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pokerGO LIVESTREAMING SCHEDULE

MAY 31	EVENT #3 \$5K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM
JUNE 1	EVENT #7 \$25K HEADS-UP CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 2	EVENT #1 \$1K MYSTERY MILLIONS
JUNE 3	EVENT #11 \$10K MYSTERY BOUNTY
JUNE 4	EVENT #14 \$25K NLH/PLO HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 5	EVENT #17 \$2K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM
JUNE 6	EVENT #20 \$1.5K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM SHOOTOUT
JUNE 7	EVENT #22 \$25K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM HIGH ROLLER 6-HANDED
JUNE 8	EVENT #26 \$25K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM HIGH ROLLER (DAY 2)
JUNE 9	EVENT #19 \$500 COLOSSUS
JUNE 9	EVENT #26 \$25K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 10	EVENT #32 \$50K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM HIGH ROLLER (DAY 2)
JUNE 11	EVENT #32 \$50K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 12	EVENT #38 \$100K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM HIGH ROLLER (DAY 2)
JUNE 13	EVENT #38 \$100K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 14	EVENT #40 \$5K SENIORS HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 16	EVENT #55 \$250K SUPER HIGH ROLLER (DAY 2)
JUNE 17	EVENT #55 \$250K SUPER HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 18	EVENT #37 \$1.5K MONSTER STACK
JUNE 19	EVENT #52 \$1.5K NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM FREEZEOUT
JUNE 20	EVENT #51 \$25K POT-LIMIT OMAHA HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 21	EVENT #48 \$1K SENIORS CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 22	EVENT #57 \$50K POT-LIMIT OMAHA HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 23	EVENT #58 \$3K 9-GAME MIX
JUNE 24	EVENT #59 \$1K BATTLE OF AGES
JUNE 25	EVENT #61 \$500 NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM FREEZEOUT
JUNE 26	EVENT #66 \$50K POKER PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP (DAY 3)
JUNE 27	EVENT #66 \$50K POKER PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP (DAY 4)
JUNE 28	EVENT #66 \$50K POKER PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 29	EVENT #70 \$1K LADIES CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 30	EVENT #67 \$300 GLADIATORS OF POKER
JULY 1	EVENT #74 \$10K POT-LIMIT OMAHA CHAMPIONSHIP

JULY 2-16

EVENT #81: \$10,000 MAIN EVENT

TUESDAY

JULY 15

FINAL TABLE (DAY 1)

WEDNESDAY

JULY 16

FIANL TABLE (DAY 2)

STREAMING SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. FOR CURRENT STREAMING SCHEDULE VISIT WWW.POKERGO.COM

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NEWS FROM THE GAMBLING WORLD

PENNSYLVANIA ONLINE POKER JOINS MULTI-STATE LIQUIDITY POOL

By Sean Chaffin



Pennsylvania has officially joined the country's online poker shared liquidity pool after Gov. Josh Shapiro signed on to make the state the sixth member of the Multi-State Internet Gaming Agreement.

Poker players in the Keystone State started competing against players from other states at the end of April.

The move allows the state's estimated 150,000 online players to compete with others in Nevada, New Jersey and Michigan. They could potentially compete with players in Delaware and West Virginia when operators enter those markets. Pennsylvania gaming regulators projected that the addition expands the overall player pool by more than 50%.

"This is a commonsense step to support hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians, grow our economy, and bring in more revenue to support our schools, our seniors, our small businesses, and more," Shapiro said. "Three of our neighbors are already part of this agreement – and with this action, we're making sure Pennsylvania remains competitive in a rapidly growing online market."

Pennsylvania is now the largest state in the MSIGA, which has grown to cover more than 38 million Americans. With added player and prize pools, state gaming regulators hope opening up the market will reduce unregulated play.

The official launch date of multi-state play was April 28, with BetMGM and the brand's Borgata online skin

going live. According to the regulators' announcement, "Others are expected to join soon."

WSOP Online also completed that platform's merger with the company's Michigan, New Jersey, and Nevada pools in May, bringing an end to the fractured online bracelet events. Instead, all players with access to the platform will compete in 30 bracelet events this summer.

WSOP.com is also the only platform currently allowing players in all four states to compete against one another.

PokerStars also operates a shared platform in New Jersey and Michigan, and BetRivers launched a Pennsylvania online poker product in November with plans for expansion.

Governor Talks Poker

After the news of the launch, Shapiro joined PokerGO's Mori Eskandani to discuss joining the MSIGA and what may be ahead. He even agreed to a possible game featuring him and other governors.

"I think it's common sense," he said. "There's a bunch of folks like you out there, including 150,000 people in my state in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, who love to play poker online. I think they should be able to play poker online, not just with people from Pennsylvania, but they should be able to reach out and [play] with people from other states. They shouldn't have to wait as long for a game, and should have games that are more vibrant and more competitive, where they get to compete

against more people kind of at their level. It's good for the commonwealth taxpayers as well, so I think it's a win-win all around."

Shapiro said online poker came down to an issue of personal choice. He was hopeful that seeing Pennsylvania join the MSIGA might bring about even more expansion.

"The way I look at this, folks are playing poker all the time," he said. "Whether you're doing it at a table or whether you're doing it at a casino, you're doing it with some buddies, or you're doing it online, I just think you should have the freedom to do that. And by the way, if you don't want to play poker, if you don't want to gamble, you don't have to do that either. It's totally fine. No one's forcing you."

"We're now the biggest state as part of this compact. As Pennsylvania does it, maybe more states will join in. More Americans will get the opportunity to participate with one another in this great game that has been around thousands of years. I think it's a great opportunity."

With 17 retail casinos and 22 sites associated with online casino gaming, the gaming sector employs over 15,000 people in Pennsylvania. Last year, legalized gambling produced almost \$2.7 billion in annual tax revenue to fund school property tax reductions, the purchase of goods and services from the agricultural community, and grants available for projects in all 67 counties. ♠

FATHER-SON WRITING DUO SECURE RIGHTS TO POKER LEGEND STU UNGAR'S LIFE STORY

By Sean Chaffin

A father-son writing team that includes an Oscar winner has now acquired the rights to three-time *World Series of Poker* main event champion Stu Ungar's life and is promising a deep dive into the poker legend's life.

Eric Roth, who won an Academy Award for *Forrest Gump* and was a writer of *Killers of the Flower Moon* and *Dune: Part One*, partnered on the project with his son Geoff Roth. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, they plan to start the project in May, beginning by researching his life and interviewing those who knew Ungar.

"We couldn't be more excited to come aboard to tell Stuey's story," the two writers said in a statement. "He was as uniquely talented and mesmerizing a figure as they come — he's simply one of one. We're honored to be involved and grateful to his family for entrusting us to expound upon his legacy."

Ungar won the main event in 1980, 1981, and 1997. A gifted gin player, he transitioned to poker when he realized there was more money to win. He became a gambler early and was known to be fierce and aggressive at the table, rising to the top in a game previously dominated by older players.

Less than a year after winning the '97 main event, Ungar was found dead in a Las Vegas hotel room. The medical examiner ruled that he died from a heart condition caused by years of drug abuse.

This isn't the first Stu Ungar-based project. There was an unauthorized docu-drama released in 2003 called *High Roller: The Stu Ungar Story*, which starred *The Sopranos'* Michael Imperioli.

ESPN also produced a feature documentary in 2006 which earned four Emmy Awards, including for "Best Documentary of the Year" and "Best Writing."

Ungar's ex-wife Madeline and daughter Stefanie will be involved in the process of the new production.

"We've never felt ready to share it — until now," Stefanie said of working with the writing pair on the series. "When I met Eric and Geoff Roth, we knew we had found the right team to tell my father's story. Eric first met my dad in 1979 while watching him play cards in Las Vegas, and that connection adds a personal layer to this project. We're excited to finally honor my father's legacy and share who he really was with the world."

Ungar's life was a roller coaster. Despite winning millions on the felt, Ungar died virtually broke. He remains one of just two players to win the *WSOP* main event three times, along with Johnny Moss. ♠



POKERSTARS SWITCHES TO SLIDE DEALING AT LIVE EVENTS

By Erik Fast

To ensure game integrity and mitigate cheating concerns, PokerStars is implementing changes to its live poker tournament series.

Instead of allowing dealers to use the traditional pitch where cards are briefly airborne on their way to the player, PokerStars will mandate that they use the slide method.

Slide dealing has gained popularity in Australia and much of Europe. Instead of the traditional pitch, the dealer pushes or slides the card off the stub and across the felt.

According to a statement, this change in dealing protocol, "prevents phones or smart devices from having the chance of catching any card faces during a pitched deal."

This potential form of cheating made the news last year when several men were caught utilizing tiny cameras and "microscopic earpieces that were so small, they could only be removed using a magnet" in France last year.

Poker pro Matt Berkey noted on his podcast that removing devices like cell phones from the table isn't enough, as one suspected cheater allegedly placed a tiny hidden camera inside of a ring.

"You have to go to the core of the problem, which is the dealer's pitch," he said.

PokerStars runs several popular live tournament series outside the United States, including the *European Poker Tour*, the recently re-branded *PokerStars Open*, the *Asia*



Pacific Poker Tour, and the *Brazilian Series of Poker*. The record-setting *Irish Poker Open*, which just wrapped up in Dublin (pg. 38), is also affiliated with the site.

In addition to phones, smart accessories like watches, rings, glasses and wearable tech with the ability to transmit information will also now be disallowed at the table.

"These changes are all about integrity and player experience and safety," said *EPT* Tournament Director Toby Stone. "We've listened to what players want, what their concerns are about playing in tournaments nowadays and made changes that directly address those concerns. With what we are bringing in, players know they are playing on a fairer, more even playing field, and they aren't being disadvantaged either by illegal action that is hard to detect, or behavior that is technically within the rules but perhaps not in the spirit of the game." ♠



WSOP RELEASES ONLINE BRACELET SCHEDULE

By Steve Schult

The *World Series of Poker* released its 30-event online bracelet schedule for the 2025 festival, bringing the total number of bracelets up for grabs this summer to 130.

Once again, the Paris and Horseshoe Las Vegas convention center will host the series scheduled for May 27-July 16. The series will have an online event on every Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday during that time frame.

The *WSOP* released its virtual felt schedule on the same day its Pennsylvania client officially joined the Multi-State Internet Gaming Agreement (pg. 10) and merged its Keystone State player pool with its other pool consisting of players from New Jersey, Nevada and Michigan.

WSOP Online is the only operator available in all four states. As a result, this will be the first time all eligible players will compete for online bracelets on the same platform since online poker expanded outside of Nevada.

"The addition of the Pennsylvania player pool to *WSOP Online* comes at the perfect time, and we're ready to give avid poker players in The Keystone State the opportunity to raise the stakes on their poker play," said Danielle Barille, vice president of online poker at Caesars Entertainment. "This expansion enhances the experience for players by building even greater prize pools that are up for grabs all summer long as a part of our jam-packed *WSOP Online* schedule."

The five biggest buy-ins on the schedule will stop online play at a final table and play to a winner live on the



Las Vegas Strip. The live final tables are an homage to the first *WSOP* online events while alleviating any ghosting (a form of cheating where a player has someone else play on his account or assisting) at the final table of the highest buy-in online events.

In 2015 and 2016, there was only one online event on the schedule and it played its final table in the Rio's "Thunderdome" to crown a champion. Anthony Spinella won the inaugural online event in 2015 and Clayton Maguire topped the 2016 field. Since then, the online portion of the schedule has only grown.

Additionally, the online schedule will have a separate leaderboard and Player of the Year race. Whoever finishes atop the Online Bracelet Leaderboard will earn the title of 2025 *WSOP Online* Bracelet Player of the Year. ♠



WSOP Circuit Returns To Atlantic City After Five-Year Hiatus

By Sean Chaffin

The *World Series of Poker* by the Jersey Shore is back. Caesars Entertainment announced recently that the *WSOP Circuit* is returning to Harrah's Atlantic City from Aug. 14-25.

The city hasn't hosted a *WSOP Circuit* event since 2020, despite being the first ever stop when the tour launched in 2005.

"We are thrilled to welcome back the prestigious *World Series of Poker Circuit* to Harrah's Resort and the unmatched energy, excitement, and talent it brings," Harrah's Senior Vice President and General Manager Gregg Klein said. "Hosting this iconic event reinforces our commitment to delivering premier gaming experiences and positions us as a top destination for esteemed players and poker fans alike."

New Jersey was one of the strictest states during COVID, and casinos were slow to reopen, let alone bring back large-scale tournament series. Before the pandemic, Atlantic City had five poker rooms: Harrah's, Borgata, Tropicana, Golden Nugget, and Caesars. But the Golden Nugget and Caesars never reopened their cardrooms.

The Borgata has been the leader in the Atlantic City market, but it took a few years before the casino started hosting tournaments again. The property didn't host a multi-week tournament series until January 2023, with the *Borgata Winter Poker Open* reboot.

Atlantic City casinos have experienced year-over-year revenue declines in recent months. That trend could continue as nearby metropolitan areas



expand gambling options.

Philadelphia and Maryland have established casino industries, and New York City is expected to have casinos in the next few years. Poker tournament series could be one of the easiest methods to generate repeat customers at the Garden State's casinos.

The last Atlantic City *Circuit* stop was in early March 2020 and was canceled before completion. ♠

COLLEGE STUDENTS BUILD POKER-PLAYING ROBOT

By Sean Chaffin

A pair of computer science and neuroscience students at Northeastern University gave the phrase “playing like a robot” new meaning.

Second-year students Nikhil Mukraj and Jacob Schechter recently unveiled a robot that plays live poker at the school’s RISE 2025 Expo. The gathering featured hundreds of student researchers across several disciplines, showing off their work.

According to the report from *Northeastern Global News*, Mukraj’s and Schechter’s robot stole the show. Unlike some previous computerized poker-playing efforts and online poker bots, the students’ robot actually functions like a real-life player and can participate in live poker games. The goal was to improve “pick-and-place” robotics algorithms for industrial uses.

“In various manufacturing and warehouse settings, you want to have precise control over a given object or item,” Mukraj said. “Robot’s motions need to be very precise.”

In this case, that meant having the robot control playing cards and chips while implementing some poker strategy. The game seemed like a perfect mix of precision movements and human logic, offering the challenge of designing a robot that could play the physical game while also making solid strategic plays at the table.

The robot handles the cards via an arm with a suction cup and has a full range of movement. A card recognition



algorithm was included to allow the robot actually to play and participate in a game.

“Poker is a semi-random game — you don’t always know what’s going to happen next,” Mukraj said. “The algorithms that we developed to solve poker can be applied to other unpredictable environments. We see this coming up quite a bit in navigation.”

Some of the possible uses for the technology could include manufacturing to self-driving cars, the project builders said.

Mukraj and Schechter hope to further enhance their bot to allow it to also deal cards.

Several high-stakes pros have previously squared off against poker-playing computers. Phil Laak and Ali Eslami defeated Polaris in 2007, a system designed by the University of Alberta’s Computer Poker Research Group. The group later improved on that with Cepheus, using artificial intelligence for an even more advanced program.

However, those computers were built to try to play nearly unbeatable poker. In this case, the two Boston-area students were not focused on strategy. Instead, they were more interested in the machine’s robotics. ♠

MAURICE HAWKINS DRAGGED BY FORMER BACKERS AFTER 19TH CIRCUIT VICTORY

By Steve Schult

Just days after tying *World Series of Poker Circuit* history, Maurice Hawkins’ character was once again under the scrutiny of the poker world.

The Florida pro won the \$400 no-limit hold’em monster stack at the *WSOP Circuit Horseshoe* Tunica stop. He bested a 571-entry field to earn \$34,711 and his 19th *Circuit* ring which tied him atop the all-time ring leaderboard with Ari Engel (pg. 42).

But the buzz on social media isn’t about his success. Instead, Hawkins was forced to fend off allegations from former backers that he stole their money.

One of Hawkins’ former backers, Randy Garcia, called Hawkins a “pathological liar and a deadbeat.” Garcia said that he backed him for quite some time and loaned him money for bills and family obligations. But those debts were never paid back.

This situation was well known and settled in court. After Garcia took legal action against Hawkins, a Palm Beach County judge ruled in Garcia’s favor, awarding him a \$115,828 judgment.



Garcia said he was hiring a lawyer to help seize any money Hawkins may win to collect the six-figure sum Hawkins legally owes him.

The public back-and-forth prompted another Hawkins backer to step forward. Denise Pratt, a poker enthusiast from Mississippi who travels to several *Circuit* stops, said she paid for Hawkins’ travel expenses and tournament buy-ins.

When she tried to collect after his win in Tunica, she was turned away. A video revealed he called her an expletive before saying he “didn’t owe her anything.”

Hawkins responded to media reports with threats of lawsuits. ♠

MIAMI BALLET ADDS POKER STORYLINE TO CLASSIC OPERA

By Sean Chaffin

Poker has been the inspiration for many films through the years – from the life of old-school pros to the online poker boom and more.

Hollywood seems drawn to the romance and characters that surround the game. But musicals and other Broadway-type shows haven't shown the same interest. That may now be changing.

The Miami City Ballet recently debuted a new, modern version of the classic opera *Carmen*.

Now, much of the story's events are inspired by the high-stakes underground poker games documented in the 2017 poker film *Molly's Game*.

The production tells the story of a naïve soldier named Don José, a naïve soldier whom Carmen seduces. The English National Opera describes the story as “a searing depiction of a woman who craves love but creates obsession and jealousy” and says the opera “is one of the most popular operas ever written.”

The new Miami City Ballet version portrays Carmen as a card dealer looking to seize power. Like Molly Bloom, the production casts Carmen as an influential central figure in the story.

“Instead of just being a love story, I wanted her to become a card dealer and then slowly in the ballet she becomes more and more powerful and then she runs



her own poker games,” choreographer Annabelle Lopez Ochoa said.

Ochoa hoped to give modern audiences something different with the retelling of the famed opera as a modern ballet.

“I want to give them drama, sexiness and entertainment,” she said. “It’s also going to be a celebration for the eyes.”

