wasn't enough, Kornuth has also been working diligently on a new project at Chip Leader Coaching, the training site he founded. *Card Player* recently caught up with Kornuth to talk to him about all of the many things on his plate.



An Extra-Delayed Final Table

The *WPT Gardens Poker Championship* main event played down to a final table of six back on Jan. 13 of this year. The event was meant to resume on March 31 and play down to a champion after a break of roughly 11 weeks, but just a couple weeks before play was to resume, the *WPT* announced that all three of its delayed final tables had been postponed until further notice.

It has now been over five and a half months since the final table was set, and it remains unclear when it will actually be played out.

The planned venue for the final table, the HyperX Esports Arena

The two-time *World Series of Poker* bracelet winner has accumulated more than \$7.8 million in lifetime live tournament earnings.

Las Vegas located at Luxor Hotel & Casino, reopened in late June, but the *WPT* has yet to announce their plans for a restart.

"It's definitely super unfortunate," said Kornuth when asked about the situation. "I've been waiting to play that for a long time and I'm really looking forward to it. The fact that it stopped due to the virus and everything going on is ... understandable."

When the cards do eventually get in the air, Kornuth will be sitting with 120 big blinds as the chip leader. He will be playing for his first *WPT* title and a potential top prize of \$554,495, with a guaranteed payday of \$111,795 locked up for making the final six.

© WPT.com

“I think that winning a very small online tournament doesn't really equate to a *WSOP* live event.”

He has had plenty of time to prepare by playing online and working on his game, but as the most accomplished player remaining in the field, Kornuth believes that this extended delay has actually been more beneficial for his five opponents.

“It's unfortunate because some of the other players at the final table have the ability to improve more than I can,” said Kornuth. “They can kind of close the gap if you will.”

Kornuth has avoided putting too much pressure on himself to convert his chip lead and experience advantage into a title in this event.

“For me, everything is kind of a numbers game. I kind of look at it as, ‘I think I will win this event X percentage of the time.’ I don't really think of it as a pressure thing,” he said. “Winning a reasonable percentage of the time is nice, but you never know if it's going to happen or not, so I try not to really think about that type of stuff.”

A Date With Phil Galfond

In addition to his *WPT* final table, Kornuth also has another big match to play this year with hundreds of thousands of dollars on the line. He is one of seven challengers to publicly agree to play in the ‘Galfond Challenge’, a series of high-stakes heads-up showdowns against three-time *WSOP* bracelet winner Phil Galfond.

Galfond has already completed two of the seven matches. In the first showdown, he quickly dug himself a €900,000 hole, only to eventually secure an extremely narrow victory against ‘VeniVidi1993’ during the final session of the match.

His second showdown was ultimately far less dramatic, as Galfond built a solid lead early on and more or less never looked back against Ioannis ‘ActionFreak’ Kontonatsios. He ended up with €114,765.66 in profit after 15,011 hands played to secure his second straight victory.

Galfond has already started to play some sessions against a third challenger in Bill Perkins, but there has been little information about when the next challenge might get underway. Kornuth has revealed that he and

Galfond have come to an agreement about when their match is set to get underway.

“We actually finalized recently and have a penalty in place if one of us is unable to start on the date we've now agreed upon, which is Sept. 16,” said Kornuth.

Kornuth is set to play 35,000 hands of heads-up pot-limit Omaha against Galfond, with blinds of €100-€200. Galfond is laying a €1 million side bet against Kornuth's €250,000 on the final results of the match.

Of course, it's helpful that Kornuth has been able to sweat Galfond's play of tens of thousands of hands of pot-limit Omaha against his first two opponents.

“It is nice to have information about his game and really seeing how he's been playing, which will help me with my decisions,” said Kornuth.

Only time will tell if Kornuth will be able to become the first player to emerge victorious in a Galfond Challenge match.

A Return To The Online Realm

In June Kornuth made back-to-back deep runs in *World Series of Poker Circuit Online* gold ring events, finishing 13th in a \$215 buy-in and then second in a \$320 buy-in the following day for \$28,091. In July he managed to make it down to heads-up yet again, ultimately placing second in the *WSOP Online* \$500 turbo deepstack six-max no-limit hold'em event for \$79,291. Kornuth outlasted all but one of the 1,691 total entries in that event to nearly capture his third bracelet.

When asked how it has felt to get back to playing some online poker, Kornuth said, “It's been nice. It has kind of reminded me of the pre-Black Friday days when you can just grind online and there's a ton of stuff to play. I've really enjoyed it. It's a nice change of pace.”

One of Kornuth's two *WSOP* bracelets was won in a \$3,200 buy-in online no-limit hold'em bracelet event in 2018. He topped a field of 356 total entries in that tournament to win \$341,598 and his second piece of *WSOP* hardware. The 2020 *WSOP Online* features an unprecedented

amount of bracelets that will be awarded over the internet, with 85 up for grabs this summer. There has been public debate on social media about how this huge increase in online bracelets being offered will impact the perceived prestige of the *WSOP* bracelet.

“To be honest, I'm not a huge fan,” leveled Kornuth when asked about where he falls on this debate. “It's a cool tournament series, and obviously I'm excited to play it for that reason, but I think that winning a very small online tournament doesn't really equate to a *WSOP* live event. But that's the trend that we've seen over time, is just considerably more chances to win a bracelet. It's just been exponential now because of this instead of just a slow process.”

Putting In Work

In addition to everything going on for Kornuth as a professional poker player, he is also keeping busy in his role as the founder and lead coach at Chip Leader Coaching. Kornuth mentioned that he has recently been focused on a project with high roller star Alex Foxen, who has cashed for more than \$16.8 million in live events.

“It's a big project we decided to call Chip Leader Coaching AI,” said Kornuth. “We partnered with Socrates, which is an artificial intelligence platform, and it allows us to create an engine that guides you through questions depending on what you get right and wrong.”

“One of the biggest problems with the learning market today is you just sift through this sea of knowledge and you really don't have the ability to figure out what you really need to learn,” continued Kornuth. “The engine actually chooses that for you, which is very unique today, and we're excited to be able to produce this platform that we think will be a revolutionary way to learn the game of poker.”

With teaching poker, playing the game, and preparing for his big showdowns in the coming months, Kornuth has had plenty on his plate. Stay tuned to *Card Player* to find out how he fares at his *WPT* final table, in his match with Galfond, and in the currently running *WSOP Online* series. ♠

Alexandros Kolonias Discusses His Rise To Tournament Poker's Highest Levels

The Greek Professional Talks Playing Tennis With Novak Djokovic, Switching From Backgammon To Poker, and Much More

By Erik Fast



Alexandros Kolonias recorded his first live tournament poker score in May of 2014. In the six years that have followed he has accumulated more than \$3.6 million in live cashes, including winning the 2019 *World Series of Poker Europe* main event for more than \$1.2 million and his first *WSOP* gold bracelet. He has recorded several six-figure scores in live high roller events, with his largest being \$919,250 earned as the runner-up in the 2016 *European Poker Tour Grand Final* €25,750 buy-in event.

The 34-year-old was born in Volos, Greece, but now resides in London. He primarily focuses on online tournaments, with millions in lifetime scores on the internet. Most recently he competed at the *Poker Masters Online*. Kolonias cashed in 11 of the 30 high roller events held, winning two titles, and securing five total top-three finishes along the way. When the smoke cleared, he had cashed for more than \$1.2 million and was declared the top player of the series and awarded the Purple Jacket.

Kolonias was a highly ranked junior tennis player, and later went on to earn a Bachelors in Physical Education

and Sports with tennis specialization. *Card Player* recently caught up with the Greek poker ace to learn more about how he transitioned from tennis into playing backgammon and then poker, a tennis match he once played against current top ranked tennis pro Novak Djokovic, how he made his way to the highest stakes tournaments in the world, and more.

Card Player: Before poker you used to be a competitive backgammon and tennis player. Can you tell me about how these games became a big part of your life when you were younger?

Alexandros Kolonias: I was always into sports and as a young person, and I always enjoyed physical activity and also the competition. The sport I liked the most was tennis. I really enjoyed competing and the spirit of the game, and I think this has driven me

in pursuing competition in other areas. I have played tennis for many years and it was central to my life at that point. I was competing in tournaments nationally around Greece and internationally.

Also, I have always been fascinated with solving riddles

“Kolonias was formerly a highly ranked junior tennis player and once played against current top ranked tennis pro Novak Djokovic.”

from a very early age. I liked a lot of mind games like chess and backgammon, which led me to play backgammon at a serious level later in life.

CP: Were games like these, with strong strategic components, popular in your house when you were young?

AK: Yes, my father taught me to play chess and backgammon when I was young and also poka - a Greek variant of poker.

CP: As a junior tennis player you once played a match against current world no. 1 ranked Novak Djokovic, who has won 17 Grand Slam titles. Could you tell me about that experience and how the match played out? What was the strength of your game, and was it true that you took a set off him?

AK: That was a great experience. It was my first ever European championship and first time I was traveling outside of Greece. I was 14 years old and it was a European National Championship in Parma, Italy. I think I was better than him at this period of time because he wasn't crushing yet. He was the third-ranked player in Serbia, and I was the third-ranked player in Greece. I won the first set but then I got injured in the second set. I still finished the match, but lost the final two sets. I can't recall the score exactly but it was something like 6-3, 5-7, 3-6. Just two or three years after that match, he had already worked his way up to being one of the best players in the world. The strengths of my own game were good stamina, a strong serve, and a big forehand.

