

# Card Player

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## NO PHONES. NO COACHES. WSOP CHANGES THE GAME POKER WORLD ADJUSTS TO 'TAMAYO' RULE

### PLUS

ONE YEAR LATER:  
JONATHAN TAMAYO  
ON BEING POKER'S  
UNLIKELY 'BAD BOY'

DANIEL WEINMAN:  
MAIN EVENT CHAMP  
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JUNE 21	EVENT #48 \$1K SENIORS CHAMPIONSHIP
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JUNE 23	EVENT #58 \$3K 9-GAME MIX
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## NEWS FROM THE GAMBLING WORLD

CASINO EXEC AND POKER STANDOUT JOHN STRZEMP  
PASSES AWAY

By Sean Chaffin

John Strzemp, a former casino executive and runner-up in the 1997 *World Series of Poker* main event, passed away in April at the age of 73 after a long battle with illness.

Strzemp was a close associate of former Wynn Resorts CEO Steve Wynn. He was also well-known in the Las Vegas poker scene. In the 1997 *WSOP* main event, he finished second to Stu Ungar for \$583,000, Ungar's final *WSOP* cash before his untimely death the following year.

The final hand in that matchup is remembered as one of the worst bad beats in *WSOP* history.

Ungar moved all in with A♥ 4♣ on a flop of A♣ 5♦ 3♥ and Strzemp called with A♠ 8♣. The turn brought the 3♦ and the casino executive was in good shape to at least chop the pot, if not win it outright.

But the 2♠ fell on the river to give Ungar the wheel, his third main event title, and the \$1 million top prize.

Strzemp was born in Chicago in 1951 and earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Illinois. Initially, he became a certified public accountant, but he and his ex-wife Genevieve moved to Las Vegas in 1981.

They bought their first house with winnings from a football betting contest, and he transitioned away from accounting and into the casino industry.

Strzemp went on to a long career as a casino executive. He worked as president of Treasure Island until MGM Resorts acquired the property in 2000. Then, he was named Wynn executive vice president and chief administrative officer, overseeing the finances of Wynn's Las Vegas and Macau properties.

From 2003 to 2006, Strzemp served as MGM's treasurer and briefly served as Bellagio's chief financial officer. He retired from full-time work in 2017 but continued to act as a consultant.

Strzemp's skills with numbers not only served him well in the business world but may have carried over to the poker table as well.

Strzemp cashed in the main event on four other occasions and had another *WSOP* final table in 2003. He recorded more than \$1.4 million in tournament cashes dating back to 1990. His last cash came in January 2023, when he finished 53rd in a *Card Player Poker Tour* \$1,600 no-limit hold'em event at Venetian Las Vegas for \$3,998.

"Friends and associates said they were often dazzled by Strzemp's mathematical skills and behind his back called him 'Rainman,' a reference to the Tom Cruise-Dustin Hoffman film," the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* noted. "Friends also enjoyed his dry sense of humor that often coaxed them to laugh out loud at some of his stories."

Beyond poker, betting on sports and horse races was



a regular part of his gambling life. Strzemp was a lifelong Chicago Cubs fan and enjoyed attending baseball games nationwide. He is survived by two children, John Strzemp III and Jacqueline; one granddaughter; and Bonnie Ratner, his wife of 24 years. ♠





# Kentucky Derby Sets Handle Record For Fourth Consecutive Year

By Sean Chaffin

A wet and muddy track didn't deter bettors putting money down on this year's Kentucky Derby.

For the fourth year in a row, bettors wagered record amounts on the first leg of the industry's Triple Crown. Furthermore, the television ratings were the highest in more than three decades.

Bettors flocked to the "fastest two minutes in sports," risking a record-setting \$349 million from all sources on the entire Kentucky Derby Day program. Those figures top last year's record, where horse bettors generated a handle of \$320.5 million.

The slate's main event also posted a new record, with gamblers betting \$234.4 million from all possible platforms. That also bests last year's record of \$210.7 million. All-sources handle for Derby Week set a record of \$473.9 million, beating last year's \$446.6 million.

TwinSpires, the official betting partner of the race, saw a record handle of \$108 million on Churchill races for the entire day's program. That's up from last year's previous record of \$92.1 million.

For the Derby, the horse racing betting platform saw a new record of \$73 million, beating a record of \$60.9 million from 2024.

*Sovereignty*, ridden by Junior Alvarado, won by a length and a half and paid off at 7-to-1 odds in the 151st race at Churchill Downs. The win secured the horse's owners \$3.1 million of the \$5 million purse.