The production runs through May at the Adrienne Arsht Center in downtown Miami. ♠


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JUNE 2	#14	\$25K NLH/PLO HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 5	#22	\$25K NLH HIGH ROLLER 6-MAX
JUNE 7	#26	\$25K NLH HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 9	#32	\$50K NLH HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 11	#38	\$100K NLH HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 12	#41	\$10K LIMIT HOLD'EM CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 15	#46	\$250K SUPER HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 26	#72	\$10K SUPER TURBO BOUNTY
JULY 2	#81	\$10K WSOP MAIN EVENT
JULY 9	#88	\$50K NLH HIGH ROLLER
JULY 12	#94	\$10K NLH 6-MAX CHAMPIONSHIP

OMAHA

MAY 31	#9	\$10K OMAHA HI-LO CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 2	#14	\$25K PLO/NLH HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 10	#36	\$10K PLO HI-LO CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 14	#44	\$10K BIG O CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 17	#51	\$25K PLO HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 20	#57	\$50K PLO HIGH ROLLER
JUNE 28	#74	\$10K PLO CHAMPIONSHIP
JULY 1	#79	\$100K PLO HIGH ROLLER

MIXED

JUNE 3	#18	\$10K DEALER'S CHOICE CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 6	#25	\$10K SEVEN-CARD STUD CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 8	#30	\$10K NO-LIMIT 2-7 SINGLE DRAW CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 16	#50	\$10K RAZZ CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 18	#55	\$10K H.O.R.S.E. CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 24	#66	\$50K POKER PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 26	#71	\$10K LIMIT 2-7 TRIPLE DRAW CHAMPIONSHIP
JUNE 30	#77	\$10K SEVEN-CARD STUD HI-LO CHAMPIONSHIP
JULY 2	#82	\$10K 8-GAME MIX CHAMPIONSHIP
JULY 14	#98	\$25K H.O.R.S.E. HIGH ROLLER

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MILLION DOLLAR GAME III: ALAN KEATING WINS \$2 MILLION

13 Players Participate In Hustler Casino Live High-Stakes Streams

By Julio Rodriguez



While super high-stakes cash games are nothing new, it's rare that they are filmed and livestreamed for a home audience. Generally speaking, players who don't bat an eye at flipping for seven-figure pots aren't the type to seek the spotlight, or any attention whatsoever.

Which is why the poker world took notice when Hustler Casino Live first announced the show's Million Dollar Game three years ago. This year's edition featured some of the splashiest high-stakes players around in 'Texas' Mike Moncek and Nik 'Airball' Arcot, table talk and old school skills from Erick Lindgren and Haralabos Voulgaris, and the ongoing war between Alan Keating and Peter Wang.

The game was so hyped up that the Los Angeles-area casino even brought in UFC ring announcer Bruce Buffer to bring each player to the table with an over-the-top, smoke-filled, and spot-lighted introduction. Players would take breaks during the game to be interviewed by a sideline reporter. On the final day, film actor and poker fan Emile Hirsch even showed up to present Keating and Wang with personal portraits he painted himself.

Day 1 – 'Texas' Mike Dominates While Playing Nearly Every Hand

By the end of the eight-hour session on day 1, there was more than \$10 million in play on the table. The big winner of

the evening was 'Texas' Mike Moncek, who racked up with an impressive \$1.55 million in profit.

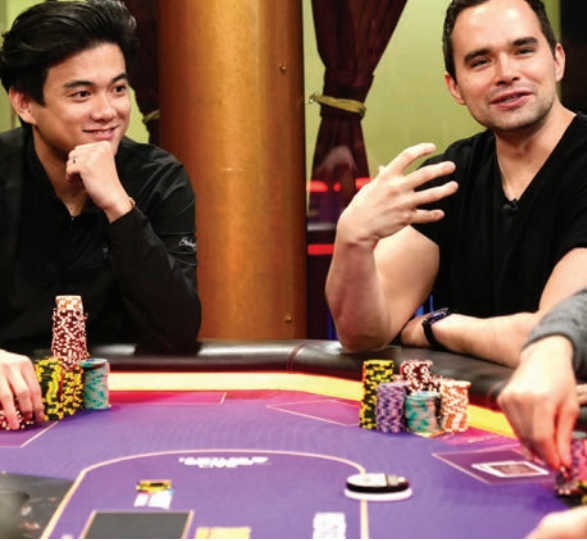
The Chicago amateur, who was profiled in an April issue of *Card Player*, used a relentless barrage of aggression and overbets to take big chunks out of his opponents. The businessman-turned-high roller played a whopping 85% of his hands, crushing his nearest competitors by nearly 30% VPIP.

It was clear that Moncek was enjoying himself much more than last year, when he lost a \$2.2 million flip to Keating. This time around he was able to even laugh it off when Keating bluffed him off trips with four high in a \$530,000 pot.

It was a bold bluff for Keating, who had already dusted off his initial million in the hand of the night against longtime rival Peter Wang. Wang, who was last year's big winner in the Million Dollar Game with nearly \$5 million in profit, has battled with Keating continuously over the past year. Wang had recently taken the worst of it on PokerGO, getting his huge bluffs picked off while also losing the biggest pot in *High Stakes Poker* history, shipping \$1.4 million to Keating.

This skirmish involved a third player, Jack, who got caught in the middle of a leveling war and was forced to fold the best hand. Keating had gotten out of line with queen

© Hustler Casino Live





high, but his massive shove on the river looked like it was going to work before Wang found an incredibly tough call with jacks on an ace-high board.

Keating had a lot of work to do to recover from his seven-figure misstep. After reloading for another million, the normally talkative high roller brooded quietly for a couple of hours as he went card dead and withstood Moncek's relentless action on his immediate right.

The comeback began when he took down a \$1.46 million pot from Jack with the nut flush against trips. Jack would later give him the rest of his stack before quitting the game, temporarily.

Keating then busted Pav, and when Jack returned with another \$500,000, he took that too. Despite starting the game down a full buy-in, Keating bided his time and not only got back to even, but he profited a cool \$451,000.

Erick Lindgren made the trip to Los Angeles with \$25,000, and somehow parlayed that into \$1.28 million. The two-time bracelet winner came out of the satellite event on Sunday, earning his seat into the big game.

The only catch was that he had to risk his million for at least eight hours. Many speculated that he would play tight and try to lock up profit, especially with the two most aggressive players on his direct left. That wasn't the case at all as he was frequently involved in six-figure altercations.

Although it took him a bit of time to get his bearings, he was able to bob and weave enough to finish with a nearly \$300,000 profit on the session. The highlight was when he picked off

a bluff from Steve Swedlow, a former high-profile lawyer and now judge who likes to incorporate table talk into his game.

Swedlow finished the night down \$931,000, the majority of which came after losing a big pot to Jack with a pair and a flush draw against his aces. The loss erased his winnings of \$816,000 from last year's game, and also inspired him to take the rest of the week off.

Despite only playing a couple of orbits to end the evening, Nikhil 'Airball' Arcot entered the game and managed to win a cool \$430,000, mostly from holding aces over Wang's queens.

Day 2 – Haralabos Voulgaris Ups The Table Talk, 'Texas' Mike Gives It All Back

Although the game took a bit of a step back on day 2, with four of the eventual seven players buying in for \$500,000 instead of \$1 million, there were still plenty of seven-figure pots to battle over.

But it was a much different result for Moncek. He gave it all back and then some, dusting off \$1.7 million with some very ambitious hero calls and a propensity to play 7-2 like aces (even though the 7-2 game wasn't on.)

Moncek kept a positive attitude despite the reversal of fortune, telling his social media followers that he had "a lot of fun despite the results."

Wang was another big winner from Monday, finishing the session up \$700,000 after picking off Keating up the biggest pot of the week. But Moncek's night would have been even worse if not for Wang, who also couldn't get anything going after arriv-

ing late and quickly running aces into a set of jacks to lose more than half his buy in.

Wang would finish the night as the only other loser, giving back a little more than \$600,000 of his winnings. That was good news for the rest of the table, who all managed to book wins.

Britney Jing, who is Wang's sister, bought in for \$500,000 and almost immediately doubled up thanks to a cooler when her flopped flush held against Arcot's top set. She would finish the session up \$350,000, quitting when Wang showed up to take her seat.

Despite losing his initial buy-in to Jing, Arcot was able to rebound and finished in the black, racking up with a profit of \$375,000.

A young high-stakes newcomer named Jasper had a rollercoaster session filled with numerous ups and downs and some head-scratching hero calls, but managed to quit while he was ahead to the tune of \$145,000 profit.

Keating was steady throughout the day with only a few hiccups, and finished up \$620,000, bringing his two-day total to \$1.07 million.

But the big winner of the evening was Haralabos Voulgaris, who played his \$500,000 stack to virtually break even for the first eight hours and then soared up the leaderboard during the final hour of three-handed play.

The former NBA analyst and soccer team owner was seemingly more focused on story telling and jokes for most of the night, but he was able to dodge a couple coolers and got paid on his big hands to finish up \$820,000.

Day 3 – Alan Keating Makes Late Entrance But Finishes As Big Winner

The buy-in was bumped back to \$1 million for the third and final day of the game, which also featured Kansas businessman and frequent high-stakes poker player Brandon Steven, and Stanley Tang, founder of DoorDash. They are the only two players to compete in all three years of the Million Dollar Game.

Steven got off to a terrible start, losing nearly half his stack, which he later admitted in an interview was something that happens to him often. Even still, he was able to mount quite a comeback, taking down a big pot with pocket queens and then cracking kings with 5-4 to finish the session as the night's second-biggest winner, taking home \$705,000 in profit.

This marks three straight winning years for Steven, who profited



\$680,000 last year and \$265,000 the first year. His \$1.65 million in total winnings are the fourth-most in the field.

Although Tang also played the first two years, his luck wasn't very good. Tang lost nearly \$1.6 million combined during the first two years in the game, but this time around, he soared to a profit of \$616,500.

The game was stuck in the muck for the first few hours without Keating at the table. He eventually showed up and the action noticeably picked up, which included a \$1.6 million pot and yet another hero call.

Arcot had been a sizable winner the first two days, but he put himself in a hole he could not climb back out of when he nearly doubled up Keating with a busted straight flush draw. Keating had been counterfeited after flopping two pair and was left with a tough decision that required several minutes in the tank.

Ultimately, he came away with the correct call, ensuring that he finished the night with another win. While Keating was the night's big winner with \$848,000 in profit, Arcot was the biggest loser, racking up \$1.29 million less than he started the day with. Overall, Arcot lost \$482,000 over three days of play, making him down \$1.04 million overall after his nearly \$600,000 loss in year one.

And while the week started so promisingly for Moncek and he showed flashes of brilliance throughout, he ultimately

couldn't overcome how many hands he played, finishing down \$1.05 million on the session. That put him down \$1.22 million for the week, and \$3.28 million when you factor in last year's losses, the most of any player to participate in Million Dollar Game history.

Keating finished \$1.92 million in the black overall, which was nearly identical to his results from last year. With \$3.25 million in total winnings over the last two years, he trails only Wang's \$5.18 million in winnings, the majority of which he secured last year.

What's Next?

As Hustler Casino Live Producer Ryan Feldman reiterated, it's hard to put a game this big together. It's especially hard to do it for more than one night at a time, given these millionaires' hectic schedules and temperament. And if a player gets buried on the first night, it's much harder to get them to come back for a second round.

"It's really tough," Feldman explained to *PokerNews*. "The same thing kind of happens every year where we have a number of players who are either committed or interested, as you get closer, you start getting people that can't make it for different reasons."

As a result, Feldman says future editions of the Million Dollar Game could just be one day and run longer, and possibly occur twice per year rather than annually. ♠

Rank	Player	Profit/Loss	Total Hours/Hourly	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
1	Alan Keating	\$1,920,000	23.5/\$81,702	VPIP (56%) PFR (20%)	VPIP (58%) PFR (28%)	VPIP (71%) PFR (30%)
2	Haralabos Voulgaris	\$852,000	17.5/\$48,685	DNP	VPIP (36%) PFR (21%)	VPIP (27%) PFR (15%)
3	Brandon Steven	\$705,500	8.5/\$83,000	DNP	DNP	VPIP (43%) PFR (19%)
4	Stanley Tang	\$616,500	9/\$68,500	DNP	DNP	VPIP (51%) PFR (25%)
5	Britney Jing	\$358,500	5/\$71,700	DNP	VPIP (27%) PFR (12%)	DNP
6	Erick Lindgren	\$283,000*	8/\$35,375	VPIP (39%) PFR (11%)	DNP	DNP
7	Peter Wang	\$242,500	19.5**/\$12,435	VPIP (38%) PFR (13%)	VPIP (48%) PFR (18%)	VPIP (48%) PFR (11%)
8	Jasper	\$145,000	6.5/\$22,307	DNP	VPIP (60%) PFR (33%)	DNP
9	Nikhil Arcot	-\$482,500	18/- \$26,805	VPIP (40%) PFR (40%)	VPIP (28%) PFR (18%)	VPIP (28%) PFR (16%)
10	Steve Swedlow	-\$931,000	8.5/- \$109,530	VPIP (41%) PFR (10%)	DNP	DNP
11	Pav	-\$1,000,000	7.5/- \$133,333	VPIP (57%) PFR (30%)	DNP	DNP
12	Mike Moncek	-\$1,220,000	25.5/- \$47,843	VPIP (85%) PFR (43%)	VPIP (53%) PFR (24%)	VPIP (54%) PFR (28%)
13	Jack	-\$1,500,000	8/- \$187,500	VPIP (46%) PFR (23%)	DNP	DNP

VPIP - Voluntarily Put Chips Into Pot
PFR - Preflop Raise
DNP - Did Not Play

*Lindgren won \$1 million satellite

**Wang took frequent breaks

SAM GREENWOOD: 'YOU CAN LEARN A LOT FROM YOUR PUNTS'

He Started With Zero, Now He Plays \$250K High Rollers

By Art Parmann and Justin Young



With \$42.5 million in recorded tournament earnings and millions more won online, Sam Greenwood is one of the most successful poker players of all time. That includes major scores at high roller events all over the world, with a big run at the *Triton Poker Super High Roller Series* in Jeju, South Korea, to start the year with almost \$2.5 million in cashes.

The Toronto-native saw his first major cash back in 2013, when he finished runner-up in a €5,500 *European Poker Tour Prague* pot-limit Omaha event for \$101,220. That six-figure payday now ranks 90th on a poker résumé that includes 213 cashes overall, 13 seven-figure prizes, and 19 titles.

Although his average buy-in now exceeds most players' entire bankrolls, Greenwood also owns a *World Series of Poker* bracelet from a 2015 \$1,000 no-limit hold'em event for \$318,977. The brother of fellow poker pros Luke and Max Greenwood has kept his play to the nosebleeds for the better part of

the last decade, however, most notably taking down the \$250,000 buy-in *PokerStars Caribbean Adventure Super High Roller* for a massive \$3,276,760.

Greenwood was recently a guest on the *Table 1 Podcast*, explaining how he ran up an online bankroll with zero dollars and how he transitioned to dominating the high-stakes circuit. He also discussed his new Punt of the Day substack, featured in *Card Player* (pg. 58), where he hopes to bring stripped-down poker advice to more casual players in an easy-to-digest format.

Interview highlights are featured below. You can watch or listen to the entire episode on YouTube, Spotify, Apple, or any podcast app.

Greenwood spoke about briefly playing chess before moving on to poker, starting with \$0 and building his bankroll up.

Sam Greenwood: I was good at math growing up. Looking back on it, I just did not have either the head or the emotional constitution for chess. I think it was growing up playing video games,

where you just get used to hitting reset. With chess it's like, 'You just fucked up – game over.' So, we dabbled a little with chess, and it just did not interest me. I even remember I had a teacher who said I'd be good at it.

Justin Young: Sounds like kind of an insult.

Sam Greenwood: It was the chess coach. He thought I would be the guy. I just couldn't do it. It just didn't click



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for me for whatever reason. Max (his older brother) was in first year university at the start of the poker boom. The Moneymaker episodes had already aired, and he started playing with Peter Jetten.

Jetten is a former high-stakes pro who played online under the name 'Apathy' and cashed for nearly \$10 million in live tournaments.

I don't know if you remember him, but Peter went to high school with us. He got us into it. I remember Peter telling me stories about poker. I remember Max telling me Peter won the *Super Monday* on PartyPoker for \$25,000. I was like, 'He won \$25K in a poker tournament on the internet in one day? That's what you're telling me?'

That was crazy. I couldn't fathom having made that much money in one day. So, Max started playing, and then I started playing. I was in high school

and was just playing freerolls. The freerolls would fill up and start at 7 p.m. There would be 1,000 people entering the tournament and you needed to be at your computer at 6 p.m. sharp to register or it would fill up. If you were there at 6:05, you were fucked.

The site I was playing on was called Bugsy's Club, obviously long gone. You wouldn't even win money in the freeroll. You would win points you could then play sit-n-go's or whatever with. If you got enough points, you could convert them into money. I think 1,000 points was worth a dollar.

Then when you cashed the freeroll, you could play whenever you want. You didn't need to wait for the freeroll, so that was nice. Then eventually in a \$1 tournament, I cashed for like 50 bucks.

Justin Young: That's huge.

Sam Greenwood: I came in fifth I think and was like, 'Now I can

play real money poker.' Same thing, \$1 sit-n-go's building all the way up. Eventually it got to the point where Max said I should probably try playing on PartyPoker or PokerStars. 'Try real poker now that you have actual money.'

Lucas (his twin brother) and I were both underage at the time, so I created a PartyPoker account under my dad's name, and Luke created a PokerStars account under my dad's name. I could play on PartyPoker and he could play on PokerStars.

Justin Young: Your dad was multi-accounting and had no idea.

Sam Greenwood: Max at that point had made enough money playing poker that I was just like, 'Hey, can I (borrow)?' It was like the equivalent of asking for your parents' credit card to buy something online.

Maybe they had some trepidation, but they weren't funding the account.

We were funding it with our own money. I started playing \$5 sit-n-go's, then \$10 sit-n-go's, and then all the way up to the point where by the time I started university I had \$10,000 on PartyPoker and was playing \$100 sit-n-go's. That felt like I had accomplished something.