CP: A number of top poker pros, including Erik Seidel and Gus Hansen, got into the game after playing high-level backgammon. Is there anything that game has to teach that was helpful to you when starting out in poker?

AK: Yes, I think backgammon really helped me a lot in my poker career. It is the closest to poker you can have from all games. It has to do with understanding equity, probabilities and how strategies interact. It's also similar to poker in terms that there's an element of luck in the short term, which was good for building a strong mindset for poker. Also, in backgammon there are tournaments and cash games and what differentiates them is match equity, which is exactly what ICM (the Independent Chip Model) is to poker.

CP: Have you ever played backgammon against any poker pros for money?

AK: No, I have never played any poker players, but I would challenge anyone but Gus Hansen.

CP: When did you first play poker? Did it capture your interest straight away?

AK: The first games I played were with my high school friends, the same friends that I was playing chess and backgammon with. And yes - I really liked it right from the beginning.

CP: How did your interest in poker evolve from something you were just trying out to a serious hobby and then

to something you pursued to make money?

AK: That happened about six years later, when I was already a professional backgammon player. Some of my backgammon friends were getting involved with poker and suggested I should definitely do it as well, because they are very similar and poker is a lot bigger. I read some books on poker and then started going to the local casino daily. From there, I understood that I was good at it and that I enjoyed it, so one thing just led to another.

CP: At what point did you feel like you were officially playing poker professionally? What games stakes were you playing?

AK: It can be said that I was playing professionally from the beginning in my local casino. It was in 2011 when I quit my tennis job and started going to fewer backgammon tournaments. I moved to Loutraki next to the casino, and was playing no-limit hold'em cash games, with stakes of €2-€4 blinds.

CP: How did the early years of your pro poker career go? Did you find success right away, or were there any bumps on the road early on?

AK: I was winning from the beginning, because those live games I was playing in were quite soft. But I had some big downswings as well, especially when I was trying out pot-limit Omaha, and in some of those downswings came close to going bust, but luckily that never really happened.

CP: You've had online results dating back for more than a decade, but only started recording big scores in live events over the last five years or so. With only eight recorded live cashes under your belt, totalling around \$124,000 in scores, you entered and finished as the runner-up in a €25,000 buy-in high roller at the *European Poker Tour Grand Final* for \$919,250.

How did you come to play such a high-stakes event?

AK: To be honest, I think I might have played less live events than any other professional poker player, but have had really good results in the ones I played. Live poker was not a new thing for me since I was playing live poker at the beginning of my career, with at least three years of grinding that.

CP: Was it simply that you were playing at the equivalent level online, and felt comfortable against this level of opponent, but hadn't focused on playing live events as much by that point?

AK: Yes, exactly, when I got runner up in this tournament in Monte Carlo, I was already playing the high-stakes online tournaments. I just hadn't started traveling much to live events before this point. After the first live tournaments, I came to understand that I really enjoyed playing them more than online poker and decided to start participating in more live events.

CP: There is less emphasis these days on a lot of skills that used to be considered crucial to success in live poker,

**Alexandros Kolonias
has accumulated more
than \$3.6 million in live
cashes, including winning
the 2019 World Series of
Poker Europe main event
for more than \$1.2 million.**



“Backgammon really helped me a lot in my poker career. It is the closest to poker you can have from all games. It has to do with understanding equity, probabilities and how strategies interact. It’s also similar to poker in terms that there’s an element of luck in the short term, which was good for building a strong mindset for poker.”

such as reading live tells. Did any of the things that come along with live play give you any problems in the first few high-stakes live events you played?

AK: The three years of live play I had before transitioning to online play made it so that I wasn’t completely clueless, but the truth is that back then, I believe that I was underestimating the importance of live tells. Now I really think that live tells are a big thing.

CP: You made two big final-table finishes in 2019, starting with a fourth-place finish in the *partypoker MILLIONS North America* main event in Canada for \$273,800. At the time it was your third biggest live score. Your previous big live paydays had all more or less come in high rollers. Can you tell me about the experience of running deep in a \$10,000 buy-in main event that had over 500 entries?

AK: I really enjoyed playing and running deep in a main event like that. The experience of playing in a main event is always very special. The fact that the diversity of players in main events is so varied, when compared to fields in high rollers, requires you to use a lot of different strategies, which I enjoy.

CP: Later in 2019 you had an even bigger result in such a tournament, defeating a field of 541 entries to win the *WSOP Europe* main event for more than \$1.2 million. What did it mean to you to win such a huge event and earn your first gold bracelet?

AK: This win is my biggest achievement so far and I’m very proud of my performance and the success that resulted. I was feeling very good from day one of this event, and I think I was playing really well throughout. It was an amazing feeling and I cannot put into words how I felt when I realized I had won. I was very emotional; a great feeling of gratitude came over me for the win and for all my family and friends that were rooting for me while playing. It is a huge honor to receive such a prestigious award as a gold bracelet in the main event. It was a personal achievement, but it was also an honor for me to have represented Greece in winning a world championship title.

CP: You managed to survive to the final two tables as one of the shorter stacks, but were able to rally back and enter the final day in second chip position. Were there any big turning points in that event for you or key hands you remember along the way on that penultimate day?

AK: I won a big hand with pocket queens against pocket

king. There was also a hand where I shoved K-5 suited from the small blind vs an open from the cutoff from [eventual runner-up in the event] Claas Segebrecht, and won against his A-Q. I remember him being surprised about this hand and saying, ‘I respect your all-in.’

CP: You put together an incredible run in the online *Poker Masters* series and you managed a victory in the very last event of the schedule when you needed a top-two finish to secure the Purple Jacket. What did that win mean to you?

AK: It meant a lot to me to win. I was up against a group of top-notch competitors during *Poker Masters Online*, so winning the tournament and getting my hands on that purple jacket was a huge honor. It was intense and suspenseful until the very end and that made the victory even sweeter. I was just playing to win the tournament.

CP: The tournament utilized real names of players instead of the usual online aliases? What do you think of that approach?

AK: I really like this approach and I think it’s very good for poker in order to promote it as a sport and take away the uncertainty and anonymity of the online game. I also feel a lot better and better enjoy playing as Alexandros Kolonias than my screen name ‘mexican222’.

CP: You ultimately cashed in more than one-third of the 30 events of this series while playing against many of the best in the world. Do you feel like you’re playing some of the best poker of your career right now?

AK: I do, I feel like the poker I’m playing now is by far the best of my career. I have been studying the game really hard in the last 18 months, and that has been my sole focus. I have been working on mastering areas of the game that previously I was not focused on as much. I tried to find as many leaks in my game as possible and then worked hard on fixing them. Some of them I was not even aware of at all in the past.

CP: What are your goals in poker? Do you envision poker being your only career? If it weren’t, what else would you be interested in pursuing?

AK: My goal has always been to be as good as you can get in this game. Another goal of mine is to promote poker as a great mind sport. I don’t think poker will be my only career. I am very interested in running my own business and working with companies that are promoting positive change in society. ♠



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LET'S TALK ABOUT GAME THEORY

By Greg Raymer

In Chapter 4 of my book *FossilMan's Winning Tournament Strategies*, I discuss the basics of game theory, and how it applies to poker. I want to summarize some of that discussion here, in case you haven't yet had a chance to read the book.

Game Theory is simply a branch of mathematics that analyzes the strategies and choices in any game, and determines which of those decisions is optimal. If you can determine the complete Game Theory Optimal (GTO) strategy for a game, then with that strategy you are unbeatable.

For a game like poker, that doesn't mean you win every hand, or even every session. But it does mean that in the long run, after luck evens out, you never lose. If your opponent were also playing perfect GTO strategy, then you would tie one another. If they are playing any other strategy, in the long run, you will win. However, not even the best computers have yet determined the GTO strategy for poker (though they are getting closer). And even if they get there, that strategy will be so complicated that no human brain will ever be able to memorize it.

So, you might be thinking, what does it matter? Well, the more you study and understand GTO strategy, the stronger and better your basic strategy will become. Basic strategy is what you apply in a poker game when you don't know anything about an opponent or how they play. Are they too aggressive, too passive, too loose, too tight? Do they overplay suited cards preflop? Do they always semi-bluff their draws, or never bluff at all? Since you know nothing about them, you can only play your basic strategy. Therefore, the stronger your basic strategy, the closer it is to GTO, the better your results.

Once you get to know an opponent, you will find some mistakes and patterns in their play. You might also start to spot tells indicating

when they're strong or weak. Once you have enough confidence in these reads, you can move beyond your basic strategy, and make plays that diverge from it. If these modifications take greater advantage of the opponent's mistakes, then this new strategy will be more profitable than your basic strategy, at least against this player. In the language of Game Theory, this is a Game Theory Exploitative strategy, as you are doing something different than your GTO strategy, to exploit the opponent's weaknesses more effectively.

Here is a simplistic example. Imagine it is the first hand of a

“Once you get to know an opponent, you will find some mistakes and patterns in their play.”

no-limit holdem tournament, and everyone is 300 big blinds deep. A player moves all-in preflop. Sticking to GTO strategy, you only call if you have A-A, which is what most of us would do. Now, on the next hand, this player again moves all-in preflop. And the next hand, and so on. At some point, it is obvious this player is doing this regardless of their cards.

However, a pure GTO strategy does not take into account how an opponent has played in the past. It only considers the bare facts of the game, such as stack size, blind size, position, action so far in this hand, and the like. As such, pure GTO strategy is still folding everything except pocket aces. In the real world, you would be much better off adjusting to this obvious pattern, and taking advantage by calling with some other hands. That is, you will modify

your basic strategy, and make an exploitative decision to call with a range of top hands, not just aces.

In a more realistic example, suppose a player is the chip leader deep in the tournament, and is raising preflop a high percentage of the time. As such, you know they are unlikely to have a premium starting hand each time, meaning you can profitably adjust how you play against this aggressive chip leader. Let's assume your stack is the right size (such as 15-20 big blinds), and you know this player enough to know that if you reraise all-in, they will only call with a reasonably strong hand. It might therefore be correct to reraise all-

in, and take advantage of their loose opening range. If the numbers are right, you might do this even when holding a very weak hand. In contrast, if the person who raised is a very tight player, who also doesn't like to fold once they enter a pot, you would probably be wrong to reraise all-in unless you had a very strong hand.

So, first, work on your basic strategy. You need to make it a strong, winning strategy on its own. More importantly, you have to really understand why it is a strong basic strategy. Only then will you be able to intelligently identify those situations where you can take advantage of an opponent's mistakes, and win even more using a smart exploitative adjustment. Play Smart! ♠



Greg Raymer is the 2004 WSOP world champion, winner of numerous major titles, and has more than \$7 million in earnings.

He recently authored *"FossilMan's Winning Tournament Strategies,"* available from D&B Publishing, Amazon, and other retailers. He is sponsored by Blue Shark Optics, YouStake, and ShareMyPair. To contact Greg please tweet at him using @FossilMan or go to www.FossilManPoker.com.

A Beginner's Lesson In Counting Outs

By Jonathan Little

As many poker hands progress, it will be clear that you either have a strong made hand or a draw. A draw is a hand that is almost certainly behind at the moment, but could improve to a hand that can beat all or almost all other hands. For example, when you have 10-9 on the Q-7-4-J turn, if an eight or three comes on the river, you have the best possible hand.

But just because you have the potential to improve your draw to an effective nut hand does not mean you should continue with it every time when facing a bet. You have to compare your pot odds to the odds that one of the cards you need to complete your draw is the next face-up community card.

Suppose your opponent goes all-in for \$100 into a \$100 pot on the Q-7-4-J turn and you have 6-5. Knowing you probably need to improve to a straight to win, you can figure out if you can profitably make the call.

To figure out how often you need to win to justify calling, divide the amount you have to call (100 in this case) by the current pot (100) plus the bet you are facing (100) plus the amount you have to call (100). $100 / (100 + 100 + 100) = 33\%$. So, if your draw will arrive on the river 33 percent of the time or more, you can

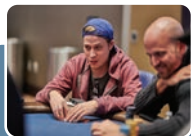
profitably call.

Next, you have to figure out how often an eight or three will arrive on the river. There are four unseen eights and four unseen threes remaining in the deck (including the folded and burn cards, because you have no way of knowing which cards are in the deck, folded cards, or burn cards). There are 44 unseen cards remaining in the deck (52 card deck minus the four on the board minus the two in your hand minus the two cards in your opponent's hand). You then take the number of cards that let you win (8) and divide it by the number of cards remaining in the deck (44) to tell you how often your draw will complete on the river. $8/44 = 18\%$.

A shortcut to figuring out how often your draw will arrive on the next card is to take the number of outs you have (8) and multiply it by two. Make that number a percentage, and that is roughly the percentage of time you will improve on the next card. $8 \times 2 = 16\%$ (which is close enough to the actual odds of 18 percent). Multiply the number of outs you have by four to get roughly how often you will improve on the turn and the river. $8 \times 4 = 32\%$. While these numbers are not as precise as dividing your outs by the number of unseen

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2020 World Series of Poker Online
\$800 No-Limit Hold'em Knockout Deepstack



Ian Steinman
6,535,960 chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 24.0%
After Flop: 5.0%
After Turn: 0.0%



Jeff Platt
3,264,984 chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 72.0%
After Flop: 95.0%
After Turn: 100.0%



PREFLOP

With seven players remaining and blinds of 120,000-240,000 and an ante of 30,000, Ian Steinman raised to 480,000 from the button. Jeff Platt called from the big blind.

FLOP



Platt checked. Steinman bet 420,000. Platt called.

TURN



Platt checked. Steinman checked.

RIVER



Platt checked. Steinman bet 650,000. Platt called.

ANALYSIS

Jeff Platt came into the final table of this *WSOP Online* bracelet event as the chip leader. He lost around a third of his stack with A-Q losing to the A-K of short stack Stephen McManus to fall to the middle of the pack. Later that same orbit, newly minted chip leader Ian Steinman min-raised from the button with 8-4 offsuit, likely looking to apply pressure on medium stacks like Platt who would not want to bust before the couple players below him on the leaderboard. Platt defended his big blind with K-8 offsuit and flopped trips on a K-K-10 board with two spades. He checked from out of position and Steinman made a continuation bet of 420,000 into the pot of 1,290,000. Platt could have check-raised with his trips, as he would likely take a similar line as a semi-bluff with his flush and straight draws, but he instead decided to check-call. Steinman should have a very wide range from the button as the chip leader. By check-calling, Platt keeps more of these weak hands in, which allows for Steinman to continue bluffing with them on later streets. The 3♦ on the turn saw Platt check again. Steinman checked behind and the 2♣ completed the board. Platt checked a third time, and Steinman was left with eight high at the river. With no showdown value to speak of, he made a 650,000 bluff into the 2,130,000 pot. Platt made a quick call with his trips and climbed into second chip position, while Steinman fell to third. Platt went on to finish seventh in this event after losing a big preflop battle of the blinds against Joon Kim.

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

“Make sure to practice counting your outs so it becomes second nature when at the poker table.”

cards, they are close enough.

So, you need to win 33 percent of the time, but you will only win 18 percent of the time. Since 18 percent is less than 33 percent, you have to fold. If you were instead facing a \$20 bet into a \$100 pot, you would now only need to win $20/(20+20+100) = 14\%$, making a call profitable because you will improve 18 percent of the time but you only need to improve 14 percent of the time.

If you are facing a non-all-in bet, meaning there is still money remaining in the stacks to be bet on the next betting round, you do not necessarily need to be getting the correct immediate pot odds to call. For example, if your opponent bets \$50 into a \$100 pot, you need to get there 25 percent of the time $50/(50+50+100) = 25\%$, which an eight-out straight draw will not do. However, if you can get on average another \$150 to go into the pot on the river, you are effectively risking \$50 to win a \$250 pot, making a turn call profitable $50/(50+50+250) = 14\%$.

It is important to also realize that sometimes you will not need to improve to a nut hand to win. Sometimes improving to a one-pair hand will be good enough to win the pot. This increases the number of outs you have. For example, if you have an ace-high flush draw, you have nine outs to make a flush, but also three outs to improve to a pair of aces, which will often be the best hand. While a pair of aces will not always be the best hand, it should still be accounted for, perhaps counting those three outs as 1.5 outs or so, depending on how confident your opponent seems in their holding.

Of course, make sure you recognize that when you make a strong, but non-nut hand, you could still lose. For example, if you improve to a low flush, you could lose to a better flush. If your opponent makes a substantial bet, it is often best to not raise, opting instead to just call with your strong, but non-nut hand.

When there is money remaining in the stacks to be bet on the river, you may be able to bluff your opponent off the best hand when you fail to complete your draw. In general, you will find that the best cards to bluff are those that complete other draws besides your draw, such as when you have a missed straight draw but the flush draw comes in.

Make sure to practice counting your outs so it becomes second nature when at the poker table.

When you have A♥ K♥ on a board reading 7♥ 5♥ 3♠ 2♦ you have...

- Nine outs to the flush. If the 9♥, 8♥, 6♥, 4♥, or 3♥ comes, you could lose to a straight flush. If the 3♥ or 2♥ comes, you could still lose to a full house.

- Three outs to the straight. The 4♥ gives you a flush, not a straight. If you make a straight, you could still lose to a bigger straight.

- Six outs to top pair. If you make top pair, you could lose to a better made hand.

When you have Q♥ 9♥ on a board reading J♥ 7♥ 6♠ 2♦ you have...

- Nine outs to the flush. If the 6♥ or 2♥ comes, you could still lose to a full house. Even if you make a flush, you could still lose to a bigger flush.

- Three outs to top pair. If you make top pair, you could lose to a better made hand.

- Three outs to middle pair. If you make top pair, you could lose to a better made hand.

When you have 9♥ 8♥ on a board of 7♥ 5♠ 2♦ 3♣ you have...

- Four outs to a straight.

- Six outs to top pair. If you make top pair, you could lose to a better made hand.