That was also the point in time where you needed 100 buy-ins. That was my bankroll requirement – 100 buy-ins. It didn't matter what the game was.

I was fortunate enough that my parents paid for my school, rent, dorms, and meal plan. I could just treat it like a video game. I could just worry about moving up stakes and that sort of stuff. I didn't need to deal with actually paying for things.

I went to McGill University in Montreal. There was sort of a clubbing scene, but when you're 18, you're just going to pubs anyway. What's the worst you could do? Spend \$300 at the bar out one night. My expenses were nothing, so it just didn't really matter. I could just keep playing.

Art Parmann: So, you built it up from zero? You didn't ever have to deposit?

Sam Greenwood: I remember somebody saying, 'Nobody should ever work at McDonald's because you could just make \$15 an hour playing \$11 sit-n-go's.' That was the time where you didn't need to be good to make a decent amount of money at those stakes.

Justin Young: Ah, the good old days.

The conversation later shifted to Greenwood's success in super high rollers and how he began playing on poker's biggest stages.

Justin Young: Just after Black Friday, you started playing high-stakes tournaments. Did you just dive into those?

Sam Greenwood: I had a lot of friends like Mike Watson, Dan Smith, Ike Haxton, and Scott Seiver who were playing the super high rollers, and there'd be the dynamic where I would be looking at the tournaments and listening to them talk about who was playing.

They'd say, 'Oh, this guy sucks.' I would be like, 'I think he sucks too.' Then I thought, 'Hey, I think I can play these things. I think I'm good enough to play in them.' I also recognize that there is a sort of gravity like in private games, where if you just keep showing up and you keep playing in the game,

people will think you belong. I thought if I could start playing the super high rollers, if I could put up some results, then people would think I belong. The first super high roller I played was the \$100,000 at the *PokerStars Caribbean Adventure* in 2015 and I min-cashed it.

Art Parmann: See, 'I belong.'

Justin Young: It's a good start.

Sam Greenwood: Then right after that, there were super high rollers in Australia. The combination of all of those got to the point where I consistently could get in those tournaments. The thing people don't really talk about much when it comes to high roller events is that they're really fun to play despite the added stress, competitiveness, and all that. Nowadays, everyone knows each other and there's a lot fucking around.

When you play them, you start getting a reputation. You start getting better at adjusting to specific player tendencies. The first time, it seems crazy. Then by the eighth time, it just feels like the most natural thing in the world. It's just a normal poker tournament.

Greenwood also discussed his Punt of the Day substack, which keeps him

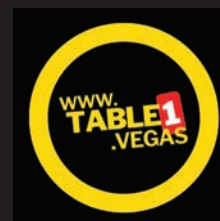
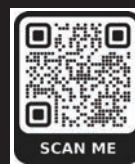



Table 1 is for people who love poker but can't stand rigid, boring, dusty games. We've put together the kind of community where the vibe is just as important as the cards.

Think about it—what if poker was less about squeezing every penny out of the pot and more about the laughs, the stories, and those unforgettable moments? That's what we're here for.

If you've ever thought, "Man, poker used to be fun," then welcome to Table 1.



A man with a beard and a striped sweater is sitting at a poker table, looking intently at the cards. His hands are resting on the table, and there are stacks of chips in front of him. The background is slightly blurred, showing the wooden structure of the casino.

“The thing people don’t really talk about much when it comes to high roller events is that they’re really fun to play despite the added stress, competitiveness, and all that.”

Watch The Full Episode





pretty busy.

Art Parmann: You started your own newsletter that you're putting out five days a week. That's a commitment. What made you want to start doing that?

Sam Greenwood: Yeah, five days a week is a commitment. I have people who have already subscribed. I love Run It Once, and I'm still making videos for them and they've been good to me, but I felt a lot of poker strategy content that's public operates in one of two modes that I'm not the biggest

fan of.

One is like, 'We'll tell you all these secrets to be the best and destroy your competition' type stuff, which always feels like you're kind of overselling it a little. The other is very technical and in-depth.

I've done this in the past. 'Hey, here's one hand I played. I'm going to talk about this for 45 minutes.' I'll be like, 'The board was 9-6-5, but if it was 9-6-7, we would have done this.' But I wanted to instead harken back to [the old days of] *Two Plus Two*. Good

analysis, in-depth, but also something you could read with coffee in the morning or before you go to bed. I wanted something quick and punchy like that.

The other thing is sort of tying into how we talked about high rollers in general. I want to demystify the super high roller culture and how the top guys are playing. I want to try to explain that when you're playing a hand, there are all sorts of other factors people consider that might adjust their strategies. There are all sorts of stuff people get wrong, especially under time constraints, and so there's that element too. I wanted something that demystifies what you're thinking and what you're going through in the hand.

The way I structure each post is I talk to the best of my abilities, what I was thinking about as I was actually playing the hand, and then try to explain what I got wrong.

I don't give this big explanation of range strategy. If you're somebody who casually plays poker, who never looks at software, then this is for you. Then for premium subscribers, I post, I share sims I've made, I give further analysis, that sort of stuff.

But the main meat of the blog is for somebody who plays poker once a month or plays in a home game. You can read my blog and go, 'This makes sense. I learned something. I picked up a couple of tips. this is something I can use.' ♠

Top Tournament Scores

Date	Event	Buy-In	Place	Payout
Feb. 2023	PokerStars Caribbean Adventure High Roller	\$250,000	1st	\$3,276,760
May 2023	Triton Poker Cyprus High Roller	\$100,000	2nd	\$1,923,918
April 2018	EPT Monte Carlo High Roller	€100,000	1st	\$1,839,200
Jan. 2019	PokerStars Caribbean Adventure High Roller	\$100,000	1st	\$1,775,460
March 2025	Triton Poker Jeju High Roller	\$100,000	5th	\$1,687,000
Aug. 2018	Triton Poker Jeju High Roller	\$250,000	4th	\$1,471,421
April 2018	PartyPoker Millions Barcelona High Roller	€50,000	1st	\$1,240,000
Sept. 2022	Triton Poker Mediterranean Poker Party	\$75,000	2nd	\$1,210,000
May 2019	Triton Poker Montenegro High Roller	HK\$750,000	2nd	\$1,118,000
Aug. 2019	Triton Poker London High Roller	£100,000	5th	\$1,100,440
March 2019	Triton Poker Jeju High Roller	HK\$500,000	2nd	\$1,040,000
Aug. 2016	EPT Barcelona High Roller	€50,000	2nd	\$1,022,559
Nov. 2017	PartyPoker Millions Caribbean Poker Party	\$5,000	1st	\$1,000,000
April 2019	EPT Monte Carlo High Roller	€100,000	3rd	\$819,314
May 2019	Triton Poker Montenegro High Roller	HK\$1,000,000	5th	\$734,500
Dec. 2015	EPT Prague High Roller	€50,000	2nd	\$704,061

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DON'T CALL IT AN OBSESSION: RAMI SINGH TALKS TROPHIES

The King Of Wins Holding On To Amateur Status... For Now

By Paul Oresteen



The “Raminator,” the “Last True Amateur,” “Kingpin of Team Singh” – Raminder Singh has a few nicknames at the table as one of Florida’s most prolific poker players with hundreds of tournament cashes and dozens of wins totaling \$3.5 million in earnings. This is despite maintaining an amateur status, running a white-collar IT and management consulting firm while being dad to two teenagers.

But how does a guy collect 532 tournament cashes as an amateur?

Simple – he channels his Type A personality into everything he does. Singh gets up very early to start his workday whether it’s as CEO for his company or for his side business in real estate. He then goes above and beyond to fulfill his family obligations, competing against his kids for trophies

while taking the family to Romania and India in the summer to visit relatives.

Singh’s drive translates directly to his poker game – he’s a finisher. He plays to win and in fact has won 76 of his 127 final table appearances – a mind-melting 60% winning percentage.

I caught up with Singh at a *Moneymaker Poker Tour* stop in Daytona Beach, Florida where in addition to the interview, he was kind enough to serve me my exit papers on day 1B (pg. 43).

Discovering Poker Late In Life

Singh, 50, was introduced to poker in 2006 through a bar league game.

“My boss took me to play, wrote down the hand rank-

© WPT



ings on the back of a napkin and I ended up winning the tournament,” Singh said. “People were upset that I was cracking kings with A-5, but it was all beginner’s luck.”

Slowly, the game took over. In 2016, his kids were out of diapers and his company was well established with trusted lieutenants, allowing Singh more time to play cards in the evenings and on weekends.

“I wouldn’t call it an obsession, but I’ll call it a very strong hobby that I love,” Singh said. “I’ve never read anything or looked at a chart in my life. It’s life experience and reading people in this game. I like the human aspect of poker. I’ve never played online.”

Since shipping his first bar win, Singh’s string of victories places him third in the world. Only Men Nguyen (97) and Flaminio Malaguti (97) have more wins on record, and each of those players’ records could be picked apart with wet paper straws.

One could get hypnotized scrolling through Singh’s tournament results as it seems he lives at the Seminole Hard Rock. Less than 1% of his cashes have come outside of the state of Florida or Las Vegas – he cashed three times at *WSOP Paradise* and once in Texas.

The Floridian admitted as much he doesn’t like traveling for poker.

“You won’t find me much outside of Florida,” Singh said. “I’ve heard those other places are phenomenal. My problem is running a business with close to 100 employees, then there’s raising family – we travel to our home countries Romania and India during the summer. So, it’s very hard for me to travel solely for poker.”

Singh’s weekly planner reads like he’s the world’s busiest man. If he spends this much time on his hobby in a hyper-competitive environment, how does he find time to relax?

The simple answer is that he doesn’t.

“I have issues with lack of sleep,” Singh admitted. “My wife rarely comes with me on poker trips – she’s not a fan

in general. But she sees how poker can be and gets on me about getting enough sleep.”

“How do I operate?” Singh asked aloud. “You’ve got to do what you’ve got to do. I love my family, I love my business, and now I love poker too.”

A Family Man At Heart

“My parents don’t think of poker as a mind sport with a lot of strategy; it’s just gambling to them and they wish that I’d pick another hobby,” he said. “But my kids and nephews love it, and they’ve turned it into a trophy competition with me. They’re thriving now because of it.”

“If I come home with a new trophy, it motivates my kids to beat me,” Singh continued. “My daughter is a national math champion and she already passed me. She has over 90 trophies, I think I have 76 and my son is getting there – he’s got about 45 now.”

Singh’s daughter also competitively ice skates and his son also competes in math and swimming.

“They love to compete,” Singh said smiling ear-to-ear. “Anytime I bring home a trophy, it makes them want to do better in their activity.”

Singh’s fascination with trophies has somewhat numbed him to the real money that’s on the line, but he insists he’s never bought a win before.

“Whether I want the trophy or the money – it’s synonymous with me. I compete. Whether there’s a three-way chop or even, I want the money on top. I’ve never offered somebody extra money for a trophy. I don’t do that. It has to be an ICM deal or an outright win – it’s the same thing to me.”

It was a three-way chop that resulted in the biggest win of his career last year, taking down the \$3,500 *Lucky Hearts Poker Open* for \$486,353 after a deal with Dan Martin and Jesse Lonis.

Other notable wins include a side event at the *Hard Rock Poker Open* for \$200,000, and the *WSOP Circuit Palm*



Beach Kennel Club main event for \$168,995. He also took down the inaugural *RunGood All-Stars ProAm* in Las Vegas.

While a *World Series of Poker* bracelet is one measurement of poker success, Singh realizes that a bracelet might not be in the cards for him.

"I don't like Vegas all that much. My workday starts at 5 a.m. when I'm there, and I can't play a lot of multi-day events as a result," he admitted.

"My main goal and title that would make me happiest would be a *World Poker Tour* title," he said. "It's probably on everyone's bucket list."

Singh's outward personality relaxes a little after some time at the table.

"Poker is my prime hobby and it's not just relaxing, it's a form of therapy for me," he said. "To be honest, it helps to deal with life's grind. Life is a grind, we know that."

"Poker is great, but I enjoy it part-time," he continued. "I'll play tennis and cricket when the family is here. I love spending time with my kids. I'm actually pretty good at their video games and am always involved with their school projects."

Eyeballing The Future

Singh isn't the outlier in his family playing poker; his nephews Japneet and Harmeet also play in Austin, Texas. They're easy to spot in Team Singh shirts that feature a golden lion.

"My message to them was to establish themselves first – have a strong foundation, a full-time job in their profession. First, cover your bases and then you can pick it up," Singh said. "My kids, too. I'll tell them the same – to be great, you must have a strong foundation."

While Singh's family are just laying their foundations, he's got his eyes towards the future.

"Once I retire, my plan is to play those Aria \$10,000 and \$25,000 events, take some trips abroad for some *EPT* events and so my wife can visit her family in Eastern Europe. You may see me do that," he said. "But that's far away when the kids go to college. I want to make sure they're settled and perhaps ready to take over my business."

"I don't compete with anybody here," Singh said motioning to the rest of the field on break. "They keep a leaderboard at Seminole Hard Rock – I don't care for it. My competition is at home." ♠

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“I compete. I want the money on top. I’ve never offered somebody extra money for a trophy.”

TEAM
SINGH



KATHY CHANG'S HEATER BURNS BRIGHT HEADING INTO THE WSOP

'Miami' John Protégé And Women's Poker Advocate Talks Mixed Games

By Craig Tapscott



The late 'Miami' John Cernuto would be proud of his apprentice Kathy Chang for her amazing year on the felt, and she would be just as quick to give the tournament iron-man much of the credit.

Chang has cashed in eight tournaments in 2025, finishing in the top 10 of all eight and winning four. She won three events in February, taking home trophies for a \$400 H.O.R.S.E event at Wynn, a \$500 NLH tag team ladies event at The Venetian, and a \$150 Limit T.O.R.S.E event at The Orleans. She took a short breather, then won the \$200 Limit Omaha eight-or-better

event at the *LIPS Women in Poker Spring Festival* in April.

As a mixed game enthusiast, Chang looks forward to the opportunity to add a coveted WSOP bracelet to the *WSOP Circuit* ring she won at the Commerce last year in a \$600 H.O.R.S.E event. Like her mentor, Chang is a cash machine, with more than 200 on her poker résumé to go along with over 30 live wins.

Card Player caught up with Chang a few weeks before the start of the summer series.

Craig Tapscott: When did you first discover poker and dip your toes into tournaments?

Kathy Chang: I kind of fell into no-limit hold'em by accident. The first time I saw it was when I watched *ESPN* in 2008. I was fascinated right away because I love all games, card games, board games, everything.

I knew nothing about poker other than pocket aces, which was a good hand. I started playing a little bit. We had a local league in my area, and then I went to the Bicycle Casino in Los Angeles.

I played a tournament, and I still knew nothing. A friend said, "If you just fold, you'll be in the money." My first cash was for \$255, and I was thrilled. I then decided I was going to

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play poker. I liked the feeling of cashing. (laughs)

CT: How was the switch to mixed games?

KC: I learned that with fixed limit, you can't bust the first hand, right? You can at least play for a couple of hours, even if you're the worst player ever. You also need a little bit more of your own brain power. Now, with all the solvers and everything, I don't even understand no-limit anymore.

I feel a lot more comfortable playing fixed limit versus the pot-limit and the no-limit, although I play all of them. (laughs) It really is a whole new language.

Everybody speaks English, but if you can be bilingual it helps in everything you do. Your mind works differently. The same goes for poker. You become a more well-rounded player by learning many different games.

CT: Please share a little about the late 'Miami' John Cernuto and what he meant to you.

KC: I was fortunate enough to meet John years ago, and he coached me and became my friend and mentor. I miss him dearly. I'm just getting teared up thinking about it right now.

He was so phenomenal, mainly because he believed in me. I needed a mentor because I had started playing poker on my own. I didn't know anybody in poker. I pretty much just practiced and tried to meet people.

I started playing H.O.R.S.E. years ago, and then I picked up deuce-to-seven triple draw. Now that's my favorite game. But back then, there wasn't

a lot of online content. We only had a few books and not much on mixed games. I had to learn as I went along.

CT: How did John contribute the most to your game?

KC: John was instrumental in getting me to the next level. I was doing okay up until then, but he just really helped me [clean up mistakes]. Especially in my Omaha eight-or-better study, where it's a split-pot game, and the goal is to scoop.

He was always pushing me to have quality starting hands. I could hear him always saying, 'throw it away, throw it away, throw it away.' You want starting hands that are most favorable in getting that scoop potential. You don't want to chase the low, but that's the best feeling when you have the low locked and free rolling to the high.

Sometimes, I'd want to get a little bit creative and play something that wasn't on his 'A list' of starting hands. He would remind me it might look fun right now, but in the long run, you want to play solid hands. That will be the most advantageous to win.

He would also remind me about 'position, position, position.' He couldn't drill that in my head enough. Position is so important in every game. You get so much more information when you have position.

I came from a no-limit hold'em background. When short-stacked and in the small blind, you could just go all in and hope for the best in tournaments. (laughs) But John taught me that in Omaha eight-or-better, since there are no antes, you could fold your

small blind and wait for a better spot. You could still build it up and come back.

CT: What did you appreciate about John the most?

KC: There's so much. He was so humble. And no matter what game he played, he was focused and played solid.

He was very old school. He hardly used a computer. He handwrote all his notes. I had to type out everything so I could read it.

But what he gave me most was a way to believe in myself, develop confidence, and not get discouraged. I will never be so good that I don't need a coach. I always want to learn. I always want to get better.

No one's going to replace John. But I think if I can find one or two people who could help me in specific games, then maybe they can help me get to an even higher level.

CT: You attend many mixed-game festivals, the most recent at the South Point Casino. What do you love about them?

KC: Yes. That whole week, we had the *Ladies Spring Festival*. I happened to win the Omaha eight-or-better event at that one. There's so much positive energy at the festivals. I have all my friends around. We have goofy hats and a pajama day.

I play poker because it's fun. I don't want it to be a job. Even if you don't win, at least you had a good time.

And even if I'm not winning, I'm always learning. Now that I'm getting into the bigger games and higher stakes, I'm watching the better players. I'm always learning something.