Some players enjoy figuring out how many outs they have against their opponent's specific hand, but in reality, you never know what your opponent has, so that exercise is not too useful.

Here is a chart that shows how often a draw will improve on the turn, river, or turn and river combined.

Outs	Flop to Turn %	Turn to River %	Turn and River %
20	43%	44%	67%
19	40%	41%	65%
18	38%	39%	62%
17	36%	37%	60%
16	34%	35%	57%
15	32%	33%	54%
14	30%	30%	51%
13	28%	28%	48%
12	25%	26%	45%
11	23%	24%	42%
10	21%	22%	38%
9	19%	20%	35%
8	17%	17%	28%
7	15%	15%	28%
6	13%	13%	24%
5	11%	11%	20%
4	9%	9%	17%
3	6%	7%	12%
2	4%	4%	8%
1	2%	2%	4%



Jonathan Little is a two-time WPT champion with more than \$6 million in tournament winnings. Each week, he posts an educational blog and podcast at JonathanLittlePoker.com, where you can get a FREE poker training video that details five things you must master if you want to win at tournament poker. You can

also sign up for his FREE Excelling at No Limit Hold'em webinars at HoldemBook.com/signup

LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC: PART I

By Steve Zolotow

Over the years, I have written many columns about learning poker. These columns frequently includes lists of books, magazines, and websites with which I am familiar. Then comes a list of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

I am going to start a series of columns that focuses on a specific hand or idea from a specific site, and then elaborate about my thinking process when analyzing this specific hand. I hope that these columns give you some not only some sources of good content, but also insight into how you can think about or analyze a hand. I am going to restrict myself to free content, but I would recommend that if you find a source is useful, please consider showing support and buying some of their products.

I am going to start with some recent free content from Upswing Poker. You can find it at <https://upswingpoker.com/doug-bluff-vs-antonius/> or an older version of this hand can be found on YouTube with analysis by Doug Polk at www.cardplayer.com/link/DougPolkUpswing.

The game has blinds of \$1,000-\$2,000 with a \$200 ante. Everyone folds up to Doug in the small blind. Both Doug and Patrik Antonius in the big blind have huge stacks, around \$470,000 or 235 big blinds. Doug has 7♠ 4♥.

What should he do with 7-4 offsuit, getting 5:1 whenever Patrick limps behind? My immediate thought is that he should fold most, if not all, of the time. If calling \$1,000

would end the action, calling would be clearly correct, because 7-4 offsuit will win 38.5 percent of the time against a random hand. Since the pot would be \$6,000, an all-in call would net about \$1,310 (.385x6000-1000.)

This situation is just the opposite of a call ending the action, as both players are very deep. If Doug decided to not fold, he should raise to something like \$7,000 as a bluff. If Patrick three-bets, you can easily fold 7-4 offsuit without giving up much equity.

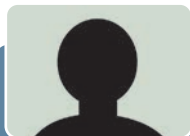
The best way to think of the future equity of a hand is in terms of implied odds. When the implied odds favor your opponent, they are referred to as negative implied odds.

This is a hand that probably has large negative implied odds. They are somewhat negative when the Big Blind doesn't raise. If he does raise, you can either fold, losing the extra thousand of your call, or call, putting more money in the pot in a situation where you have negative equity. I mentioned that I would consider an occasional bluff raise to \$7,000. If I did raise, my intention would be to fold to a three-bet. In summary, playing a very weak hand with deep stacks, out of position, against a very tough opponent is a recipe for disaster.

In the YouTube video, Doug states that he was experimenting with a strategy of never raising from the small blind. He continues by checking all flops, and then calling with all hands with which he plans to continue.

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2020 World Series of Poker Online
\$800 No-Limit Hold'em Knockout Deepstack



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 32.0%
After Flop: 18.0%
After Turn: 14.0%

Joon Kim
13,894,468 chips



Eric Baldwin
6,095,798 chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 67.0%
After Flop: 82.0%
After Turn: 86.0%

PREFLOP

With five players remaining and blinds of 140,000-280,000 and an ante of 35,000, Joon Kim raised to 840,000 from the small blind. Eric Baldwin called from the big blind.

FLOP



Kim checked. Baldwin checked.

TURN



Kim checked. Baldwin checked.

RIVER



Kim checked. Baldwin checked.

ANALYSIS

Joon Kim began to pull away from the rest of the pack during short-handed play. By the time this hand arose, he had nearly 13.9 million of the roughly 30 million chips in play, which was good for just shy of 50 big blinds. Two-time bracelet winner Eric Baldwin's 6.1 million (21.7 big blinds) was the next-largest stack, while Ian Steinman was at the bottom of the counts with 1.8 million (6.6 big blinds). Given this stack dynamic, Kim had free license to ruthlessly pressure Baldwin, knowing that he would be very wary of clashing with the only opponent who could bust him in a single hand while another player was so short. Kim made a largish raise with the lowly 4-2 offsuit from the small blind when it folded to him. Baldwin picked up K-J suited in the big blind and elected to defend his big blind. The flop came down K-6-4 to give Baldwin top pair with a backdoor flush possibility. Kim checked to him, having flopped some showdown value with bottom pair, and Baldwin checked behind. The 5♣ on the turn gave Baldwin four to a flush to go along with his top pair, but he remained cautious in his approach. Kim checked a second time, and Baldwin checked behind. The Q♠ completed the board and Kim checked a third time, deciding not to turn his pair of fours into a bluff. Baldwin's top pair would likely merit a value bet in a lot of situations, but the 2009 *Card Player* Player of the Year likely decided it was not worth re-opening the betting against an aggressive chip leader and checked a third time. His pair of kings was good for the pot of 1,855,000 and he closed the gap somewhat on Kim. Within five minutes of this hand concluding, two players were knocked out. Baldwin locked up an additional \$21,736 for outlasting those two opponents. He ultimately finished third in this event for \$44,914, while Kim went on to secure the title, the bracelet and the top prize of \$103,127.

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“THE BEST WAY TO THINK OF THE FUTURE EQUITY OF A HAND IS IN TERMS OF IMPLIED ODDS.”

This strategy is almost certainly suboptimal. While I love experiments, a cash game for nosebleed stakes doesn't seem like the right spot for it. The recent write-up mentions using a GTO chart for a situation where you have 100 big blinds. This chart appears to show the 7-4 offsuit is a bottom of your calling range. I am surprised not to see some sort of mixed strategy-some mix of calls, raises and folds.

I want to discuss one of the traps of using computer generated GTO strategies. First, the strategy is based on your being able to play perfect GTO strategy for the entirety of the hand. This is far beyond human capacity. So, I would have to feel that going forward in the hand, I would make a lot fewer mistakes than my opponent. From what Doug said in his earlier video, check-calling all playable flops would be worse than GTO strategy.

The chart also suggests that you always call with A-A, obviously. Assuming that it is always right to call with both A-A and 7-4 offsuit, it is a huge trap to think the equities of these two calls are close. In the 100 big blinds situation, calling with A-A might be worth over five big blinds. Calling with 7-4 offsuit might be worth less than one-tenth of a big blind.

Let me restate this. Folding A-A would be a huge, colossal blunder. Folding 7-4 offsuit would be an infinitesimal mistake,

if it even is a mistake at all. I admit that knowing the result of some hands makes it hard to judge the correctness on each individual play. Color me old-fashioned or tight-aggressive, but I think for a real player in a real situation to call with 7-4 offsuit is a mistake, regardless of what the chart says

There are two take-aways from this column. The important thing is to learn how much analysis can go into studying any poker decision. Yes, poker is a beautiful, complicated game, in which even great players make mistakes. Upswing Poker is a good source of hands, material, and analysis, just don't fall into the trap of not analyzing whatever poker material you are reading or viewing. ♠



Steve 'Zee' Zolotow, aka *The Bald Eagle*, is a successful gamer. He has been a full-time gambler for over 35 years. With two WSOP bracelets and few million in tournament cashes, he is easing into retirement. He currently devotes most of his time to poker.

He can be found at some major tournaments and playing in cash games in Vegas. When escaping from poker, he hangs out in his bars on Avenue A in New York City -The Library near Houston and Doc Holliday's on 9th St. are his favorites.



IS PHIL HELLMUTH'S EGO REALLY TOO BIG... OR HAS HE BECOME A VICTIM OF 'BRAT' HAZING

By Houston Curtis

At the offset, I should say that I consider Phil Hellmuth to be a dear friend. In fact, I think we've spent enough time together as both friends and business partners over the years that I didn't feel any need to reach out to him for his blessing when writing this article. (Hope that's ok with you buddy.)

Phil and I not only created some of the very first top selling poker instructional DVD's together, but he also ran commentary for the 2006 *Aruba Poker Classic*. I did smaller projects with Phil as well, like the prop bet pilot I spoke about a couple columns ago called *I'll Take That Bet*, as well as producing the entire behind-the-scenes coverage of *Camp Hellmuth*, which is still in the vault waiting to be dusted off one day! *Camp Hellmuth* was like a poker fantasy camp that attracted wealthy poker enthusiasts from around the country and the globe, charging big money in order to spend a weekend learning directly from Phil himself.

So, given all this rich history Phil and I have together, instead of getting Phil's take on how he is perceived by his peers and by the media, I wanted to approach the subject of Phil Hellmuth Jr. from a clean slate. If, in fact, such a thing exists with regard to the infamous Poker Brat.

I first met Phil Hellmuth more than 15 years ago when the poker boom was red hot and super ripe. When I wasn't rounding soft cash games throughout Tinseltown, I actually had a legit and quite successful career producing television and

independent releases.

When I met Phil I was on the hunt for the perfect poker celeb to host a series of poker instructional videos that I believed would demonstrate "ShamWow" style revenue if aired during the all-new heavy rotation of televised poker. I wanted to produce a step-by-step method that would essentially teach the average Joe how the pros get rich and look cool doing it... all while playing the game of poker. Specifically, we were talking about no-limit hold'em, which was still a shiny new toy to the mainstream media. But it wouldn't be for long.

I began searching for a professional poker player to host my DVD series in 2003 when the cash games in major cities like New York and Los Angeles were more filling than Captain Ahab on a whale hunt. Hole card cams had just been implemented for the first time on both ESPN's *World Series of Poker* (which was still held at Binion's up until 2005) and *Travel Channel's World Poker Tour* took the *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* game show vibe and wrapped it around Texas hold'em. *Rounders* was still in the hearts and minds of budding wannabe pros and Chris MoneyMaker had recently proven to the world that with a small investment, anyone could achieve fame and fortune.

So, I began thinking about the kind of personality I wanted representing my poker instructional video series. It had to be someone who was an icon to the game, but also had a huge



personality. Someone who would be great on television and have all the credentials to back up his claims. And in 2003 before the modern poker explosion, that person was Amarillo Slim.

Looking back, we had no idea how the poker world was about to pass Slim by in such a fast and furious way. To us, he was still one of the big dogs. And to be fair, (God rest his soul) he always will be. But, his passing in 2012 aside, there's no denying that Slim never had the longevity of his old Texas rounding buddy Doyle Brunson.

When Slim was indicted on charges of indecency with a minor, his reputation became too tarnished for us to finalize his contract. We couldn't ask Doyle either, because he had already written *Super System*, and turning that massive book into a successful commercial DVD series at that time would have been a gigantic undertaking that we weren't prepared to make.

Not long after, I ran into Phil at a tournament at the Bike, and we discussed the deal and decided to shake hands and move forward. And while a lot has happened in both our lives since those days, we've been friends ever since. So... is this going to be a puff piece, you ask? Not at all. But what I'm about to point out is something about Hellmuth, his ego and his media perception that I find absolutely fascinating, and I hope you will too.

If memory serves me correctly, when we began working on Phil's DVD set, I believe he was tied with Johnny Chan at nine *WSOP* bracelets. (He now has 15!) I think you will agree with me when I say that Phil is as synonymous with poker as any other pro in the history of the game either alive or dead. And if you have followed his career at all then you would also have to agree that Phil's success as an author, investor, and advisor to numerous companies, both in and outside of the poker landscape, is impressive to say the least.

However, despite the fact that his brand alone is most likely worth more than 95 percent of all top poker pros in the game today, Phil's unique, one-of-a-kind personality is truly the stuff legends are made of. Hilarious to many, perplexing to some, and infuriating to others, when Phil Hellmuth walks into a room, no matter how you see him... he owns it.

Then why is it every time I casually stumble across a poker video on YouTube featuring Phil, it almost always seem to have some kind of negative headline, feature a blow up scene, bad beat, or any other moment that doesn't paint Phil in the glowing light that his accomplishments should garner?

In preparation for this article, I did several web searches centered around Phil either losing or winning during televised poker events, assuming I would see huge numbers for Phil's

losses and lower numbers for his wins. In fact, it was quite the opposite. The Google search "Phil Hellmuth Loses" delivered 106,000 results while the search for "Phil Hellmuth wins" delivered an impressive 416,000 results.

However, I noticed that when I made the search more specific to Hellmuth playing a single hand of poker, those numbers reversed! For instance, I typed in "great play by Phil Hellmuth" and it received 557,000 search results vs "bad play by Phil Hellmuth" which received well over 1.2 million hits.

By comparison, the search "bad play by Daniel Negreanu" only pulls up 152,000 results, whereas "good play by Daniel Negreanu" elicits around a million! Then I began taking a closer look at the videos that would come up under a positive search term for Phil and noticed that even when Phil wins the hand, the narrative that gets spun is not always complimentary. You will see titles such as, "Hellmuth Gets Lucky" or "Phil Hellmuth Bullies An Amateur," and "Phil Hellmuth's Usual Arrogance."

So, when Phil is playing great poker and winning... he often catches grief from the "Brat Haters," and when he gets a horrible beat and spins out of control, everyone and their brother join in on the laughter as if Phil is completing Hell Week during a fraternity initiation.

Even I must admit when I see the smile on Negreanu's face light up after Phil loses a big pot and goes on tilt, I can't help but enjoy the moment as well. Having said this, pros ribbing Phil is one thing, but when these moments become televised and then land on YouTube playlists to be seen over and over again, it tends to make every wannabe amateur in poker feel like he has a free ticket to jump in on the "Brat Hazing" bandwagon, even if he's not a member of the fraternity! [Note to self... propose an "I Love Brat Hazing" t-shirt idea to Phil the next time we talk!]

Case in point, the blogging and trolling posts about Phil on Twitter and other social media channels actually get downright hateful sometimes. I see kids who can barely grind out rent money taking to the internet to call Hellmuth names and be completely disrespectful to the man who holds the record for most bracelets won!

To these amateurs out there who live to bust Hellmuth and enjoy laughing at his occasional misfortune (and how poorly he sometimes handles it), consider the following question. Does Phil's persona, whether intentional or not, give him a major advantage over lesser players?

Now that might sound like an oxymoron, but what I mean is, could Phil Hellmuth have unknowingly concocted a secret formula on how to bust amateur players better than any other pro in the business? The first person to ever point this out to me was Annie Duke. We were watching Phil play from a distance one day and Annie mentioned to me that in all her years playing poker she had never seen someone who could read an amateur player better than Phil. I felt this was a spot-on observation.

But we don't get to see a lot of Phil's reads on amateurs, because the TV tables usually have him surrounded by pros. And when he does make a beginner look foolish, the hand gets cut from the final edit, unless of course, the amateur puts a bad beat on Phil and he starts throwing chairs around the casino and pointing out what a total donkey the player is and how he shouldn't even be allowed at the same table.

Coincidentally, about halfway through writing this column, I received a Twitter notification from Phil. He was discussing his recent interview for the *A Hero's Journey* podcast where Phil admits in the tweet that his ego is too big and

almost cost him his marriage. You gotta admire this right? A statement like this from Phil just makes me love the guy even more. He's a complex human being who might be often misunderstood and talked about in a negative way, but is at the same time highly respected, and highly respectful to anyone and everyone he meets outside of the poker table.

One time I was standing at a distance as some fans were in line to get Phil's autograph at the Rio, and I overheard a conversation with a couple of young players. One was saying that he heard Phil's outbursts were all for show and that he only does it for the camera.

I didn't bother saying anything to the kids, but it just made me smile and remember the last time I had played with Phil in a high-stakes private game that certainly had no cameras to be found. A few columns ago I wrote about Phil attending my private game once and winning over \$300,000. Despite his win, and even though he and I were friends and business partners at the time, when I sucked out on him in a decent sized pot, I too became the target of a classic Phil tirade.

"Houston, you are such a donkey! You should be dead broke right now. How in the hell do you call me on a flush draw with one to come unless you are drawing to the absolute nuts?" And so on. Yet, after the game, Phil was all smiles, told me what a wonderful time he had playing with the Hollywood elite and thanked me several times for including him.

What this tells us is that Phil is never tap dancing for TV time. For better and worse, he is who he is... and to me, there is something refreshing and honorable in that. So, to all the haters out there who would love to bust Phil, I'll say this. Just focus on playing good poker... because if you are sitting at a table with this guy, you are going to need your wits about you.

And if you do become victim to one of his outbursts, consider it a badge of honor.

And to Phil reading this, just know one thing. Your ego is part of what we all love about you. And for those of us lucky

enough to know you on a personal level, I think we would all tell you the same thing... Don't go changin' baby!

This week's video supplement is an excerpt from the very first poker DVD Phil and I did together back in 2004, *Phil Hellmuth's Million Dollar Poker System* where Phil shares his top 10 hands. (kardsharp.com/cardplayer) The video did a 7 to 1 ROI on my first ad spend during *World Poker Tour* on the Travel Channel. Unfortunately, all the ads then got pulled because Travel Channel claimed they didn't feel good about selling a product that taught people how to gamble. I thought that was pretty funny considering they sure didn't mind airing an entire show about gambling.