I always listened to what John was teaching me, but I had to add my personal touch. Each game, each table is different. You have to see who's at your table and what they are doing. Fortunately for me, one skill that I have is reading people.

CT: I can tell you love live poker.

KC: I love live poker so much more than when I play online. I'm very observant. I watch the people. They'll always tell you what you need to know if you pay attention. Listen to what they're saying, see what they're doing, and you will get a lot of information.

You're sitting there hour after hour in tournaments. There's so much to take in. It's fun. If you watch closely, you can see players' patterns and get a feel for what's happening. Even though



the cards say you're supposed to do one thing, the people say you're supposed to do another. That's a huge factor in how I've done so well.

CT: I read that you're working with the Christina Gollins mentorship program. How is that going?

KC: I'm still looking for a mentor for myself, but I signed up to mentor others. I am proud of them for having this program because I think it's great. We can all help each other and grow the game, especially for more women.

CT: You're very passionate about introducing more women to poker. What advice would you give newer players getting into the game?

KC: There are so many great women's groups out there. I am a member of Pocket Queens, which is a group that is fantastic for women. There is the *LIPS Tour* for women. I've joined all the groups, male, female, everything because I feel like the community is important to me.


CT: What barriers do you think

women come up against when first starting to play the games?

KC: It's being out of your comfort zone. It's starting something new. I created the Mixed Game League at Pocket Queens. It's free. We play a different variant every month. It's a fun and non-threatening environment. I'm trying to give women an opportunity to learn in a fun way.

My best advice for women is to just jump in and get involved.

Find Chang on Twitter/X @changrd. ♠



“I play poker because it’s fun. I don’t want it to be a job. Even if you don’t win, at least you had a good time. And even if I’m not winning, I’m always learning.”

HOMETOWN HERO RAVEE SUNDARA WINS POKERGO TOUR TEXAS POKER OPEN MAIN EVENT

By Erik Fast



The second annual *PokerGO Tour Texas Poker Open* spanned from April 16-29 at Champions Club Texas in Houston, with 20 events and nearly \$2.5 million in total guaranteed prize money. Events ranged from \$150 to \$5,100, with the marquee event of the festival being the \$2 million guaranteed \$3,300 main event.

The tournament drew a total of 699 entries across eight starting flights, surpassing the guarantee and creating a prize pool of nearly \$2.1 million.

Houston poker regular Ravee Sundara emerged victorious in the end, earning \$283,143 and the iconic *TPO* belt buckle trophy. This was the largest live tournament result yet for the man many around town known as 'Sonny.' He now has more than \$564,000 in recorded scores to his name.

In addition to the unique hardware and the money, Sundara also secured 1,260 *Card Player* Player of the Year points as the champion.

This second annual running of the *TPO* featured eight starting flights and two more days of combined field action. The top 88 finishers earned a share of the multi-million-dollar prize pool.

Plenty of notables ran deep, including reigning *World Series of Poker* main event champion Jonathan Tamayo (85th), 2022 *Wynn Millions* main event champion Tony Sinishtaj (22nd), 2023 *WPT World Championship* winner Daniel Sepiol (15th), 2019 *WPT ARIA Summer Championship* win-

ner Matthew Wantman (13th), and a trio of bracelet winners in Joey Weissman (12th), Brian Green (11th), and Michael Liang (10th).

The final table began with Kaleb Harwell out in front and Sundara in seventh chip position. Two of the more accomplished players still in contention bowed out early, with bracelet winner Justin Liberto and four-time *WPT* final tablist Viet Vo unable to get much going after the field combined onto a single table.

Will Benson got the last of his stack in with pocket kings leading the A-K suited of Aaron Gao, but the board brought three spades to give Gao the nut flush and the knockout. Benson earned \$60,000 as the seventh-place finisher.

2021 *Wynn Millions* main event champion Andrew Moreno's last stand pitted his open-ended straight draw against the top two pair of Harwell. The chips went in on the turn, and a blank river saw Moreno head to the rail with \$80,000 for his efforts. The score pushed his career earnings past the \$5.3 million mark.

Phu Vo got all-in on the river in his final hand after hitting an ace high straight. Unfortunately for him, Sundara had flopped trip tens and rivered a full house. Sundara made the quick call to score the knockout, narrowing the field to four. Vo pocketed \$100,000 for fifth place.

Jason Bullock was the next to be eliminated, with his A-8 unable to hold up against the Q-10 suited of Gao. The flop



brought a 10 to give Gao middle pair, and he held from there to send Bullock packing in fourth place for \$125,000.

The final three were fairly close in chips at that point. They decided to hash out a deal to redistribute the remaining prize money a bit based on ICM considerations. They left the title and \$60,000 to play for, with each locking up about a quarter of a million dollars.

Kaleb Harwell slid to the bottom of the leaderboard early, but surged out in front when he made a set of tens against the kings and tens of Sundara. Sundara then doubled up through Gao, cracking pocket aces with K-10.

Gao was knocked out in third when he shoved a weak queen from the small blind and Harwell woke up with pocket tens in the big blind. Harwell flopped top set and improved to tens full by the river. Gao took home the \$247,328 he bargained for in the deal, which was by far his largest tournament score yet.

The final two players then negotiated a new deal to further chop up the remaining \$60,000. They also agreed to run a best-of-three series of pot-limit Omaha flips to determine the champion.

Sundara won the first two to lock up the title, while Harwell finished second with \$264,529 in prize money. This was the second six-figure cash that he's made in a poker tournament, having placed third in the *WSOP Circuit Choctaw* main event in 2023 for \$113,339.

Ray Qartomy Crushes High Roller Side Events

The largest buy-ins offered at the *TPO* series were a collection of four \$5,000 buy-in no-limit hold'em high rollers. The tournaments collectively paid out \$515,000 in total prize money, with Houston local Ray Qartomy emerging as the star of the show.

Qartomy made the final table in three of the four events,

with two outright wins and one third-place showing. All told, he cashed for \$106,900, including a 72nd-place finish in the \$3,300 main event. As a result, Qartomy now has more than \$5.3 million in career tournament earnings to his name.

This spree began when Qartomy bested a modest field of 15 entries in the first high roller to earn \$40,500 and a *TPO* belt buckle trophy. Ed Sebesta was the runner-up, banking \$22,500, while David Chen placed third for \$12,000.

Chen and Qartomy swapped roles the following day in high roller no. 2. Chen emerged victorious from a field of 24 entries to earn \$54,000 and the title, which was his second in a *PGT* event. Ernest Bush finished second for \$33,600, while Qartomy was awarded \$19,200 as the third-place finisher.

The win grew Chen's career earnings to nearly \$900,000. His largest score remains the \$217,500 he took home as the champion of a \$10,000 event at the 2024 *Poker Masters*.

The third high roller was the largest of the festival, with 39 entries making for a \$195,000 prize pool. Elliot Smith came away with the title and the \$58,680 top prize after cutting a heads-up deal with Terry Morales, who settled for \$58,320. Smith now has more than \$2.7 million in recorded tournament scores.

The fourth and final high roller saw Qartomy win his second title of the series. He bested 25 entries for \$41,700 after a heads-up deal with bracelet winner Brian Green, who earned more with \$49,550. Green also finished 11th in the main event, earning \$33,000 for that deep run through a field of 699 entries. His career tournament haul now sits at \$4.1 million.

Smith finished third for \$20,000, while Chen added another \$13,750 for fourth. ♠

PGT TEXAS POKER OPEN - CHAMPIONS CLUB - HOUSTON, TX



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$3,300 NLH April 23-28 \$2,000,000 GTD Entries: 699 Prizepool: \$2,097,000	1 Ravee Sundara	\$283,143 (1,260)
	2 Kaleb Harwell	\$264,529 (1,050)
	3 Aaron Gao	\$247,328 (840)
	4 Jason Bullock	\$125,000 (630)
	5 Phu Vo	\$100,000 (525)
	6 Andrew Moreno	\$80,000 (420)
	7 William Benson	\$60,000 (315)
	8 Viet Vo	\$50,000 (210)
	9 Justin Liberto	\$40,000 (105)

Event	Player	Payout
\$5,100 NLH April 25 Entries: 15 Prizepool: \$75,000	1 Ray Qartomy	\$40,500
	2 Edward Sebesta	\$22,500
	3 David Chen	\$12,000

Event	Player	Payout
\$5,100 NLH April 26 Entries: 24 Prizepool: \$120,000	1 David Chen	\$54,000
	2 Ernest Bush	\$33,600
	3 Ray Qartomy	\$19,200
	4 David Evans	\$13,200

Event	Player	Payout
\$5,100 NLH April 27 Entries: 39 Prizepool: \$195,000	1 Elliot Smith	\$58,680
	2 Terry Morales	\$58,320
	3 Seunghyun Nam	\$29,250
	4 Jeremy Becker	\$21,450
	5 Jonathan Tamayo	\$15,600
	6 Edward Sebesta	\$11,700

Event	Player	Payout
\$5,100 NLH April 28 Entries: 25 Prizepool: \$125,000	1 Ray Qartomy	\$41,700
	2 Brian Green	\$49,550
	3 Elliot Smith	\$20,000
	4 David Chen	\$13,750



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IRELAND'S SIMON WILSON WINS RECORD-SMASHING IRISH POKER OPEN MAIN EVENT

By Erik Fast



The 2025 *Irish Poker Open* €1,150 no-limit hold'em main event attracted a record field of 4,562 entries, blowing away the €2.5 million guarantee by nearly €2 million. This was by far the largest running of this storied tournament, which holds the honor of being the longest-running no-limit hold'em event in Europe after debuting in 1980.

The previous field-size record was set just last year, with 3,233 entries. That meant a 41.1 percent year-over-year increase in turnout.

After five starting flights and three more days of action inside the Royal Dublin Society, Ireland's own **Simon Wilson** hoisted the trophy. The resident of Ashbourne, which is part of the Dublin metro area, earned a career-best payday of €600,000 (\$684,000 USD) for the win.

"It's really special. We come every year, and thousands of people enter. It's always just a pipe dream," Wilson said on the PokerStars live stream after coming out on top.

"Really happy to be able to close it out," he later noted. "Of course, the first-place prize is incredible, but the memory of winning this tournament is second to none. Biggest achievement I've had, and I'm going to remember this day forever."

Wilson now has more than \$1.2 million in recorded earnings to his name, including \$48,792 for a fifth-place finish in a €10,000 buy-in side event at this same festival just days before taking down the main event.

Prior to this, his top payday had been the \$251,073 he earned as the ninth-place finisher in the 2023 *World Series of Poker Online* main event.

In addition to the hardware and the money, Wilson also secured 1,320 POY points as the champion. With his two final-table finishes at this series, he is sitting in 80th place on the leaderboard.

The top 671 finishers earned a piece of the \$5,119,590 prize pool. Several notables ran deep, including bracelet winner and *World Poker Tour* champion Soheb Porbandarwala (25th), bracelet winner Carl Shaw (21st), 2013 *Irish Open* champion Ian Simpson (20th), and poker journalist Terrance Reid (11th).

The final day began with 19 players remaining and Italy's Umberto Ruggeri in the lead. Wilson was situated in 11th place when cards first got in the air, but Michael Karim had pulled out in front by the time the official final table was set. Joe O'Donaill was the first to hit the rail after the last nine posed for a quick photo. He ran pocket nines into the pocket kings of bracelet winner Georgios Skarparis (\$52,212).

Robert Fluereci lost a preflop race with pocket sevens against Brandon Harris' A-9 to head home in eighth place (\$67,294). Panteleimon Pontos' final stand pitted his A-3 suited against the A-K suited of Karim. Pontos flopped a three to take the lead, but Karim rivered a king to narrow

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the field to six. Pontos earned \$88,350 for his seventh-place showing.

Kicker problems spelled the end of Harris' run. He check-raised all-in on a ten-high flop with J-10, only to receive a quick call from the A-10 of Wilson. Blanks on the turn and river meant that Harris settled for \$114,000 as the sixth-place finisher, while Wilson surged up the leaderboard.

Karim had fallen to just over eight big blinds by the time his final hand arrived. He shoved from the small blind with Q♠ 6♣ and was quickly called by Ignatas Kirsis from the big blind with 7♥ 7♦. Karim found no help from the board and was eliminated in fifth place (\$148,200).

Wilson overtook the lead during four-handed play, then further extended his advantage when his A♥ 6♦ drew out on the 7♠ 7♥ of Skarparis, who called Wilson's button shove from the big blind. The board came down A♠ 10♥ 2♥ 2♣ 3♥ and Skarparis was knocked out in fourth place (\$193,800).

A battle of the blinds led to the next elimination. Wilson ripped from the small blind with K♦ 9♠ and received a call from Kirsis, who had been dealt 5♠ 5♥ in the big blind. The A♣ J♣ 9♦ A♦ 4♣ runout gave Wilson aces and nines with a king kicker for the win. Kirsis secured \$256,500 for his podium finish.

Heads-up play began with Wilson holding a 3:1 lead over Ruggeri. It didn't take long for him to convert that advantage into the title. Wilson three-bet shoved over the top of a short-stacked Ruggeri's button min-raise with 6♦

5♦. Ruggeri called all-in for less than eight big blinds with A♥ 10♣, and the board came down 7♠ 6♣ 3♥ K♣ 2♠ to give Wilson a pair of sixes and the title.

Ruggeri was awarded \$360,240 as the runner-up. This was his third-largest cash yet, trailing only his third-place finish in the 2023 *European Poker Tour Prague* main event for \$495,979 and his win in this year's *Merit Poker Western Series* main event for \$377,500.

This was Ruggeri's fourth final-table finish of the year. With 2,828 POY points and more than \$812,000 in to-date POY earnings, he has climbed to seventh place on the leaderboard.

Other Big Winners

The 12-day Irish Poker Open festival featured a total of 69 events, with satellite and tournament buy-ins starting at €120 up to the €10,000 high roller event chopping three-handed in the mini main event to each secure six-figure paydays after.

Tyler Gordon, Gonzalo Veiga, Alexander Rizvi all made the most of their modest €250 buy-in tournament, chopping three-handed to each secure six-figure paydays after navigating through a field of 6,411.

Another trio of six-figure scores came out of the €1,150 knockout event, with **Nils Pudel**, Nikolaos Konstas, and Fabian Rolli coming to an agreement in the €1 million guaranteed tournament.

The €3,000 event title went to **Maximilan Sanders**, while the €5,000 event winners included **Shamil Patel**, **Marcel Kessler**, **Kai Lehto**, and **Kenny Hallaert**. The €10,000 high roller was won by **Robbie Toan**. ♠

Irish Poker Open - Royal Dublin Society - Ballsbridge, Ireland

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€1,150 NLH KO April 10-15	1 Nils Pudel	\$133,448 (960)
	2 Nikolaos Konstas	\$123,690 (800)
	3 Fabian Rolli	\$136,412 (640)
€1,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,222 Prizepool: \$1,344,075	4 Yannick Jobin	\$40,949 (480)
	5 Patrick Eagers	\$34,588 (400)
	6 Tobias Peters	\$33,203 (320)
	7 Florian Duta	\$32,422 (240)
	8 Maksim Petrov	\$21,136 (160)
	9 Ben Miller	\$13,634 (80)

Event	Player	Payout
€250 NLH April 10-21	1 Tyler Gordon	\$132,240
	2 Gonzalo Veiga	\$109,440
	3 Alexander Rizvi	\$105,906
€1,000,000 GTD Entries: 6,411 Prizepool: \$1,543,036	4 Moya Murphy	\$54,948
	5 Haraldur Petursson	\$42,180
	6 Steven Murphy	\$32,490
	7 Joseph Bold	\$24,966
	8 Kevin Lynch	\$19,266
	9 Soraya Estrada	\$14,706



Event	Player	Payout
€5,000 PLO KO April 11-12 Entries: 28 Prizepool: \$147,853	1 Shamil Patel	\$73,927
	2 Klemens Roiter	\$46,225
	3 Fabian Rolli	\$12,027
	4 Christopher Dowling	\$8,664
	5 Markus Ristola	\$7,011

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€1,150 NLH April 13-21 €2,500,000 GTD Entries: 4,562 Prizepool: \$5,119,590	1 Simon Wilson	\$684,000 (1320)
	2 Umberto Ruggeri	\$360,240 (1100)
	3 Ignatas Kirsis	\$256,500 (880)
	4 Georgios Skarparis	\$193,800 (660)
	5 Michel Karim	\$148,200 (550)
	6 Brandon Harris	\$114,000 (440)
	7 Panteleimon Pontos	\$88,350 (330)
	8 Robert Fluereci	\$67,294 (220)
	9 Joe O'Donaill	\$52,212 (110)

Event	Player	Payout
€5,000 NLH KO April 13-14 Entries: 39 Prizepool: \$205,939	1 Marcel Kessler	\$117,429
	2 Ludvig Sterner	\$44,255
	3 Jon Kyte	\$15,960
	4 Sam Grafton	\$11,833
	5 Junxian Du	\$9,257
	6 Leslie Packer	\$7,205

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€5,000 PLO April 14-15 Entries: 80 Prizepool: \$422,370	1 Kai Lehto	\$119,016 (384)
	2 Klemens Roiter	\$76,722 (320)
	3 Ruslan Nazarenko	\$54,834 (256)
	4 Marcel Kessler	\$42,180 (192)
	5 Marcelo Bonanata	\$32,433 (160)
	6 Roy Brindley	\$25,764 (128)
	7 Michael Khan	\$20,634 (96)
	8 Jack Moore	\$16,473 (64)
	9 Jordan Glazer	\$13,224 (32)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€5,000 NLH 8-Max April 15-16 Entries: 147 Prizepool: \$776,112	1 Kenny Hallaert	\$160,368 (576)
	2 Elias Suhonen	\$153,360 (480)
	3 Lawrence Brandt	\$86,184 (384)
	4 Ludvig Sterner	\$66,234 (288)
	5 Umberto Ruggeri	\$50,958 (240)
	6 Paul Hofer	\$39,216 (192)
	7 Andrii Nikitin	\$30,096 (144)
	8 Cheng Chen	\$25,080 (96)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€10,000 NLH April 16-17 Entries: 53 Prizepool: \$574,446	1 Robbie Toan	\$186,732 (300)
	2 Adrian Cazacu	\$123,462 (250)
	3 Klemens Roiter	\$83,334 (200)
	4 Severi Palmu	\$63,156 (150)
	5 Simon Wilson	\$48,792 (125)
	6 Michael Molenaar	\$38,760 (100)
	7 Christopher Nguyen	\$30,210 (75)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€3,000 NLH April 19-20 Entries: 248 Prizepool: \$758,043	1 Maximilian Sanders	\$160,113 (612)
	2 Ewen Trevidy	\$100,092 (510)
	3 Andrii Nikitin	\$71,478 (408)
	4 Danny Pyke	\$54,948 (306)
	5 Nils Pudiel	\$42,294 (255)
	6 Alexander Swaluw	\$33,060 (204)
	7 Sander Ostlyngen	\$27,588 (153)
	8 Adrian Strobel	\$22,914 (102)
	9 Elias Suhonen	\$19,950 (51)



MAURICE HAWKINS WINS RECORD-TYING 19TH WSOP CIRCUIT RING

By Erik Fast

The *World Series of Poker Circuit* rings race has been red-hot this spring, with several of the top title earners on the tour taking down events in recent months. The latest winner was none other than Maurice Hawkins, who took down the *WSOPC Horseshoe Tunica* \$400 Monster Stack for \$34,711 and his 19th gold ring.