Until next time everyone, stay sharp... stay KardSharp! ♠



*Houston Curtis, founder of **KardSharp.com** and author of *Billion Dollar Hollywood Heist* has lived a successful double life as both a producer and card mechanic for nearly 30 years. His credits include executive producing gambling related TV shows such as *The Ultimate Blackjack Tour* on CBS,*

*The Aruba Poker Classic on GSN, and pioneering the poker instructional DVD genre with titles featuring poker champion Phil Hellmuth. Barred for life from Las Vegas Golden Nugget for "excessive winning" at blackjack, Houston is one of the world's most successful card mechanics and sleight-of-hand artists of the modern era. Curtis, who rarely plays in tournaments, won a 2004 Legends of Poker no-limit hold'em championship event besting Scotty Nguyen heads-up at the final table before going on to co-found the elite Hollywood poker ring that inspired Aaron Sorkin's Academy Award-nominated film *Molly's Game*. Curtis resides in Phoenix, Arizona where in addition to running a production company and independent record label, he is also a private gaming/casino protection consultant to clients across the globe seeking insight into master level card cheating tactics via advanced sleight-of-hand technique. To reach Houston for a speaking engagement, consulting or production services send email to stacked@Kardsharp.com*

DEUCE TO SEVEN TRIPLE DRAW LOWBALL: BIG BLIND DEFENSE

By Kevin Haney

In Deuce to Seven Triple Draw Lowball (27TD) we can defend against a single raise somewhat more liberally than from the other positions because of the better pot odds and the knowledge that the pot will be contested heads-up. Getting pot odds of 3.5:1 it may seem as if we should be defending a lot of hands in heads-up situations, however, defending too wide can be a significant leak as there are many other important considerations.

In a game such as Omaha eight-or-better we can defend against an early position raiser with a hand like $K\spadesuit J\heartsuit 10\spadesuit 8\clubsuit$ and simply check-fold when the flop has three low cards. However, in 27TD pot odds most often dictate that we should continue on after the first draw even when we do not improve. Thus, we must view the situation more as a two-street decision where in the aggregate we are only getting 2.25:1 pot odds which translate to a breakeven equity of around 31 percent.

While we may have greater than 31 percent "hot/cold" equity against an opponent's range with many holdings we must also consider the likelihood to realize this equity,

positional considerations, as well as possible reverse implied odds.

For example, suppose a player opens from first position in a six-handed game and we defend the big blind with 2-7-8. Getting 3.5:1 pot odds many players consider this to be a clear defend, however, they fail to take into account that they also will in most cases need to call the flop bet as well. (In draw games the round of betting after the first draw is often referred to as the flop.)

Even against a strong opening range the 2-7-8 definitely has higher than 31 percent equity but we must also consider playability. The 2-7-8 is a reverse implied odds holding in that its potential is capped at a mediocre eight low. When we don't improve, we are in really bad shape and when both players improve, we will often lead and get raised by our opponent who has both position and a nice equity edge. In Omaha eight-or-better we have the ability to flop the nuts or other powerful holdings with mediocre starting hands but that is not possible in 27TD.

The ability to realize our equity is also an important

consideration particularly when we defend with a three-card draw (D3) such as 2-7. With 2-7 we also have greater than 31 percent equity against an early position open and it can make very strong holdings; however, the main problem is that against a strong range it will be very difficult to real-

ize our equity enough of the time to be profitable. If you recall an under-the-gun open from a solid player is usually pat or drawing one greater than a third of the time.

With these important considerations in mind let's take a look at the suggested default big blind defends in heads-up pots.

Heads-up Pots

UTG/Hijack Open: Hero in Big Blind									
2347	2356	3468	3478	3678	234	246	347	345	23
2357	2368	3457	3467	4568	237	258	348	367	24
2345	2456	3568	3578		247	268	278	468	25
2457	3458		3567		235	256	358	378	27
2367	2378				257		357	467	
2467	2478				245		457	568	
2346	2578				238		458	346	
2358	2678				236		368		
2567					267				
					248				
Re-raise									
Call and D2									
Call									

As usual we should re-raise any holding we choose to play as a one card draw (D1) for both value and to also not potentially divulge any information regarding the strength of our draw. However, for some of the holdings the decisions on whether to play them as a D1 or a D2 are quite interesting and very close.

A draw to a 2-6-7-8 will not fare that well against a range highly concentrated in pats and one card draws. Even when villain is drawing two the situation isn't that great as we aren't a huge "hot/cold" equity favorite. While our opponent is forced to improve to realize his equity he has position and will often be constructing smoother hands with implied odds.

Thus the defaults for 2-3-7-8 thru 2-6-7-8 are to just call and draw two hoping to build a strong hand. Early on in the hand out of position against a strong range this

seems best especially if you are somewhat new to the game as it will reduce the amount of tricky situations on the later streets.

With 3-4-7-8, 3-4-6-7, and 3-5-7-8 we should draw two to either 3-4-7 or 3-5-7 and go duck hunting. While the opener is a big favorite to have a deuce the lack of other players contesting the pot highly suggests that the deck is richer on average with the remainder. The 3-4-5-7 is listed as a re-raise as it is slightly better but drawing two to this holding is fine as well.

We should call with holdings such as 3-4-7, 3-4-8, and 3-5-7 where we have a premium draw if we catch a deuce and as previously discussed reverse implied holdings such as 2-7-8 should folded. And we should not get involved with three card draws unless are up against a super loose player and hold many pairs.

Cutoff Open: Hero in Big Blind									
2347	2356	3468	3478	3678	234	246	347	345	23
2357	2368	3457	3467	4568	237	258	348	367	24
2345	2456	3568	3578		247	268	278	468	25
2457	3458		3567		235	256	358	378	27
2367	2378				257		357	467	
2467	2478				245		457	568	
2346	2578				238		458	346	
2358	2678				236		368		
2567					267				
					248				
Re-raise									
Call and D2									
Call									

When the initial raiser originates from the cut-off their range is often significantly wider thus, we should be play more hands as a D1, flat with a wider D2 range, and defend our premium D3s.

Again, some of these decisions are close and up for

debate. Due to the ability to significantly increase the quality of their draws the defaults for 2-5-7-8, 2-6-7-8, and 3-6-7-8 are still to call and draw two. However, playing them aggressively as one card draws probably has a somewhat similar expectation.

Button Open: Hero In Big Blind									
2347	2356	3468	3478	3678	234	246	347	345	23
2357	2368	3457	3467	4568	237	258	348	367	24
2345	2456	3568	3578		247	268	278	468	25
2457	3458		3567		235	256	358	378	27
2367	2378				257		357	467	
2467	2478				245		457	568	
2346	2578				238		458	346	
2358	2678				236		368		
2567					267				
					248				
Re-raise									
Re-raise with pair(s) or Call									
Call									

Versus a wide button range that will contain a somewhat large concentration of D3s it's almost certainly in our best interest to re-raise and play all of the listed one card draws as D1s.

For the most part we are going to be flatting with our premium two card draws but can work in the occasional re-raise when we hold good blockers. While it's true we aren't a great favorite over anything and we are out of position there is some merit to punishing very loose raisers. They may tire of putting in extra money with hands like 38 and fold more buttons which will result in a greater amount of heads-up pots versus the small blind or outright walks.

Also, holdings such as 2-3-7(2-3) effectively block the premium portion of a button range and significantly increases our overall equity. In addition, if we end up bricking out by pairing and our opponent improves to a one-card draw we typically have a very profitable check-raise and then snow option.

Multi-Way Situations

Versus a raise from early position and a smooth-call we must tighten up our range especially with the hands that require a deuce because unless the caller is very loose they almost always have one. For example, suppose UTG raises, the cut-off and small blind call and we hold 3-4-7 in the big blind. While the pot odds are huge and we are closing the action, our hand is quite bad for the situation as most of the deuces are probably busy and the best low we can make without one is 8-7-5-4-3.

Extra callers increase our pot odds, however, with mediocre or rough holdings they are more of a detriment than a benefit. Their presence often indicates that more of the premium cards are gone, it will be more difficult to realize our equity, and we usually have reverse implied odds.

For example, if the cut-off raises and the small blind smooth-calls we should send hands like 3-4-5, 3-6-7, 4-6-8, and 3-7-8 to the muck. While we are getting immediate odds of 5:1 we must also remember that we are often making a two-street commitment. However, sometimes we must fold the flop unimproved as we can get stuck in the middle with way the worst of it. For example, suppose everyone draws two, we do not improve with one of the mediocre holdings listed above, and the small blind leads. This is a clear fold as the small blind is either drawing one or is pat and there is a player left to act behind us.

Many players leak money in 27TD by defending too loosely out of the big blind due to becoming overly swayed by their immediate pot odds. They fail to consider that the probability of winning the hand is going down faster than the size of the pot is going up as well as potential reverse implied odds. This often results in a stream of very marginal or losing decisions when viewed in totality one's bankroll would have been much better served just moving onto the next hand. This can happen in any variant of poker but due to the drawing nature of the game is much more prevalent in 27TD. ♠



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



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AUGUST	Aug. 9-16	Summer Poker Round-Up	Wildhorse Resort & Casino ■ Pendleton, OR
	Aug. 22	No-Limit Hold'em Tournament	Lucky Chances ■ Colma, CA
SEPTEMBER	Sept. 27	No-Limit Hold'em Tournament	Lucky Chances ■ Colma, CA
	Sept. 28-Oct. 20	Card Player Poker Tour	Bicycle Casino ■ Bell Gardens, CA
OCTOBER	Oct. 8-11	MSPT Michigan	FireKeepers Casino ■ Battle Creek, MI
	Oct. 23-25	South Dakota State Poker Championship	Silverado Franklin ■ Deadwood, SD
	Oct. 29-Nov. 1	MSPT Wisconsin	Potawatomi Hotel & Casino ■ Milwaukee, WI
NOVEMBER	Nov. 6-16	Card Player Poker Tour	Seneca Niagara Casino ■ Niagara Falls, NY
	Nov. 13-23	Gold Rush Poker Series	Lucky Chances ■ Colma, CA

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

ARIZONA

TALKING STICK RESORT - SCOTTSDALE

MONDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$125
7:15 p.m. NLH, \$170

TUESDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$125
7:15 p.m. NLH, \$200

WEDNESDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$125
7:15 p.m. NLH, \$170

THURSDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$125
7:15 p.m. NLH, \$170

FRIDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$125
7:15 p.m. NLH, \$200

SATURDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$240

SUNDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$160

CALIFORNIA

BAY 101 - SAN JOSE

MONDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$130

TUESDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$130

WEDNESDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$150

THURSDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$130

FRIDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$150

SATURDAY

9:00 a.m. NLH, \$250

SUNDAY

9:00 a.m. NLH, \$150

BICYCLE CASINO - BELL GARDENS

MONDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$70 AO \$20 KO \$20
(\$2K Guarantee)

5:00 p.m. NLH, \$75 (\$2.5K Guarantee)

TUESDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$50 AO \$20
(\$2K Guarantee)

5:00 p.m. NLH, \$30 RB \$10 AO \$10
(\$2.5K Guarantee)

WEDNESDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$50 AO \$20
(\$2K Guarantee)

5:00 p.m. NLH, \$65 AO \$20
(\$2.5K Guarantee)

THURSDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$50 AO \$20
(\$2K Guarantee)

5:00 p.m. NLH, \$80 AO \$20 KO \$25
(\$2.5K Guarantee)

8:00 p.m. MP, \$30 RB \$10 AO \$10
(\$1.5K Guarantee)

10:00 p.m. NLH, \$60 RB \$50 AO \$40
KO \$10 (\$2K Guarantee)

FRIDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$50 AO \$20
(\$2K Guarantee)

4:00 p.m. NLH, \$40 AO \$30
(\$5K Guarantee)

5:30 p.m. NLH, \$65 AO \$50
(\$5K Guarantee)

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$90 AO \$70
(\$5K Guarantee)

10:00 p.m. NLH, \$60 RB \$50 AO \$40
KO \$10 (\$2K Guarantee)

SATURDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$65 AO \$50
(\$20K Guarantee)

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$90 AO \$70
(\$20K Guarantee)

4:00 p.m. NLH, \$115 AO \$90
(\$20K Guarantee)

10:00 p.m. NLH, \$60 RB \$50 AO \$40
KO \$10 (\$2K Guarantee)

SUNDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$40 AO \$30
(\$10K Guarantee)

1:30 p.m. NLH, \$65 AO \$50
(\$10K Guarantee)

3:00 p.m. NLH, \$90 AO \$70
(\$10K Guarantee)

CHUMASH CASINO - SANTA YNEZ

MONDAY

10:15 a.m. NLH, \$40
7:00 p.m. PLO, \$0 AO \$20

TUESDAY

10:15 a.m. NLH, \$40
7:00 p.m. NLH, \$60

WEDNESDAY

10:15 a.m. NLH, \$40
7:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

THURSDAY

10:15 a.m. NLH, \$50 KO \$10
7:00 p.m. NLH, \$40

FRIDAY

10:15 a.m. NLH, \$40
7:15 p.m. NLH, \$150

SATURDAY

1:15 p.m. NLH, \$120 (\$5K Guarantee)

SUNDAY

1:15 p.m. NLH, \$100 KO \$25
(\$3K Guarantee)

COMMERCE CASINO - COMMERCE

MONDAY-THURSDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$65 (\$2.5K Guarantee)
6:00 p.m. NLH, \$65 (\$3.5K Guarantee)

FRIDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$65 (\$2.5K Guarantee)
6:00 p.m. NLH, \$150 KO \$50
(\$5K Guarantee)

SATURDAY

1:00 p.m. NLH, \$150 (\$15K Guarantee)

SCHEDULES - DAILY TOURNAMENTS

SUNDAY

1:00 p.m. NLH, \$65 RB \$50
(\$10K Guarantee)

GARDENS CASINO - HAWAIIAN GARDENS

MONDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$30 RB \$10 AO \$10
(\$8K Guarantee)
6:45 p.m. NLH, \$10 RB \$10 AO \$10
(\$3K Guarantee)

TUESDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$75 AO \$40
(\$5K Guarantee)
6:45 p.m. NLH, \$75 AO \$40 KO \$25
(\$5K Guarantee)

WEDNESDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$75 AO \$40 KO \$25
(\$5K Guarantee)
6:45 p.m. NLH, \$75 AO \$40
(\$5K Guarantee)
9:30 p.m. NLH, \$70 AO \$20
(\$1K Guarantee)

THURSDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$50 AO \$40
(\$4K Guarantee)
6:45 p.m. NLH, \$75 AO \$40 KO \$25
(\$6K Guarantee)
9:30 p.m. NLH, \$70 AO \$20
(\$1K Guarantee)

FRIDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$90 (\$4K Guarantee)
6:45 p.m. NLH, \$115 RB \$50
(\$30K Guarantee)

SATURDAY

11:00 a.m. NLH, \$50 RB \$20
(\$5K Guarantee)
3:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 RB \$50
(\$5K Guarantee)

SUNDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$75 AO \$40 KO \$25
(\$5K Guarantee)
3:00 p.m. NLH, \$50 AO \$40
(\$3K Guarantee)

HUSTLER CASINO - GARDENA

MONDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 AO \$40 KO \$25
(\$2K Guarantee)

TUESDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$80 RB \$40
(\$2K Guarantee)

WEDNESDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 AO \$40 KO \$25
(\$2K Guarantee)

THURSDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$80 RB \$40
(\$2K Guarantee)

FRIDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$80 RB \$40
(\$2K Guarantee)

SATURDAY

3:00 p.m. NLH, \$80 RB \$40
(\$2K Guarantee)

LUCKY CHANCES - COLMA

MONDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$120 AO \$10
(\$3K 1st Place Guarantee)

TUESDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$200 AO \$10
(\$4K 1st Place Guarantee)

WEDNESDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$120 AO \$10
(\$3K 1st Place Guarantee)

THURSDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$120 AO \$10
(\$3K 1st Place Guarantee)

FRIDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$120 AO \$10
(\$3K 1st Place Guarantee)

SATURDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$120 AO \$10
(\$3K 1st Place Guarantee)

SUNDAY

9:30 a.m. NLH, \$250 AO \$10
(\$8K 1st Place Guarantee)

OAKS CARD CLUB - EMERYVILLE

MONDAY

6:15 p.m. NLH, \$150

WEDNESDAY

6:15 p.m. NLH, \$185

SATURDAY

11:00 a.m. NLH, \$185

SUNDAY

1:00 p.m. NLH, \$235

OCEAN'S ELEVEN - OCEANSIDE

DAILY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$55 AO \$5

CONNECTICUT

FOXWOODS - MASHANTUCKET

MONDAY

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

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$120

TUESDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$120

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 KO \$25

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$120 (\$10K Guarantee)

WEDNESDAY

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

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$120 KO \$50

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$120 (\$15K Guarantee)

THURSDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$120 KO \$25

FRIDAY

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

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 KO \$25

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$160 (\$8K Guarantee)

8:30 p.m. NLH, \$100

SATURDAY

9:00 a.m. NLH, \$60

11:00 a.m. NLH, \$180 (\$8K Guarantee)

5:00 p.m. NLH, \$140 (\$5K Guarantee)

8:30 p.m. NLH, \$120 KO \$50

SUNDAY

9:00 a.m. NLH, \$60

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$140

5:00 p.m. NLH, \$230

MOHEGAN SUN - UNCASVILLE

MONDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$85 KO \$25

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$75

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$100

TUESDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$75

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$85 KO \$25

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$120 (\$10K Guarantee)

WEDNESDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$75

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$85 KO \$25

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$100

THURSDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$75

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$85 KO \$25

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$120 (\$5K Guarantee)

FRIDAY

11:00 a.m. NLH, \$75

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$100

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$120

SATURDAY

11:00 a.m. NLH, \$150

5:00 p.m. NLH, \$120

SUNDAY

11:00 a.m. NLH, \$200 KO \$50

5:00 p.m. NLH, \$120

FLORIDA

BESTBET - JACKSONVILLE

MONDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

7:00 p.m. PLO H/L, \$125 KO \$25

TUESDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$150

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$125 KO \$25

WEDNESDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

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

THURSDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$125 KO \$25

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

FRIDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$150

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$240 KO \$100

SATURDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$155

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$155

SUNDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$150

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

PALM BEACH KENNEL CLUB - W. PALM BEACH

MONDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$70 (\$2.5K Guarantee)

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$70 (\$2K Guarantee)

TUESDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$70

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$70

WEDNESDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$100 (\$3K Guarantee)

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$100 (\$2K Guarantee)

THURSDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$100 (\$2K Guarantee)

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$100 (\$1.5K Guarantee)

FRIDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$120 (\$10K Guarantee)