This victory moved Hawkins into a tie with four-time bracelet winner Ari Engel for the most *rings*. He already held the tour's record for career earnings with nearly \$3.2 million. Six of his 19 *WSOPC* wins have come in main events on the tour, including his controversial win at the Horseshoe Baltimore stop in March.

"It's a great accomplishment," Hawkins told *WSOP* reporters. "But this whole online situation, where you got guys getting five, six, seven rings but five out of the last six cashes is no more than five thousand. It's terrible. The state of online ring hunting, I just don't like it."

Hawkins' statement could be referring to players like Michael Lavin, who now sits in fourth place in the ring race with 17 wins. The bracelet winner's results have come almost entirely online, with 186 cashes in rings events totaling \$457,001 in earnings.

Hawkins now has 10 final table finishes in 2025. The 336 *Card Player* Player of the Year points that he earned for topping the field of 571 entries in this event brought his total to 2,208, which is good for 17th place in the overall POY standings.



Player	Payout (POY)
1 Maurice Hawkins	\$34,711 (336)
2 Dylan Crawford	\$21,452 (280)
3 Mike Mieszala	\$15,081 (224)
4 Michael Costello	\$10,822 (168)
5 Dave Alfa	\$7,931 (140)
6 Adam Henning	\$5,939 (112)
7 Connor Steinbrook	\$4,545 (84)
8 Charlie Dawson	\$3,558 (56)
9 Anh Nguyen	\$2,849 (28)

© WSOP

VINCENT MOSCATI SECURES 10TH WSOP CIRCUIT RING

By Ryan Lucchesi

Vincent Moscati finished a strong run at the *WSOP Circuit* series at the Horseshoe Casino in Tunica, Mississippi with a victory in the main event that earned him \$111,454 along with his 10th career gold ring. The Verplanck, New York native had won his ninth earlier in the series in a \$400 no-limit hold'em event.

Moscatti is now one of 20 players with double-digit victories in *WSOPC* events. His career earnings now sit at more than \$2.5 million, with more than \$1 million of that coming from his 155 cashes in gold ring events.

The \$1,700 tournament netted a field of 311 entries over the course of two starting flights. The total prize pool topped off at \$562,065 to eclipse the guarantee of a half million. The top 54 players all secured a min-cash worth \$3,404.

Notables that made a deep run in the tournament included multiple circuit winners with Saeed Nia (seventh), 19-time ring winner Maurice Hawkins (eighth), defending *WSOPC* Tunica champion Jessie Bryant (12th), William Stanford (14th), Walker Millesky (22nd), and Kyle Cartwright (24th).

When the final table began, Moscati was third in chips. He proceeded to score three of the next four knockouts to take a healthy chip lead into heads-up play with ring winner Michael Esquivel. The final hand saw Moscati's pocket eights hold against his opponent's pocket sixes. Esquivel earned \$74,552 as the runner-up.



Player	Payout (POY)
1 Vincent Moscati	\$111,454 (600)
2 Michael Esquivel	\$74,552 (500)
3 Michael Ledford	\$51,040 (400)
4 Casey Hatmaker	\$35,783 (300)
5 Roger Foley	\$25,705 (250)
6 Jason Mendoza	\$18,932 (200)
7 Saeed Nia	\$14,305 (150)
8 Maurice Hawkins	\$11,096 (100)
9 Jason Grimes	\$8,843 (50)

© WSOP

SYDNEY RESIDENT TRIUMPHS IN AUSTRALIAN POKER OPEN MAIN EVENT

By Erik Fast

The *Australian Poker Open* \$3,300 AUD main event attracted 690 entries to Club Marconi in Sydney, up from 549 in last year's debut running. The 26% increase in turnout resulted in a \$2 million AUD prize pool, more than doubling the guarantee.

After three starting flights and two more days of action, the sizable field was narrowed down to a single player in Nelson Dong. Dong earned \$249,600 USD for the win, the largest live score yet for the Sydney resident.

Plenty of big names ran deep in this event, including *WPT* champion Toby Joyce (22nd) and two-time *WSOP* bracelet winner Kahle Burns (3rd). The Geelong, Australia resident wound up earning \$110,720 for his podium showing, bringing his career tournament haul to just shy of \$16 million.

Burns got the last of his stack in with pocket tens leading the J-10 of Dong, who had shoved from the button. Burns called from the small blind and remained ahead through the flop, but Dong spiked a jack on the turn to send the high roller to the rail.

Dong took a better than 3:1 chip lead into heads-up play with France's Romain Morvan. In the final hand, Dong limped in from the button with pocket kings and Morvan raised with A-J. Dong three-bet, and Morvan four-bet shoved. Dong quickly called and the board kept Dong's overpair ahead to bring the tournament to a close.



Morvan earned a career-best score of \$153,600 as the runner-up.

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Nelson Dong	\$249,600 (1,260)
2 Romain Morvan	\$153,600 (1,050)
3 Kahle Burns	\$110,720 (840)
4 Steven Zhou	\$84,480 (630)
5 Paawan Bansal	\$67,200 (525)
6 Louis Luo	\$51,840 (420)
7 Chad Awerbuch	\$38,400 (315)
8 David Pham	\$26,240 (210)
9 Luke Edwards	\$20,480 (105)

CHRIS MONEYSMAKER WINS TITLE ON HIS OWN TOUR

By Erik Fast

Chris Moneysmaker managed a unique accomplishment on the circuit in April, taking down an event on a poker tour bearing his name.

Moneysmaker has been one of the most well-known figures on the scene for more than two decades now, thanks in large part to his win in the 2003 *World Series of Poker* main. The former accountant turned an \$86 satellite seat into the championship bracelet and \$2.5 million, resulting in the so-called 'Moneysmaker effect' that inspired a massive influx of new players to the game during the poker boom of the early 2000s.

Moneysmaker was inducted into the Poker Hall of Fame in 2019, and in 2023 the new poker tour bearing his name debuted. The *Moneysmaker Tour* has since hosted numerous festivals around the United States and even in Aruba.

The tournament drew 71 entries, resulting in a prize pool of \$17,750. The top nine finishers made the money, with Moneysmaker earning \$5,195 as the champion thanks to a three-way deal. This was his first time coming out on top, but not the first time he has cashed in a *Moneysmaker Tour* event. He has six other final-table finishes and four more cashes on top of that, with his deepest run before this being a pair of third-place showings.

The 49-year-old now has more than \$8 million in lifetime earnings, with four of his top five scores having been earned in the past two years.



Player	Payout
1 Chris Moneysmaker	\$5,195
2 Jordan Diamond	\$3,710
3 Mariya Persanova	\$2,863
4 Scott McIntosh	\$1,531
5 Stanwood Yang	\$1,181
6 Jeremy Schofer	\$919
7 Carl Buckland	\$788
8 Matthew Mullins	\$700
9 Gerald Storseth	\$613

© APO

© Moneysmaker Tour

LAURA WESTFALL TAKES DOWN NEVADA STATE LADIES CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE

By Erik Fast

The *Nevada State Ladies Championship* at the South Point Casino in Las Vegas drew a sizable field of 451 entries at \$360 a piece, blowing away the \$35,000 guarantee to create a final prize pool of \$137,555.

In the end it was Laura Westfall who hoisted the trophy thanks to a heads-up deal struck with 2024 *LIPS* Player of the Year Ruth Hall. Hall, who won it all back in 2022, earned \$20,770 thanks to her latest deal.

Westfall also earned \$20,770 as the champion. This was the largest recorded tournament score yet for the Sheridan, Oregon resident. Her previous top payday came when she won a \$600 buy-in event last December for \$19,858 during the *Venetian DeepStack Extravaganza IV*.

Bracelet winner Kathy Liebert made the final table, finishing sixth for \$3,301. The Women in Poker Hall of Fame member is now just a few thousand shy of \$7.2 million in career cashes, which places her third on the women's all-time money list behind only Kristen Foxen (\$11.6 million) and Vanessa Selbst (\$10.9 million).

There were six total events held at the latest *LIPS Women In Poker Spring Festival*. The series kicked off with a \$220 mini main event, won by Chris Read for \$9,168. That same day, Kathy Chang (pg. 30) took down the \$220 Omaha eight-or-better event to earn \$4,254. Nicole Altis and Caryn Corsi both earned \$5,983 as winners of the \$200 team event.



The \$180 'Pajama Jam' attracted 121 entries, with Jacqueline Pennington earning \$3,187 after chopping with Liebert.

Player	Payout
1 Laura Westfall	\$20,770
2 Ruth Hall	\$20,770
3 Lorena Sanchez	\$9,491
4 Mary Jo Olsavsky	\$5,571
5 Gina Webster	\$3,824
6 Kathy Liebert	\$3,301
7 Danielle Chaput	\$2,902
8 Lori Wheeler	\$2,545
9 Lisa Towns	\$2,270

© LIPS



Ladies looking for their next event should check out Card Player's Women In Poker webpage. The comprehensive women's poker resource has everything you need whether you are a savvy veteran of the game or just getting started.

Simply visit CardPlayer.com/Women, and you'll get instant information about every known upcoming ladies event, as well as details about past tournaments and winners.

Get the latest women in poker news, interviews, and features, and access links to other ladies poker organizations such as the Women in Poker Hall of Fame, the Women's Poker Association, the Ladies International Poker Series (LIPS), Poker Power, Globetrotting Poker, Pocket Queens, and more.

Visit cardplayer.com/women for more!



2025 Card Player Player of the Year

Sponsored by  CoinPoker

As of
4/29/2025

Rank	Player	Points	Titles	Final Tables	Earnings
1	Shannon Shorr	3,990	5	8	\$1,856,765
2	Jeremy Ausmus	3,880	1	7	\$2,728,400
3	Brandon Wilson	3,648	3	8	\$2,336,000
4	Alex Foxen	3,466	2	8	\$2,363,685
5	Nick Schulman	3,266	1	11	\$1,112,185
6	Eric Blair	2,938	2	8	\$1,252,425
7	Umberto Ruggeri	2,828	1	4	\$812,242
8	Lautaro Guerra	2,797	1	8	\$1,337,186
9	Wenjie Huang	2,550	1	2	\$5,978,000
10	Joey Weissman	2,477	1	7	\$1,053,700
11	Calvin Lee	2,430	0	3	\$1,474,690
12	Chino Rheem	2,409	2	8	\$928,850
13	Igor Yaroshevskyy	2,360	0	2	\$1,469,000
14	Cody Stanford	2,345	5	7	\$473,578
15	Spencer Champlin	2,244	1	4	\$715,700
16	Matthew Wantman	2,227	1	9	\$805,358
17	Maurice Hawkins	2,208	3	10	\$307,983
18	Kristen Foxen	2,194	3	4	\$891,500
19	Bryn Kenney	2,193	1	2	\$2,736,430
20	Clemen Deng	2,163	0	6	\$1,514,572
21	Jesse Lonis	2,129	2	7	\$1,025,860
22	Sam Greenwood	2,126	0	3	\$2,380,500
23	Joao Simao	2,110	1	4	\$657,125
24	Ryan Leng	2,108	1	4	\$203,165
25	Russell Brooks	2,106	3	5	\$296,299
26	Tom-Aksel Bedell	2,100	2	4	\$1,290,437
26	Anatoly Filatov	2,100	1	1	\$1,882,000
28	Sean Winter	2,076	1	3	\$1,210,000
29	Tom Vogelsang	2,063	1	4	\$1,507,870
30	Cecile Ticherfatine	2,060	0	4	\$459,151

CIRCUIT RESULTS



© Parkwest Bicycle Casino

Event	Player	Payout
Winnin' O' the Green Parkwest Bicycle Bell Gardens, CA \$300/\$600 NLH April 6-16 \$1,500,000 GTD Entries: 2,544 Prizepool: \$1,730,120	1 Lam Nguyen	\$230,000
	2 Michael Casella	\$201,455
	3 Behzad Teranie	\$168,000
	4 Nicholas Browning	\$127,500
	5 Jeremy Mintz	\$100,000
	6 Ziao Guo	\$60,260
	7 Quincy Vassar	\$47,560
	8 Dillon Najar	\$36,460
	9 Chris Klodnicki	\$28,450



© APO

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Australian Poker Open Club Marconi Bossley Park, Australia A\$10,000 NLH April 22-23 Entries: 85 Prizepool: \$513,757	1 Joseph Antar	\$160,000 (480)
	2 Noel Jaber	\$113,728 (400)
	3 Weiran Pu	\$75,392 (320)
	4 Kahle Burns	\$44,672 (240)
	5 Benjamin Leblonde	\$35,776 (200)
	6 Joshua Mcswiney	\$26,816 (160)
	7 John Perry	\$21,734 (120)
	8 Anthony Xu	\$17,901 (80)
	9 Najeem Ajez	\$15,341 (40)



© APO

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Australian Poker Open Club Marconi Bossley Park, Australia A\$1,500 NLH April 16-21 A\$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,000 Prizepool: \$830,050	1 Johan Lees	\$161,472 (960)
	2 Daniel Neilson	\$94,272 (800)
	3 Reece Bedot	\$65,472 (640)
	4 Anthony Xu	\$47,552 (480)
	5 Jennifer Cassell	\$36,992 (400)
	6 Dustin Tran	\$27,072 (320)
	7 Jason Brown	\$18,112 (240)
	8 Hai Kee	\$12,352 (160)
	9 Zac Vigar	\$10,624 (80)



© WSOP

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
WSOP Circuit Pasino Aix-en- Provence Aix-en-Provence, France €1,000 NLH April 17-22 €1,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,433 Prizepool: \$1,414,543	1 David Gradic	\$182,400 (960)
	2 Thierry Amirault	\$125,970 (800)
	3 Axel Hallay	\$90,345 (640)
	4 Aliosha Staes	\$66,576 (480)
	5 Julien Bolimowski	\$49,946 (400)
	6 Cecile Ticherfatine	\$38,190 (320)
	7 Julien Sitbon	\$29,640 (240)
	8 Farid Diaf	\$23,256 (160)
	9 Alex Sampirisi	\$18,468 (80)

All payouts in USD.

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TOURNAMENTS

William Hernandez



© Wynn Poker

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Signature Series Wynn Las Vegas, NV \$600 NLH April 17-20 \$400,000 GTD Entries: 974 Prizepool: \$496,740	1 William Hernandez	\$72,573 (456)
	2 Christopher Keller	\$69,454 (380)
	3 Mikhail Sniatovskii	\$54,794 (304)
	4 Eric Baldwin	\$33,353 (228)
	5 Fred Li	\$25,902 (190)
	6 Shane McDaniels	\$19,850 (152)
	7 Joon Kim	\$15,281 (114)
	8 Satish Surapaneni	\$11,403 (76)
	9 Brett Rubin	\$8,614 (38)

Frederic Bunchan



© SHR Poker Blog

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Big Slick Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood, FL \$1,100 NLH April 19 \$50,000 GTD Entries: 123 Prizepool: \$119,310	1 Frederic Bunchan	\$30,370 (264)
	2 Carter McMahon	\$20,300 (220)
	3 Francis Mohan	\$15,000 (176)
	4 Ken Orosz	\$11,300 (132)
	5 Cory Rock	\$8,500 (110)
	6 Raminder Singh	\$6,500 (88)
	7 Manny Tarich	\$4,980 (66)
	8 Shimon Mordechai	\$3,880 (44)
	9 Ernesto Rasse	\$3,040 (22)

David Moses



© WSOP

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit Horseshoe Robinsonville, MS \$400 NLH April 18-20 \$100,000 GTD Entries: 627 Prizepool: \$206,910	1 David Moses	\$35,561 (336)
	2 Nicholas Latta	\$23,063 (280)
	3 Michael Chilton	\$16,389 (224)
	4 Paul Voisin	\$11,637 (168)
	5 Thomas Courtney	\$7,562 (140)
	6 Clifford Mills	\$6,538 (112)
	7 David Champion	\$4,234 (84)
	8 Mark Cooney	\$3,338 (56)
	9 Chad Hall	\$2,730 (28)



© Moneymaker Tour

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Moneymaker Tour MGM National Harbor Oxon Hill, MD \$1,700 NLH April 24-28 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 261 Prizepool: \$399,330	1 Casey Glick	\$78,760 (432)
	2 Adrian Garcia	\$74,866 (360)
	3 Isiah Ditoto	\$40,820 (288)
	4 John Hall	\$24,898 (216)
	5 Kevin Bair	\$19,228 (180)
	6 Harry Korotki	\$15,933 (144)
	7 Michael Miravi	\$13,378 (108)
	8 Jason Smith	\$11,181 (72)
	9 Melanie Hennigan	\$9,017 (36)

TOURNAMENTS



© SHR Tampa

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Tampa Poker Classic Seminole Hard Rock Tampa, FL \$400 NLH April 23-27 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 1,029 Prizepool: \$339,570	1 Dion Jagroo	\$56,940 (384)
	2 Andrew Jones	\$37,920 (320)
	3 Michael Morton	\$28,010 (256)
	4 Huicun Qiao	\$20,910 (192)
	5 Paul Edwards	\$15,770 (160)
	6 Mohamad Alhalwani	\$12,020 (128)
	7 Vittorio Iemolo	\$9,260 (96)
	8 Ryan Hogan	\$7,220 (64)
	9 Marcio Peixoto	\$5,690 (32)



© PokerStars

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
PokerStars Open Live! Casino Philadelphia, PA \$1,100 NLH April 23-27 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 1,154 Prizepool: \$1,107,840	1 Edward Leonard	\$147,806 (960)
	2 Guan Huang	\$126,507 (800)
	3 Frank Funaro	\$125,708 (640)
	4 William Beer	\$62,760 (480)
	5 Adam Agaev	\$47,415 (400)
	6 Norman Rogers	\$38,330 (320)
	7 Daniel McGinnis	\$31,660 (240)
	8 Michael Bohmerwald	\$25,095 (160)
	9 Norman Rodriguez	\$18,625 (80)



© RGFPS

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Mission Rungood bestbet Jacksonville, FL \$400 NLH April 24-27 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 1,039 Prizepool: \$337,675	1 Chongyou Chen	\$65,730 (384)
	2 Nikhil Sunku	\$47,000 (320)
	3 Dimas Martinez	\$25,236 (256)
	4 Charles Lonaie	\$15,814 (192)
	5 Yekaterina Lukina	\$11,104 (160)
	6 Benjamin Scrogins	\$9,421 (128)
	7 Talesh Patel	\$8,075 (96)
	8 Jeremy Paetsch	\$6,729 (64)
	9 Sean Conklin	\$5,720 (32)



© MSPT

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
100 Grand Stack Series Sycuan El Cajon, CA \$400 NLH April 24-27 \$100,000 GTD Entries: 588 Prizepool: \$190,955	1 James Millard	\$36,063 (336)
	2 Di Wu	\$24,938 (280)
	3 Chris Smith	\$18,168 (224)
	4 Stephen Lichtenberger	\$13,529 (168)
	5 Timothy Acker	\$10,244 (140)
	6 Jamie Dalupan	\$7,731 (112)
	7 Jeremiah Corrigan	\$5,992 (84)
	8 Agustin Lopez	\$4,639 (56)
	9 Osvaldo Villalobos	\$3,672 (28)

TOURNAMENTS

Leo Pinamonti



© Canterbury Park

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Spring Championship Series	1 Leo Pinamonti	\$38,915 (336)
	2 Umut Ozturk	\$25,755 (280)
	3 Michael Gunderson	\$18,765 (224)
Canterbury Park Shakopee, MN	4 David Bashel	\$13,975 (168)
	5 Loki Abboud	\$10,590 (140)
\$400 NLH April 24-27 Entries: 605 Prizepool: \$199,650	6 Daniel Warner	\$7,985 (112)
	7 Jeremy Calverley	\$6,190 (84)
	8 Bharathan Pulluvallil	\$4,790 (56)
	9 John Reading	\$3,790 (28)

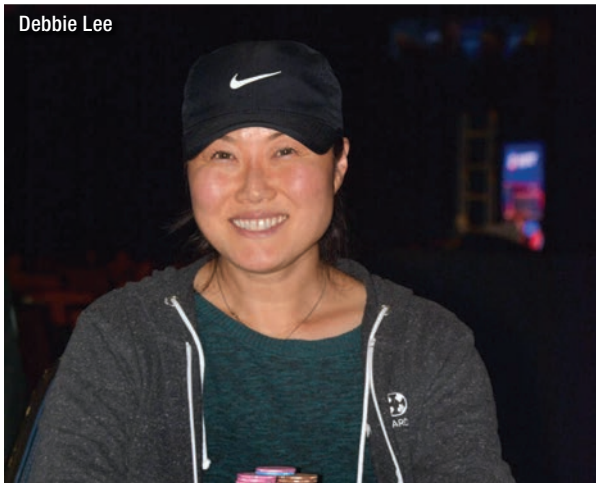
Thomas Wikkoff



© RGP5

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Mission Rungood Horseshoe Council Bluffs, IA	1 Thomas Wikkoff	\$64,869 (360)
	2 Nicholas Hall	\$45,465 (300)
	3 Eric Kyle	\$29,237 (240)
	4 Nicholas Stille	\$19,798 (180)
\$800 NLH April 25-27 \$100,000 GTD Entries: 461 Prizepool: \$322,700	5 Robert Renaud	\$15,215 (150)
	6 Walt Lustgraaf	\$12,634 (120)
	7 Nicholas Barksdale	\$10,585 (90)
	8 Corey Paggeot	\$8,535 (60)
	9 Ryan Phan	\$6,486 (30)

Debbie Lee



© Choctaw

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
WPT	1 Debbie Lee	\$63,443 (456)
	2 Marvin Donaldson	\$38,165 (380)
Choctaw Durant, OK	3 Robert Champion	\$28,136 (304)
	4 Forrest Kollar	\$20,971 (228)
\$500 NLH April 24-27 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 774 Prizepool: \$309,532	5 Bennett Turkington	\$15,839 (190)
	6 Matthew Griggs	\$12,118 (152)
	7 Zackary Walker	\$9,388 (114)
	8 George Bryant	\$7,364 (76)
	9 Ryan Gerstenberg	\$5,847 (38)

Jung Sang



© APT

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
APT	1 Jung Sang	\$85,026 (540)
	2 Tsai Chun	\$47,430 (450)
	3 Kai Hu	\$33,170 (360)
	4 Ching Wei Chen	\$24,041 (270)
Red Space Taipei City, Taiwan TWD 17,000 NLH KO April 26-27 TWD 15,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,724 Prizepool: \$484,052	5 Tsun Chiu	\$19,143 (225)
	6 Hua Wei Lin	\$15,237 (180)
	7 Kexuan Lin	\$11,641 (135)
	8 Youngchang Choi	\$8,215 (90)
	9 Chi Tang	\$6,278 (45)

TOURNAMENTS



© APT



© APT

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
APT Red Space Taipei City, Taiwan TWD 330,000 NLH April 26-27 TWD 15,000,000 GTD Entries: 122 Prizepool: \$1,137,408	1 Minh Nguyen	\$286,159 (660)
	2 Alex Lynskey	\$193,363 (550)
	3 Calvin Lee	\$125,690 (440)
	4 Matt Belcher	\$104,067 (330)
	5 Alex Wice	\$83,948 (275)
	6 Joseph Cheong	\$66,201 (220)
	7 Christopher Park	\$50,608 (165)
	8 Jhon Hendri	\$38,099 (110)
	9 Hirokazu Kobayashi	\$28,443 (55)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
APT Red Space Taipei City, Taiwan TWD 100,000 April 27 Entries: 81 Prizepool: \$216,950	1 Kai Hsu	\$59,641 (288)
	2 Masataka Setoguchi	\$42,408 (240)
	3 Bawoo Yun	\$27,776 (192)
	4 Punnat Punsri	\$21,375 (144)
	5 Nopparut Piyatassakorn	\$16,926 (120)
	6 Kwok Ng	\$13,237 (96)
	7 Hon Cheong Lee	\$10,416 (72)
	8 Sean Ooi	\$8,138 (48)
	9 Jason Wong	\$6,185 (24)

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 Irish Open
€1,150 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Simon Wilson
23,400,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 30%
After Flop: 14%



Ignotas Kirsis
11,800,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 68%
After Flop: 84%



PREFLOP

With eight players remaining and blinds of 400,000-800,000 with a big blind ante of 800,000, Simon Wilson raised to 1,600,000 from the hijack. Ignotas Kirsis three-bet to 4,200,000 from the small blind. Simon Wilson four-bet to 7,600,000 and Kirsis called.



Kiris checked, and Wilson bet 3,000,000. Kirsis moved all-in for 10,700,000, and Wilson folded.

COMMENTARY:

Simon Wilson had a very standard open with his A-J offsuit from the hijack. Ignotas Kirsis had pocket jacks in the small blind and opted to put in a small three-bet off of a 22-big blind stack. There was the presence of a very short stack at the table that made three-betting a much more optimal play than jamming. Given that Wilson is an extremely competent player, he would construct a four-bet range that included bluffs and bluff jams. Kirsis would not be three-betting to fold to a jam. Wilson had a hand that's a really great four-bet bluff candidate as it blocked a lot of Kirsis' potential value and unblocked a lot of Kirsis' bluffs. He made the four-bet and put Kirsis in a very awkward position. Kirsis would be aware that Wilson's four-betting range was extremely polar and a five-bet jam would only be called off by better and possibly A-K suited. Furthermore, Kirsis had to play defensively with a short stack still on the table. Kirsis likely also knew he could extract more value on low card flops against Wilson's bluffs and could get away on very bad flops like A-K-X or A-Q-X. If he ran into queens or better, it would just be a badly-timed cooler. On the seven-high flop, Wilson attempted to take it down with a small continuation bet but had to fold against Kirsis' jam. Kirsis, who started the hand with 22 big blinds, nearly doubled up without showdown, growing his stack to 38 big blinds.

NOTE: WINNING PERCENTAGES DO NOT INCLUDE TIES. ODDS PROVIDED BY [CARDPLAYER.COM/POKER-TOOLS/ODDS-CALCULATOR/TEXAS-HOLDEM](https://cardplayer.com/poker-tools/odds-calculator/texas-holdem)

IRELAND ALL-TIME MONEY LIST



Rank	Player	Earnings	Cashes	Wins
1	Andy Black	\$4,798,137	97	6
2	Max Silver	\$4,749,538	88	7
3	Marty Smyth	\$3,802,808	22	7
4	Marc MacDonnell	\$3,437,633	138	2
5	Eoghan O'Dea	\$3,427,333	74	1
6	Toby Joyce	\$2,682,551	111	1
7	Dermot Blain	\$2,318,720	101	4
8	Patrick Clarke	\$1,801,740	76	3
9	Padraig O'Neill	\$1,751,182	62	1
10	Padraig Parkinson	\$1,601,140	46	2

With the 2025 *Irish Poker Open* in the books (pg. 38), it feels like an opportune time to check in on Ireland's all-time money list.

Andy Black put himself on the poker map with a fifth-place finish in the 2005 *World Series of Poker* main event for \$1.75 million and has cashed for an additional \$3 million outside of that massive score. The Dublin resident is still putting up results on the live circuit even as his 60th birthday approaches this summer. His most recent six-figure payday came when he finished fifth in the 2023 *Irish Open*, which at that point was the largest field in the decades-long history of that tournament with 2,491 entries.

Max Silver is hot on Black's heels despite having retired from professional poker back in 2020. Silver has added just a few scores since announcing that decision, including a final-table showing in a €5,000 event at the latest *Irish Open*. Silver has a dozen six-figure paydays to his name, including a \$700,000 windfall as the champion of a 2018 *European Poker Tour Barcelona* €10,300 side event.

Belfast's **Marty Smyth** has only recorded one cash in the

past dozen years, but despite that fact, he remains in third place on this leaderboard. Smyth was red-hot on the live circuit in the late aughts, with four scores worth \$500,000 or more between April 2007 and December 2008. He won the 2007 *Irish Open* main event for nearly \$900,000, and then followed that up with a second-place showing in the 2007 *Ladbrokes Poker Million*. He then he came out on top in that same event the following year for \$1 million. In between, he took down the *World Series of Poker* \$10,000 pot-limit Omaha championship for \$860,000 and a bracelet.

Rounding out the top five are **Marc MacDonnell** and **Eoghan O'Dea**. MacDonnell earned a cool million for his third-place finish in the 2018 *Caribbean Poker Party* main event, while O'Dea took sixth in the 2011 *WSOP* main event for \$1.7 million. O'Dea's father Donnacha sits in 17th place on the list with \$1.4 million in career earnings.

Former *Irish Poker Open* champ Dan Wilson sits in 11th place, while poker author and podcast host Dara O'Kearney is currently in 14th. 1999 *WSOP* main event champion Noel Furlong's \$1 million victory is enough to put him just inside the top 20. ♠



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10 MISTAKES LOW-STAKES PLAYERS MAKE AND HOW TO EXPLOIT THEM

By Alex Fitzgerald

Low-stakes poker tables are filled with predictable mistakes that most players don't even realize they're making—and that's great news for anyone looking to profit. From overvaluing weak hands to failing to adjust their strategies, these common errors happen over and over again.

In this article, I'll break down the 10 most frequent mistakes you'll encounter, how often they come up, and how you can capitalize on them.

Calling Too Much (Common)

This is everybody's biggest leak, because people play poker for release. Remember how everyone acted at the first home games you played? Tons of giggling, shouting, jabbering, limping, calling, and seeing showdowns. It's like people get high off of the chip slinging.

That's the default for most people. Seeing flops and seeing if their hand is good at showdown are the dopamine pellets they're chasing. They have a hard time giving that up.

You can see players struggling with these cravings every time you play \$1-\$3 or \$2-\$5. They can't fold anything remotely suited or connected because they'll feel like an idiot if it turns out they would have hit the flop. They call down with way too many top pairs until someone finally blasts all the chips in on the river, and even then, some of them don't fold!

If you see a player like this, pick a halfway decent hand and don't stop value betting. Ever.

Calling Slightly Too Much (Common)

After a few years, the total stations go broke or they wise up. Wising up doesn't mean they become a contender, however. It just means they become better at folding second and third pair on the river. They learn to reraise with a few decent hands and try to get value from them. They stop limping in pre-flop and instead raise themselves.

They're doing a few things right, I'll give them that. But they're still a long way from the promised land. They will revert to their default factory settings if you're value betting 40% of the pot, because that sizing



looks small to them. They will keep calling down.

Keep value owning them. Never stop.

Folding Too Much (Rare)

Maybe one player out of 10 or 20 has this leak. It's rare, but some people just come into this world conservative. They get a safe job, they're clean cut, they dress well, and they can't play poker worth a shit.

This player almost takes a smug pride in folding pre-flop because they believe they're better than all the other unwashed barbarians. They go into an entitled rage if their premium gets cracked.

If you're dealing with someone like them, just fold if they suddenly get interested and start putting chips in the pot.

Bluffing Too Much (Rare)

Maybe one guy out of 10 or 20 is a maniac, and most of them are not actually maniacs.

Nine times out of 10 when someone tells me, "This guy is a maniac!" what I really run into is a Conor McGregor type. They know they're going to get paid if they piss you off, so they run their mouths, three-bet often, float always, and occasionally apply some pressure post-flop. However, if a pot gets really big, they usually have the nuts.

A real maniac is someone who can have any two cards at any one time, and those players are rare. They love the action and the attention. You'll know who they are quickly. They'll

actually showdown some clunkers.

If you're playing against a true maniac, then pick a halfway decent hand and let them fire at you. Don't raise and tell them you have it. Let them go after you.

Never Three-Betting (Common)

You see this in every single \$1-\$3 or \$2-\$5 game in the country. Multiple players will only reraise pre-flop if they have the top 5% of their hands. They'll never do it versus a player who opens too much, even when they have a solid mediocre hand that beats that raiser's range.

What ends up happening is even the densest player starts noticing that this person doesn't reraise much. It's hard for them to get action from that point on.

If you deal with one of these types, just fold to their reraises. Don't give them a cent.

Never Overbet Bluffing (Common)

Most people are afraid to put real money into a pot without a real hand. Therefore, when they start overbetting, nine times out of 10 they just have the joint. You can fold to them.

There are opportunities to overbet bluff in low stakes. They're rare, because many of the pots are multi-way, but they exist. If someone calls you quickly on a board with flush draws and straight draws, they often would have raised with their sets, two pairs, and similarly strong hands. You can use this read to pressure them on bad turn cards for their range which is stacked with mediocre pairs.

Hero Calling All Rivers (Common)

Most people have learned how to fold a top pair, but that's it. If they get a mediocre two pair, set, or straight they're never folding it, even to a river all-in.

What does this mean for you? Go for huge value on the river if you know your opponent can't fold. Get paid.

Never Value Betting Enough (Common)

It happens all the time. A guy has a solid top pair on the river, but he's worried about a flush draw or straight draw.

They still need to bet in these situations, because most of their opponents can't check-raise bluff anyway. They can bet, get called by a ton of weaker hands, and just fold when the superior hand inevitably raises.

What this means for you is that you can fold more on the river versus this person if they're also incapable of a large bluff. Their range is much stronger than it should be.

Tilting (Common)

We all are aware of the common type of raging tilt we see all the time after someone takes a bad beat. However, keep your eyes peeled. You can also see players get fatigued and start wanting to play big pots to wake themselves up.

You'll sometimes see players get too trigger happy after a bunch of pots have gone their way.

After every pot, look around the table and ask yourself what dynamic has changed. Be prepared for how that is going to change the ranges in upcoming pots.

Playing Too Much (Common)

I was playing a cash game the other day. A gentleman at the table found out I was a pro. He asked me a question:

"How many hours should I be playing a week? To get better?"

"Do you have another job?" I asked. "Yes."

"Then 20 is a good start."

"I play way more than that," he said.

"How do you do after six hours?" I asked.

He paused.

"I would do much better if I just stopped playing after six hours."

This gentleman was crushing the table at that point, but sure enough, the session went against him as he kept playing. Playing too long dooms us all, because let's face it, we love playing cards! But if you can grind with a focused burst of attention and adaptive

reads you'll do much better than half-assing a 12-hour grind.

Conclusion

Low-stakes poker offers a treasure trove of opportunities for players who can recognize and exploit the common mistakes others make. From excessive calling to poor value betting and predictable tilt patterns, these errors are not just weaknesses—they're profit centers for observant players.

By staying disciplined, adapting to opponents, and capitalizing on these leaks, you can consistently turn the predictable into profitable. Remember, success at the poker table isn't just about playing your own cards; it's about understanding and leveraging the tendencies of those around you. Stay sharp, stay patient, and watch your results soar. ♠



Alexander Fitzgerald is a professional poker player and bestselling author who lives in Denver, Colorado. He is a WPT and EPT final tablist with numerous online tournament wins.