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$40 AO \$20

(\$8K Guarantee)

SATURDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$120 (\$5K Guarantee)

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$40 AO \$20

(\$5K Guarantee)

ILLINOIS

RGC POKER (for locations see RGCPoker.com)

DAILY

1:00 p.m. NLH, \$40

5:00 p.m. NLH, \$80

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$40

SATURDAY

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$180

LOUISIANA

COUSHATTA CASINO & RESORT - KINDER**TUESDAY**

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

THURSDAY

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

FRIDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$120

SATURDAY

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

SUNDAY

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

MARYLAND**LIVE! CASINO & HOTEL - HANOVER****MONDAY**12:15 p.m. NLH, \$120 KO \$25
(\$3K Guarantee)

7:15 p.m. NLH, \$140 (\$4K Guarantee)

TUESDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$140 (\$3K Guarantee)

7:15 p.m. NLH, \$120 KO \$25

(\$5K Guarantee)

WEDNESDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$150 (\$3K Guarantee)

7:15 p.m. NLH, \$130 (\$15K Guarantee)

THURSDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$160 KO \$50

(\$3K Guarantee)

7:15 p.m. NLH, \$150 (\$5K Guarantee)

FRIDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$200 (\$5K Guarantee)

7:15 p.m. NLH, \$140 (\$5K Guarantee)

SATURDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$100 (\$10K Guarantee)

7:15 p.m. NLH, \$130

SUNDAY

3:15 p.m. NLH, \$130 (\$15K Guarantee)

6:15 p.m. NLH, \$130

MGM NATIONAL HARBOR - OXON HILL**MONDAY**

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$120 (\$5K Guarantee)

7:15 p.m. NLH, \$235 (\$10K Guarantee)

TUESDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$240 (\$10K Guarantee)

7:15 p.m. NLH, \$120 (\$5K Guarantee)

WEDNESDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$120 (\$5K Guarantee)

7:15 p.m. NLH, \$200 KO \$50

THURSDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$150 KO \$25

(\$5K Guarantee)

7:15 p.m. NLH, \$125 (\$5K Guarantee)

SUNDAY

11:15 a.m. NLH, \$350 KO \$100

(\$20K Guarantee)

MICHIGAN**FIREKEEPERS CASINO - BATTLE CREEK****MONDAY-WEDNESDAY**

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$40

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$40

THURSDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$40

6:30 p.m. PLO/NLH, \$60

FRIDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$40

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$60 AO \$20 AO \$20

SATURDAY

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$125 KO \$25

SUNDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$140/\$240/\$500

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$40

NEVADA**VENETIAN HOTEL & CASINO - LAS VEGAS****MONDAY**

12:10 p.m. NLH, \$150 (\$8K Guarantee)

6:10 p.m. NLH, \$125 KO \$25

(\$4K Guarantee)

TUESDAY

12:10 p.m. NLH, \$150 (\$8K Guarantee)

6:10 p.m. NLH, \$200 KO \$50

(\$9K Guarantee)

WEDNESDAY

12:10 p.m. NLH, \$150 (\$8K Guarantee)

6:10 p.m. NLH, \$125 (\$4K Guarantee)

THURSDAY

12:10 p.m. NLH, \$150 (\$8K Guarantee)

6:10 p.m. NLH, \$125 KO \$25

(\$6K Guarantee)

FRIDAY

12:10 p.m. NLH, \$200 AO \$100

(\$20K Guarantee)

SATURDAY

12:10 p.m. NLH, \$340 (\$25K Guarantee)

6:10 p.m. NLH, \$125 (\$4K Guarantee)

SUNDAY

12:10 p.m. NLH, \$250 (\$15K Guarantee)

6:10 p.m. NLH, \$125 (\$4K Guarantee)

NEW YORK**SENECA NIAGARA - NIAGARA FALLS****MONDAY**

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 (\$2K Guarantee)

TUESDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$45

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$45

WEDNESDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$80

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 (\$2K Guarantee)

THURSDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$60

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$60

FRIDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$80

SATURDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$20 (\$1K Guarantee)

11:00 a.m. NLH, \$150

SUNDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$60

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$125 (\$2.5K Guarantee)

TURNING STONE - VERONA**MONDAY**

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$65

TUESDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$15 (\$1K Guarantee)

WEDNESDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$65 KO \$10

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$65

THURSDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$65 KO \$10

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$15 (\$1K Guarantee)

FRIDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 KO \$25

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

SATURDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$65

4:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 KO \$25

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$25

SUNDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$30

EASTERN POKER TOURPUB POKER EVENTS, NEWS, RANKINGS
AND UPDATES CAN BE VIEWED ATEASTERNPOKERTOUR.COM**NORTH CAROLINA****HARRAH'S - CHEROKEE****MONDAY**

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$80

10:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

TUESDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$80

10:00 p.m. NLH, \$50

WEDNESDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 KO \$25

THURSDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$80

10:00 p.m. NLH, \$45

FRIDAY

5:00 p.m. NLH, \$135

SATURDAY

11:00 a.m. NLH, \$250

SUNDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$80

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$250

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$80

10:00 p.m. NLH, \$45

OREGON**WILDHORSE - PENDLETON****TUESDAY**

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$35

THURSDAY

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$55

SATURDAY

1:00 p.m. NLH, \$75

SUNDAY

1:00 p.m. NLH, \$35

SOUTH DAKOTA**SILVERADO FRANKLIN - DEADWOOD****THURSDAY**

6:30 p.m. NLH, \$88

SATURDAY

2:00 p.m. NLH, \$44

SUNDAY

3:00 p.m. NLH, \$33

TEXAS**CELEBRITY CARD CLUB - ODESSA****TUESDAY**

7:00 p.m. PLO, \$50

THURSDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$60

WISCONSIN**POTAWATOMI - MILWAUKEE****TUESDAY**

6:15 p.m. NLH, \$80

THURSDAY

6:15 p.m. NLH, \$125

SUNDAY

12:15 p.m. NLH, \$150

ALL-TIME WORLD SERIES OF POKER BRACELET EVENT CASHES

Rank	Player	WSOP Cashes
1	Phil Hellmuth	156
2	Chris Ferguson	145
3	Daniel Negreanu	137
4	Roland Israelashvili	116
4	Erik Seidel	115
6	Barry Greenstein	110
7	Men Nguyen	100
8	Humberto Brenes	94
8	Chris Bjorin	94
8	Yueqi Zhu	94

The 2020 *World Series of Poker Online* kicked off at the start of July, and the first 14 events already saw some of the biggest names in the game add to their *WSOP* resumes. Six players inside the top ten on the *WSOP* all-time cashes leaderboard added to their total in the early events, including current leader **Phil Hellmuth**. The 'Poker Brat' has recorded three cashes so far, including an 11th-place showing in the \$500 buy-in kickoff event that started the series. As a result, he increased his lifetime total to 156 cashes in official bracelet events, which puts him 11 in-the-money finishes ahead of second-ranked **Chris Ferguson**, who has made two cashes so far this series to bring his total to 145. **Daniel Negreanu** has cashed six times so far during the *WSOP Online*, bringing his total to 137. **Roland Israelashvili** has cashed in four bracelet events so far this year to overtake **Erik Seidel** to move into fourth place with 116 cashes. Seidel cashed in event #8 to stay the top ten within one cash of Israelashvili. Rounding out players is **Yueqi Zhu**, who secured his 94th career cash in a bracelet event to join a three-way tie with Humberto Brenes and Chris Bjorin.



ALL-TIME WORLD SERIES OF POKER BRACELET EVENT CASHES BY FEMALE PLAYERS

Rank	Player	WSOP Cashes
1	Kathy Liebert	64
2	Maria Ho	58
3	JJ Liu	47
4	Cyndy Violette	44
4	Loni Harwood	43
6	Annie Duke	39
7	Jen Harman	38
8	Kristen Bicknell	36
8	Allyn Shulman	35
8	Jamie Kerstetter	34

There has been a lot of action near the top of the leaderboard for all-time *WSOP* bracelet event cashes by female players, with the top three contenders all recording multiple scores during the early goings of the *WSOP Online* series. **Kathy Liebert** has made three cashes so far, bringing her total to 64 career in-the-money finishes to maintain her hold on the top spot. Maria Ho is hot on her heels, having earned three cashes already this series to bring her total to 58. Like Ho, **Joanne 'JJ' Liu** has made the money in four bracelet events so far in 2020. Her recent deep total to 47, on this lead-among the top runs have brought her career which is good for third place on the leaderboard. The only other player ten to record a cash so far this series is Jamie Kerstetter, who made the money in event #11. With 34 cashes in bracelet events, she now sits in 10th place.





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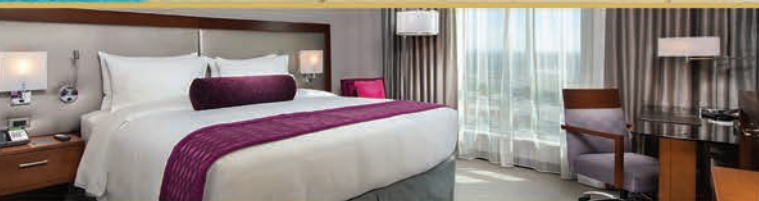
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