Free training packages of his are available to new newsletter subscribers who sign up for free at www.pokerheadrush.com.

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KEEP THE MANIAC'S RANGE WIDE

By Jonathan Little

I recently went to the Bahamas to play a tournament series and as soon as I landed, I hopped into a fun-looking \$10-\$20 no-limit game. Thirty minutes into the session, I won \$2,500 against an overly aggressive kid when he triple-barrel bluffed in a three-bet pot and I did not fold an overpair. He seemed to be tilted.

A few hands later, with \$10,000 effective stacks, I raised to \$60 with J-J from first position at the eight-handed table and the maniacal kid three-bet to \$240 from second position. Everyone folded around to me.

While four-betting may have merit, I really don't want to face a five-bet/get \$10,000 in preflop, even if my opponent is a maniac. Calling will also make my range appear weaker, ideally inducing bluffs, which he may already be overly inclined to attempt.

I called. The flop came A-10-8. I



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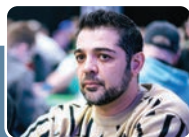
TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 Irish Open
€1,150 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Simon Wilson
12,800,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 43%
After Flop: 83%
After Turn: 93%



Georgios Skarparis
42,200,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 57%
After Flop: 17%
After Turn: 7%



PREFLOP

With eight players remaining and blinds of 400,000-800,000 with an 800,000 big blind ante, Simon Wilson opened to 1,600,000 from UTG +2. Georgios Skarparis called from the big blind.



Skarparis checked, and Wilson bet 1,100,000. Skarparis called.



Both players checked.



Skarparis bet 6,000,000, and Wilson called. Wilson won 18,600,000 with a pair of jacks.

COMMENTARY:

Simon Wilson's tournament was on the line with eight players remaining but this huge hero call allowed him to climb back into contention, eventually leading to his massive €600,000 win. Preflop play was standard, with Wilson opening a suited Broadway hand from early position and Skarparis defending his strong suited ace from the big blind as one of the deepest stacks in the field. The flop was an interesting one as it gave Skarparis backdoor straight and flush draws while he blocked key hands like A-J and A-Q. Wilson had a continuation bet he should make with his whole range and Skarparis made the call. If Skarparis was shorter, a fold would be expected, but given that he was one of the chip leaders, he had the ability to see another card and potentially apply pressure on later streets. On the turn, Wilson was put in a tricky spot with his second pair given the stack-to-pot ratio. If he was nitted, he would have been able to mix in some checks and get the money in by the river. On the other hand, Wilson could have double-barreled as somewhat of a block bet because he knows he's going to get called by a queen and/or face a bet from a queen on the river anyway. He checked and was forced to play a guessing game on the river. The river was a total brick, with all draws missing outside of a suited A-5 that may have floated the flop. Skarparis bet nearly full pot for 60% of Wilson's remaining chips. Wilson had an excellent bluff-catching combo as he blocked K-Q and Q-J and Skarparis wouldn't bet this size with a weak queen. Wilson also unblocked missed heart draws and straight draws like 10-9, 10-8, and 9-8 that would've called on the flop. Wilson found the call and dragged the crucial pot.

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

checked and my opponent bet \$360 into the \$510 pot.

Even though the obviously scary ace came on the flop, my opponent's range is far too wide for me to fold. Realize that your opponent will not have your decent pocket pair beat every time an overcard flops. Of course, he could have you beat, but you never want to allow your opponent to easily exploit you by making a continuation bet with 100% of his range. You must get comfortable with calling on the early betting rounds and navigating the turn and river.

I called. The turn was a Queen. I checked and my opponent checked behind.

It is difficult to know what this specific player's turn check means because he may only check behind when he has absolutely nothing, or he may check with many marginal one pair hands that crush me, such as A-9 and K-Q. Going to the river, my plan was to likely fold to a bet if I failed to improve.

The river was a King, giving me a straight. That is lucky!

It is important to consider the opponent's range and how he will proceed against my possible options.

If I bet, he will probably only call with two pair and better made hands. I doubt he would attempt to bluff since I could easily have the straight with hands like J-J, A-J, K-J, Q-J, and J-10.

If I check, he will probably value bet most two pair hands and may also bluff. By checking, I give him the option to put money in with his decently strong hands, but more importantly, when he has nothing.

Since I want him to put money in the pot with as wide a range as possible, checking makes the most sense.

Fortunately, my opponent bet \$580 into the \$1,230 pot.

I check-raised to \$1,300 and he quickly folded. In this spot, my river check probably won me \$580 more than a bet, unless of course my opponent is an even more extreme maniac than I thought who would have raised if I bet the river!

If you want more resources to help you improve your game, I put together a course called *Master the Fundamentals*. This course covers the basics, preflop, post-flop, multiway, turn and river strategy, and much more. This course is completely free inside *Card Player Poker School*!

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Jonathan Little is a two-time WPT winner and the 2024 PokerGO Cup champion with nearly \$9 million in live tournament earnings, best-selling author of 15 educational poker books, and 2019 GPI Poker Personality of the Year. If you want to increase your poker skills and learn to crush the games, check out his training site at PokerCoaching.com/CardPlayer.



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Punt Of The Day: Bluff Attempt Gone Wrong At Triton Jeju

By Sam Greenwood

Even the best players in the world make mistakes. Join Sam Greenwood as he breaks down and analyzes hands played from the high roller circuit on his Punt Of The Day Substack.

After a 15-hour flight from Toronto to Seoul, an airport change and another flight to Jeju, I was ready to play some poker (and get some sleep!)

The first event of the *Triton Poker* series was a single re-entry \$15,000 no-limit hold'em tournament. Not only did I bust that twice, but I also lost a bet with Jesse Lonis about how many people would play the tournament. (I took the under.)

Not the start I wanted, but there's always another tournament. I slept it off and was ready to play event no. 2, the \$20,000 no-limit. It would take me less than one orbit to make a big mistake. On to the hand.

Event: 2025 Triton Jeju - \$20,000 No-Limit Hold'em

The Hand

It is early in the tournament in level 1 with blinds of 500-1,000 with a 1,000 big blind ante, and everyone is roughly 200,000 deep. It folds to me and I raise A♣ 2♠ to 3,000 on the button, and Boris Angelov defends from the big blind.

Flop: Q♠ 10♥ 4♦ (Pot: 7,500)

Boris checks, and I bet 2,000. Boris calls.

Turn: J♥ (Pot: 11,500)

Boris checks. I bet 9,000, and Boris calls.

River: 2♣ (Pot: 29,500)

Boris checks, and I bet 29,500. Boris raises all-in, and I fold.

What Was I Thinking?

Preflop and the flop are standard; you always raise ace high on the button, and the flop is a pure continuation bet.

On the turn, I have the nut advantage as I will almost always play straights and sets like this, my opponent will three-bet preflop with 10-10+ and A-K often, and he will usually check-raise sets/two pair on the flop.

When constructing my turn bluffing range, I like to pick a variety of different hands so that I will be able to bluff all rivers. This includes straight draws (A-x, K-x, 9-x, 8-x), flush draws, and some total air like 6♣ 5♣. Generally, when bluffing one-card straight draws, the computer prefers picking your worst kicker. Since A-2 is my worst ace, I thought it would be a high frequency bet.

On the river, I thought enough money had gone in on prior streets that I would have almost no showdown value. The ace in my hand matches some of my value bets like A-A/A-K/A-Q, and the deuce blocks some rivered two pair

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 Irish Open
€1,150 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Ignotas Kirsis
52,900,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 29%
After Flop: 16%
After Turn: 7%



Georgios Skarparis
55,500,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 57%
After Flop: 84%
After Turn: 89%

PREFLOP

With six players remaining and blinds of 800,000-1,600,000 with a big blind ante of 1,600,000, Ignotas Kirsis raised to 3,400,000 from the button. Georgios Skarparis called from the big blind.



Skarparis checked, and Kirsis bet 2,300,000. Skarparis called.



Both players checked.



Skarparis checked, and Kirsis bet 8,300,000. Skarparis folded.

COMMENTARY:

Ignotas Kirsis had been one of the most unconventional players at the *Irish Open* and straddled the line of recklessness and pure genius throughout the tournament. With six left and another big stack lingering in the big blind, Kirsis opened quite loose with K-2 offsuit on the button. Georgios Skarparis, who won the *WSOP Mini Main Event* last summer, called with pocket sevens. Both players were very deep compared to the rest of the table and were highly incentivized to play small pots. Skarparis, meanwhile, had very few raises in this specific spot and would call even with hands as strong as pocket jacks due to the number of short stacks at the table. Although Kirsis probably shouldn't have opened with a hand as weak as K-2 offsuit, the EV loss was quite minimal. It's not as bad as it seems on paper. On the flop, Kirsis may have opted to range bet and used a very correct 25% sizing. Similar holdings like Kx 6♥ would love to bet, so we can assume he made the right decision. Skarparis had an easy call. When the turn put a second pair on the board, the big blind should be leading frequently, though this line rarely gets taken into account in live tournament play outside of high roller events. Both players checked. The A♠ hit the river, causing Kirsis to play the board. At this stage, Skarparis should have a very high number of bluffs and value bets, so when he checked, he capped his range. A number of Kirsis' aces could decide to bet, making the ace a legitimate scare card, though Skarparis would also check his fours. Kirsis got a bit wild and went for the exploitative bluff with an optimal sizing. Though Skarparis had a coin flip of a decision based on game theory, he very quickly folded and Kirsis took control of the chip lead.

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like Q-2 and J-2.

I have no showdown, I block some calls from my opponent, and I match my own value bets... so I bluffed.

What I Got Wrong

My preflop and flop logic were sound, but the turn is where my logic falls apart a little.

A-2 is a high frequency turn bet, but it's not pure or close to it. The computer prefers bluffing our lowest kickers, but it prefers having a heart more than having a bad kicker. I should still bet my hand around half the time, and my bet size is used by the solver.

The river is where I blundered this hand. Many of my assumptions were wrong. I have a lot more showdown than I thought -- the solver has me winning the pot -9% of the time I check. I beat A-9 and turned flush draws that check-call the turn.

Betting full pot with A-2 doesn't really match my value bets. The only hands I have with an ace in them that value bet the river are A-A/A-Q/A-K. A-A and A-Q are a small chunk of my value betting range and are thin value bets that can only bet half pot. A-K is a hand that mixes a lot of sizes on the river, but also often overbets. A-2 is too strong to bluff with a half-pot size, so if I wanted to match a value bet with a bluff, I'd prefer overbetting, like I'd often do with A-K.

My logic on the turn was that I should bluff my worst ace high. I thought I should continue to bluff my worst ace high on the river, and I'd rather not have a heart. This logic is sound, as A-3 without a heart almost always bluffs. However, A-2 is no longer my worst A-x, not even close.

That A-3 mixes checks on the river shows some more things I got wrong about this hand. An ace blocker is not

a good bluff card for me. I'll often have an ace in my hand when I have the nuts, but when the big blind has an ace in their hand, they'll often have A-4/A-9 that will check-fold.

A-3 has 1% equity on the river, and I thought hands with no showdown that weren't missed flush draws would pure bluff the river. I have lots of strong hands in my range, and waving the white flag with no equity and reasonable blockers was not on my radar. However, non-flush draw hands with less than 1% equity, such as 8♦6♦, still purely give up.

Types Of Errors I Made

Bluffing with too much showdown

Misunderstanding blocker effects

Misunderstanding range strategy

Sizing errors

Grade

I really made a meal out of this one with four total decisions and two bad ones. My river play loses a lot of EV vs. the solver. However I was jet lagged, it was one of the smaller tournaments of the series and it only cost me 25% of starting stack.

Plus, it's my inaugural POTD, so I'll generously give myself a D+. ♠



Sam Greenwood is one of the winningest tournament players ever and is third on Canada's all-time money list, having cashed for \$42 million in high roller events all over the world. The poker champion has played millions of poker hands and is breaking them down street by street on his

Punt Of The Day Substack. You can reach out to the Run It Once coach on Twitter/X for private coaching @SamGreenwoodRIO.

Hi, my name is Sam Greenwood.

I've played millions of hands of poker and cashed for millions of dollars in tournaments, but I've also made millions of mistakes along the way.

Every day on my Substack I am going to revisit the blunders I've made, walk you through what I was thinking in the hand, and explain why I was unable to execute to the best of my abilities. My hope is that you'll gain some insights from my punts and we can all learn something together.

Get 'The Punt Of The Day' For FREE



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MAXIMIZING YOUR EV WHEN YOUR MIND CAN'T HANDLE POKER

By Blaise Bourgeois

You've spent nearly \$2,000 on flights and accommodation. You've planned this trip for months, ramped up the study grind, put together a five-figure package, and worked hard soliciting action from your inner circle.

But then, you get there, and you're not in the right headspace.

That's exactly what happened to me at the *Irish Poker Open*. It had been, unusually, about two months since I played a major tour stop and I was dying to get back in action. I was set to max-fire just about everything \$3,000 and under and Dublin was supposed to get me in gear for seven weeks at the *WSOP* this summer.

But then, I was forced to pivot. I don't know if it was the gloomy weather I had experienced in England for the last few weeks, but I arrived in Ireland feeling quite lethargic and somewhat under the weather. I also had an incident in the family and work weighing heavily on my mind. In short, it was not how I wanted to feel ahead of eight days of non-stop grinding.

Thankfully I have the benefit of experience. After a few instances of this happening throughout my career, I came to the decision that I wasn't going to play any serious poker unless I really felt up for it that day.



Poker is a game that requires substantial mental strength. You'd better bring your A-game to each and every tournament you play. If you can't bring your best stuff, you don't have an unlimited bankroll, and you don't feel like you can win, you shouldn't play.

Getting over your ego and having this sort of mental fortitude is something that has to be learned over time. It's not playing scared poker, it's playing smart poker and being smart with your bankroll as a whole.

I burnt myself out early in my poker career trying to study and play online 80 hours a week. I also burnt myself out by playing everything in a series just because I had bought a flight and a hotel. If your head isn't in the game, your win-rate will absolutely plummet.

On top of that, as a professional poker player, you have a responsibility to your backers to play your very best with their money. Anything less than that is simply unprofessional.

So I decided to make the most of it and focus on having a good time. Thankfully, some of my best friends in the poker world were all in the building. Even a lot of my fellow Americans that felt that the massive €2.5 million guaranteed main event was worth flying across the pond for. They kept

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 Irish Open
€1,150 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Simon Wilson
87,000,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 46%
After Flop: 43%
After Turn: 25%



Ignotas Kirsis
90,500,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 53%
After Flop: 57%
After Turn: 75%



PREFLOP

With four players remaining and blinds of 1,000,000-2,000,000 with a big blind ante of 2,000,000, Simon Wilson raised to 4,000,000 from the button. Ignotas Kirsis called from the small blind.

FLOP



Kiris checked, and Wilson bet 5,000,000. Kirsis called.

TURN



Kiris checked. Wilson bet 16,000,000, and Kirsis called.

RIVER



Kiris checked, and Wilson bet 25,000,000. Kirsis called. Wilson won with a jack-high straight.

COMMENTARY:

This was the hand that essentially won Simon Wilson the *Irish Open*. Both Wilson and Ignotas Kirsis had over 40 big blinds to start the hand while the other two players were sitting on 13 and nine bigs. Wilson opted to open 9-7 suited from the button, which could be considered a hair loose. Kirsis misplayed his hand preflop according to the solver as A-2 offsuit should never call from the small blind. As the chip leader, he was incentivized to apply a lot of pressure on Wilson and extend his chip lead. A game theory optimal (GTO) approach would lean towards raising or even jamming A-2 offsuit as, with massive ICM pressure, Wilson only could reasonably call an all-in with pocket jacks plus and A-K suited. The flop gave Kirsis top pair while Wilson had a gutshot straight flush draw. Since the small blind should have a pretty strong range, the solver suggests the button continuation bets about half the time on this flop. Kirsis had an easy call. On the board-pairing turn, Wilson's range is generally going to be polar, so he should bet large with his best and worst hands. Although Wilson had a flush draw and a gutshot, he only had nine high, which is one of his worst hands. He used an accurate 67% sizing and Kirsis called, blocking a large percentage of Wilson's value hands. Wilson hit his 10 on the river, which was essentially the nuts aside from the odd K♣ Q♣ and a slow-played A-8 or J-8 suited. Wilson likely put Kirsis on an ace and wanted to put out a size that could get a crying call. Just under 50% pot was brilliant, as it kept Kirsis above the other two players and gave weak aces a great price. Kirsis called and Wilson soared up to over 70 big blinds while Kirsis fell to just over 20 bigs.

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

my morale building throughout the week and it brought me a great deal of pleasure to just hang out and sweat them.

One of them, Terrance 'TJ' Reid, ended up making a deep run in the main event and finished 11th for €36,700. Another friend, Dan Jackson, shipped the €350 six-max for €44,600. Others max-fired and completely bricked everything (sorry Archie), but we made up for it with plenty of pints and laughs.

I travel to a lot of poker events with my girlfriend now, who is a damn good player herself, albeit with a smaller bankroll. She's just starting to grind big series for the first time and isn't regularly playing main events yet. However, after she came up short in a number of satellites, about 10 of us came together to stake her into the main event.

She couldn't have been happier. It was just one of a number of beautiful moments I was able to experience, and truly what poker is all about.

While the weather was generally pretty terrible, there were a number of things that made the event stand out from many others I've played in my life. Food and beverage stalls were everywhere and the Craic Den provided entertainment just about 24 hours a day. Not only that, the streets were flooded with coffee shops, restaurants, and quick healthy eats. It's a fantastic stop.

From a poker standpoint, there were a ton of fun tournaments to play at the €250 - €350 level that I'd love to see at more stops, such as a €350 heads-up championship, a €350 Chinese poker tournament, along with a ton of well-run mixed games like 2-7 triple draw, an 8-game, and H.O.R.S.E.

The series also featured a juicy €250 mini main that only

bagged 5% and ran every day (sometimes with multiple flights). This event brought in an incredible 6,411 entries over 13 starting flights to accumulate a massive €1.3 million prize pool, with the champion awarded an eye-watering €116,000 after a three-way chop (pg. 40).

All these tournaments were nice to dabble in even when I wasn't at my best, as the vibes at the tables were simply immaculate. It was fantastic to be able to jump into these games without having to get into my best mental space. I managed to cash the mini for €670, finishing five away from a vital day 2 bag.

I did manage to get my wits together and play some meaningful poker by the end of the week, jumping into the €350 PLO and making a nice day 2 run, finishing 21st from a 317-entry field for a modest €950 cash. I also fired the €550 *JP Masters* and the €1,150 no-limit, to no avail.

Of course, I had to play the main event and had a very interesting run. After an early hit, I managed to turn my 50,000 starting stack into 130,000 heading into the final level of the night. With about 20 minutes left in the day, I heroed it off wrong and was down to less than 5,000 chips. Somehow, I managed to quadruple, get a shove through, double, and dodge the blinds at the end of the night to bag my original starting stack, or 12 big blinds for day 2.

The next day, I cockroached for a few hours, getting into a vicious cycle of winning a small pot, then having to open and fold to a three-bet in the same orbit. I was able to suck out with a suited ace against pocket kings and we were in there with a chance about 125 players from the money.

I shoved my last seven or eight big blinds with A♥ 7♥ and ran into pocket kings. While I flopped a flush draw and

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was 47% to win, according to the *Card Player* Poker Odds Calculator (pg. 68), I couldn't get there. My girlfriend had busted about five minutes earlier, and we went off to get some much-deserved pints.

On the final day, a group of us friends ended up booking a private cash game table to play the splashiest €1-€2 game until they kicked us out at 6 am. It was a night full of laughter, full of drinks, and something that we hope to make a tradition. It also didn't hurt to win more in that game than I did in the rest of the series.

While I ended the trip down a couple thousand euros, cashing two out of my 11 bullets, I would have almost certainly guaranteed a five-figure loss and had a much worse time if I tried to fight through the fog. From a fun perspective, I truly maximized my EV. ♠



Blaise Bourgeois is a WSOP Circuit ring winner, poker journalist, and contributing columnist for Card Player. Find him on Twitter/X @BlaiseBourgeois.

TURNING CHICKEN SHIT INTO CHICKEN SALAD

By Paul Oresteen

Poker is pain.

But you won't read about it much because wins sell the story that readers and advertisers want to read. Casinos, tour operators, online sites – they all want a smiling winner's photo touting six-figure wins. But the harsh reality is that, for most, poker is a painful and losing endeavor.

In the opening of *Rounders*, Mike McDermott says, "Few players recall big pots they have won, strange as it seems, but every player can remember with remarkable accuracy the outstanding tough beats of his career."

I've penned hundreds, if not thousands, of winner stories and all of the prize money, quotes and story lines were written on the backs of tens of thousands of losers. It's easy to lose sight of the losers, because just like even the best baseball players, they're going to fail most of the time.

My first two flights of the *Moneymaker Poker Tour* main event in Daytona Beach started well. I accumulated chips level to level, was dealt a steady stream of playable hands that connected to boards and was twice the starting stack approaching the dinner break.

Day 1A's bust saw me get in with A♣ K♣ against A♦ K♦ against a similar stack, the flop came three diamonds and that was that. Day 1B saw me open sub-20 big blinds from under the gun. Rami Singh shoved on the button with A♣ K♣ and I snap-called with queens. He hit an ace on the flop and just like that I was headed to my car.

I'd play both bustout hands the same way, but day 1C was another story. I woke up with the grumps, possibly brought on by four straight nights of parentless kids running roughshod all over the hotel.

The third and final bullet was a painful, card-dead grind. The two best hands I saw over seven hours were A♣ K♣ and pocket nines. For six hours, I looked down at an endless supply of unplayable hands, each orbit steaming me up a little more.

I found myself watching the clock, ticking off 10-minute increments crawling to the break – not a good sign. I'd feel a tinge of hope peeling my hand to see the K♣ first, then slowly reveal the 4♦ behind it and send it back to the dealer. It got to the point where I was telling shitty kickers to fuck themselves before I mucked.

What hurts worse than losing big showdowns is not having the ability to get cards to lose with. Getting eaten up by blinds and antes is death by a thousand cuts.

I had my first 0-fer weekend to the tune of \$5,000. While any seasoned poker player reading this might roll their eyes, my civilian friends would shit their pants at losing that much in a weekend.

But I didn't just lose cash, I lost out on spring break with my family. As I stewed indoors, my wife and kid were a few

hours north in St. Simmons Island living their best life. I got a stream of pictures – them with their feet in the water, smiling at a beachfront restaurant eating oysters, and Aubry's first big bike ride on a two-wheeler.

Each of those photos hurt worse than the 4♦ kickers I was being dealt. I wasn't just robbing them of money we could use, I was robbing them of my time. I chose to be in a cardroom over spring break and that guilt manifested into a losing mindset on day 1C.

I should have left. I should have pocketed that one last buy-in. I should have more to show for my efforts. I should have been a better husband and father.

I busted my last bullet, retreated to a quiet spot in the restaurant and looked to at least salvage some content after such a terrible day. I picked a pro with \$5.5 million in earnings because of our interactions while playing half the day together, and then spent an hour prepping an interview.

Now, he doesn't owe me anything, but I do expect to be respected.

I waited for there to be five minutes until break and asked him for ten minutes of his time. "No," he said flatly.

Thinking he was trolling, I hovered.

"I don't read anything and I don't talk to people," he said after an uncomfortable moment, returning his attention to the table.

I spun on my heels, walked straight out to my car and shame-ate McDonald's alone in my hotel room. My anxiety and self-deprecation spiraled for an hour as I struggled with losing and time away from my family.

I couldn't leave Daytona Beach with nothing to show for it, though. I recentered myself, played the heaviest of metal and spun up another interview. I strapped on my big boy pants and returned to chat with Florida's most accomplished amateur poker player – Rami Singh (pg. 28).

I turned a chicken shit day into chicken salad to salvage the trip. I drove back home on Sunday with the rest of Spring Break traffic – a six-hour trip that took more than seven – made painless by a smiling family waiting for me.

We had pizza delivered, sat on the back porch and swapped stories of our individual adventures. The poker was hard and the writing was a bit harder, but if it were all easy, would it be worth it? ♠



Paul Oresteen started covering poker in 2009 after graduating from Georgia State University. He calls Atlanta home and is a proud girl dad and avid playing card collector. He's covered the game from Connecticut to California, named Daniel Negreanu's dogs, and Doyle Brunson once called him an asshole.

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MAY	May 19-July 31	DeepStack Championship Poker Series	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	May 21-July 14	Summer Classic	Wynn ■ Las Vegas, NV
	May 23-July 6	Summer Poker Festival	MGM Grand ■ Las Vegas, NV
	May 23-July 13	Summer Open Series	Orleans Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	May 27-July 2	Grand Poker Series	Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	May 27-July 16	World Series of Poker	Horseshoe Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	May 28-July 13	Poker Classic	Aria Resort & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
JUNE	June 5-15	PokerAtlas Tour - St. Augustine	bestbet ■ St. Augustine, FL
	June 5-July 14	Summer Series	Resorts World ■ Las Vegas, NV
	June 15-July 7	Aria High Roller Series	Aria PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	June 20-29	Women In Poker Summer Festival	South Point Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	June 23-29	San Diego Summer Classic	Ocean's Eleven Casino ■ Oceanside, CA

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O H/L-Omaha Eight-or-Better **PLO**-Pot-Limit Omaha **RB**-Rebuy **SH/L**-Seven-Card Stud Eight-or-Better **SLH**-Spread-Limit Hold'em

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GRATON - ROHNERT PARK

MONDAY

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

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$65

TUESDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$65

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

WEDNESDAY

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

6:00 p.m. NLH, \$65

THURSDAY

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

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

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

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7:00 p.m. NLH, \$120 AO \$5 KO \$25

TUESDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$130

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

WEDNESDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$130

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$120 AO \$5 KO \$25

THURSDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$130

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

FRIDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$130

SATURDAY

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

SUNDAY

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

FLORIDA

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MONDAY

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

WEDNESDAY

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

FRIDAY

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

SUNDAY

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

BESTBET - ORANGE PARK

TUESDAY

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

THURSDAY

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

SATURDAY

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

SUNDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$60

BESTBET - ST. AUGUSTINE

MONDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$60

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

TUESDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$60

WEDNESDAY

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

THURSDAY

12:00 p.m. NLH, \$60

FRIDAY

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$160

SATURDAY

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

7:00 p.m. NLH, \$200

SUNDAY

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

OREGON

WILDHORSE - PENDLETON

TUESDAY

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

THURSDAY

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

FRIDAY

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

SATURDAY

1:00 p.m. NLH, \$125

SUNDAY

1:00 p.m. NLH, \$70



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Action Card - A card that causes an increase in betting.

Air - A bad hand with little to no value.

Angle (Shooting) - An unethical play used to gain information or an advantage.

Backdoor - A draw needing two streets to complete.

Balance - Playing different hands in the same way so opponents can't read you.

Bankroll - The amount of money you have to play poker with.

Barrel - A continuation bet followed by a bet on the turn and/or river.

Blocker - Holding one of your opponent's outs.

Bluff Catcher - A weak hand that can only beat a bluff.

Bounty - A prize earned for a knockout in a tournament.

Brick - A blank card that is unlikely to have helped.

Broadway - A straight to the ace.

Bubble - The time period right before a tournament reaches the money.

Burn - A card that is removed by the dealer to prevent cheating.

Calling Station - A loose, passive player who rarely folds.

Chip Race - Coloring up the smallest chips in circulation during a tournament.

Chop - A split of the pot.

Coin Flip - A situation where the odds for each player are roughly 50/50.

Collusion - Working with another player to cheat.

Continuation Bet - When the preflop aggressor makes another bet on the flop.

Crying Call - A call from a player who does not believe his hand is best.

Dead Money - A player with no chance of winning. Also, extra money in the pot.

Donk Bet - An early position bet by a player who was not the aggressor in the previous betting round.

Drawing Dead - When your hand can no longer win.

Drawing Live - When your hand is behind but can still draw out.

Effective Stack - The smallest stack among two players in a heads-up pot.

Eight-Or-Better - A qualifier common in high-low split games.

Equity - The mathematical expected value of your hand.

Expected Value - The weighted average of what you should profit in the long run.

Family Pot - When every player at the table sees the flop or fourth street.

Feltd - To lose all your chips, such that there are none left on the felt.

Float - To call with a weak hand with the intention of bluffing later.

Freeroll - A tournament with no buy-in, or a tournament stake with no makeup.

GTO - Game Theory Optimal play aiming for an unexploitable strategy.

Gutshot - An inside straight draw.

Hero Call - Calling with a relatively weak hand when you suspect a bluff.

Hollywood - Exaggerating and overacting to sell strength or weakness.

Horse - A player financially backed by someone else.

ICM - The Independent Chip Model assigns monetary value to tournament chips.

Implied Odds - The additional chips you expect to win if your draw improves.

Juice - Rake, or the fee collected by the house or casino.

Kill - A button that temporarily increases the stakes of the game.

LAG - A loose, aggressive player.

Limp - To enter a pot by calling the minimum bet rather than raise.

Muck - To fold.

Nit - A rock, who rarely takes risks or gives action, and only plays premium cards.

Nuts - The best possible hand on a given board.

Open - To bet first.

Orbit - A full rotation of the blinds at the table.

Overbet - To make a bet that is more than the current size of the pot.

Overcall - To call a bet after others have already called.

Paint - A face card jack, queen, or king.

Pat - A hand that no longer needs any more draws.

Polarized - When a player's range is split between either very strong hands or air.

Quarter - To win 1/4 or 3/4 of a pot by tying a hand in a high-low split game.

Rabbit Hunt - To look at future cards after folding and the hand is complete.

Railbird - Someone who hangs out on the sidelines of a poker room.

Rainbow - Three or four cards of different suits.

Range - The possible starting hands a player might have given their action.

Ratholing - Going south or sneaking your chips off the table during the game.

Scoop - To win both halves of the pot in a high-low split game.

Semi-Bluff - To bluff with a drawing hand that could improve to the best hand.

Slowroll - To delay or avoid showing when you have the best hand.

Snow - Holding on to bad cards in draw poker in order to bluff.

Straddle - A voluntary bet placed before the deal to increase pot size and incentivize action.

TAG - A tight, aggressive player.

Tell - A detectable change in a player's behavior that gives away the strength of their hand.

Tilt - Frustration or anger that leads to poor play.

Variance - The statistical measure of how results differ from expectation.

VPIP - The percentage of hands voluntarily played preflop.

Wet Board - A dynamic board with many several possible draws.

Wheel - A five-high straight.



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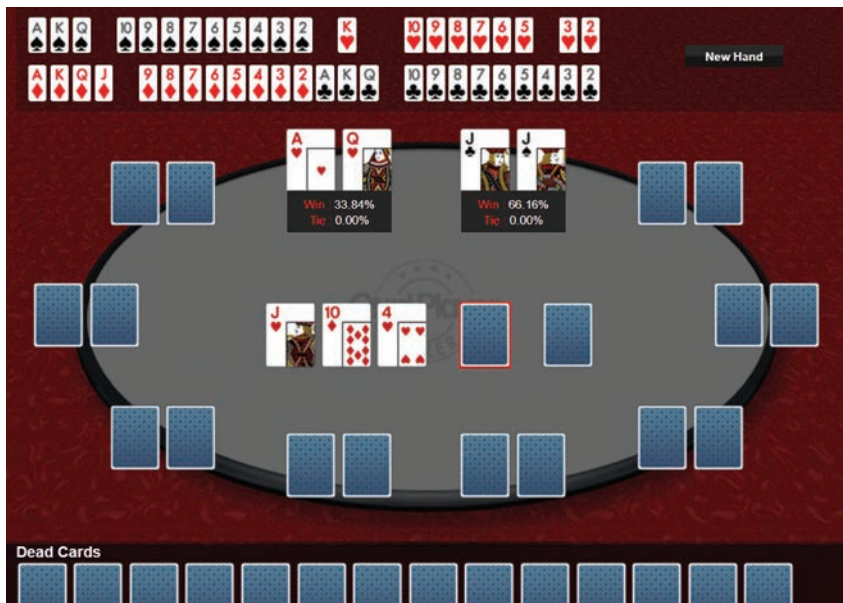
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POKER ODDS



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CALCULATING OUTS

Outs	Situation	After The Flop	After The Turn
21	Straight And Flush Draw, With Two Overcards	70%	45%
20		68%	43%
19		65%	41%
18	Straight And Flush Draw, With One Overcard	62%	39%
17		60%	37%
16		57%	35%
15	Straight And Flush Draw	54%	33%
14		51%	30%
13	Flush Draw With Gutshot	48%	28%
12	Flush Draw With One Overcard	45%	26%
11	Straight Draw With One Overcard	42%	24%
10		38%	22%
9	Flush Draw	35%	20%
8	Straight Draw	32%	17%
7		28%	15%
6	Two Live Overcards	24%	13%
5		20%	11%
4	Gutshot Straight Draw	17%	9%
3	Need To Pair Kicker	13%	7%
2	Pocket Pair Needs To Make A Set	8%	4%
1	Set Needs To Make Quads	4%	2%

HAND MATCHUPS

Situation	Example	Odds	Percent
Higher Pair vs. Lower Pair	J♠ J♣ vs. 7♥ 7♦	4.09-1	80.3% vs. 19.7%
Pair vs. Two Over Cards	7♠ 7♣ vs. A♥ J♦	1.23-1	55.1% vs. 44.9%
Pair vs. Two Under Cards	Q♠ Q♣ vs. 9♥ 7♦	4.77-1	82.7% vs. 17.3%
Pair vs. One Overcard	J♠ J♣ vs. A♥ 7♦	2.50-1	71.4% vs. 28.6%
Two Higher Cards vs. Two Lower Cards	Q♠ J♣ vs. 6♥ 5♦	1.70-1	62.9% vs. 37.1%

*Approximate Percentages

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RIVERING TRIPS FROM OUT OF POSITION

By Jonathan Little

Join more than 120,000 players worldwide who have taken their game to the next level. To develop your poker skills and learn how to crush games, check out PokerCoaching.com/CardPlayer.



On the first hand of a \$500 tournament, you have 30,000 at 50-100. Everyone folds to a recreational player on the button who limps in. You are in the small blind with J♥ 6♦.

Question 1: Should you fold, call, raise to 400, or raise to 700?

Answer: You should call with most of your hands due to your excellent pot odds. While J-6 offsuit is quite bad, you can continue when getting 7:1 pot odds.

If you expect the button to frequently fold to a raise, raising to either 400 or 700 would gain merit, but on the first hand against an unknown opponent, it is tough to know what their range is.

You call and the big blind checks their option. The flop comes K♦ 6♥ 4♣.

Question 2: Should you check, bet 200, bet 400, or bet 900?

Answer: Both checking and betting are viable. Betting 200 for value and protection in a limped pot is an excellent place to start due to all players having extremely wide ranges.

If the flop was K-J-4 instead, you should be less inclined to bet because then, your middle pair would be less susceptible to being outdrawn by various overcards.

You bet 200, the big blind folds, and the button calls. The turn is the 10♠.

Question 3: Should you check, bet 300, bet 600, or bet 1300?

Answer: When you bet the flop and get called, it is safe to assume that the button's range was narrowed a decent amount, meaning they now have lots of pairs and draws. Against that range, you no longer want to continue building the pot.

You check and the button checks behind. The river is the 6♣.

Question 4: Should you check, bet 500, bet 1200, or bet 2,200?

Answer: When you river trips, ask yourself what you can get called by. Although the button's range is likely weak, he will probably call with any six, king, and perhaps a ten. If he has a weaker hand, he will usually fold to all but the tiniest river bets. So, use a large size and hope to extract value when he has a strong hand.

You bet 1,200 and the button calls with Q♦ 10♦, giving you a nice pot. ♠



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