*Journalism* was the favorite, at 3-to-1 entering the race, but finished in second position with *Baeza* taking third.

"We congratulate the connections of *Sovereignty* on an impressive win over a very talented field of horses," Churchill Downs CEO Bill Carstanjen said. "We are thrilled with our performance following the 150th milestone year in 2024 and we will grow the Kentucky Derby in the years to come."

According to *NBC*, the race portion of the broadcast averaged 17.7 million viewers across all of the company's platforms. It's the highest viewership since 1986. Other than the network's summer Olympics coverage last year, this was the largest audience for a Saturday program since an NFL playoff game in 2024.

Viewership of the event peaked at 21.8 million viewers, the largest ever for an *NBC Sports* Derby broadcast – up 8% from last year. Streaming also produced another record for a horse racing event, reaching 959,000 viewers. That's a 34% increase from last year's 714,000 and nearly triple 2023's 371,000 viewers. ♠

# Michigan Casino Unveils New Poker Room

By Sean Chaffin

Michigan poker players have a new place to play after FireKeepers Casino Hotel in Battle Creek opened its new poker room in early May.

The new room includes 21 tables and is located next to the property's sportsbook. Players can take advantage of numerous new amenities, including a self-service beverage station, an upgraded cashier experience for faster transactions, and a special final table area for major tournament action that can also be reserved for private games and group events.

"Our new poker room is more than just a new location — it's a true hub for everything poker," director of table games John Fell said. "Whether you're here for daily games, major tournaments, or just to enjoy the atmosphere, this space delivers the energy and amenities that players expect from a top-tier poker destination."

Along with cash game offerings, FireKeepers hosts several daily tournaments throughout the week and the new room is open from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. daily.

Each spring and fall, the property hosts the *Major Series*



*of Poker Tour* (formerly named the *Mid-States Poker Tour*) events with \$1 million guarantees. The first *MSPT* stop in the new poker room featured an \$1,100 no-limit hold'em main event that ran from May 15-18.

Nick Murray won the last *MSPT* event in the previous room. Last October, Murray topped the *Michigan State Poker Championship* for \$295,494.

The space formerly occupied by the old poker room will be integrated into the main casino layout, housing slot machines. ♠



# GAMBLERS WAGER \$40.4 MILLION ON THE POPE

By Sean Chaffin

Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost was selected as the 267th head of the Catholic Church and made history as the first American to become Pope. He'll serve under the name Pope Leo XIV.

And as it turns out, he cost gamblers millions of dollars.

Yes, you read that right. Gamblers wagered millions on who would be the next leader of the Vatican City, and Prevost came through as a longshot.

By the morning of the selection, crypto-betting site Polymarket handled nearly \$26 million worth of wagers on the event. Prediction market site Kalshi fielded another \$6.7 million on the event.

According to *Forbes*, Prevost had just a 1% chance of earning the nod on Kalshi, while Polymarket was just a tiny bit higher at 1.8%.

Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin was the favorite on both sites with 26-28% of the betting, followed by Filipino prelate Luis Antonio Tagle with 23-24%. On Kalshi, Italian prelate Pierbattista Pizzaballa sat in third at 10%. Fellow Italian prelate Matteo Zuppi was in a tie for third with Pizzaballa on Polymarket at 10%.

Despite winning most of the bets, Kalshi paid out one better \$52,641 after he bet \$526 on the 1% shot that Prevost would emerge as the successor to Pope Francis.

Some experts had warned that a longshot could emerge,



and that favorites may have been overvalued in betting markets. The conclave is a secretive process that dates back centuries and some of the more well-known names among the group may not actually emerge as the favorites, according to experts.

"I think some cardinals who are faring well among the oddsmakers and media, including because of the prominent role they had under Pope Francis, may actually have less of a chance than some others who are considered long shots," Tom Nash with *Catholic Answers* told the *Catholic News Agency*.

Nominees must earn two-thirds of the votes among cardinals involved in the conclave. Making predictions can be difficult because the process is not open to the public. Participants in the process are even barred from sending or receiving messages or news as the process plays out.

"The more public the process, the more likely cardinals can be negatively influenced by various means of coercion, including from political leaders," Nash said. "And various parties have tried to influence the papal election process over the centuries." ♠

## LAS VEGAS STRIP CASINO HOLDS CEREMONY FOR NEW POKER ROOM

By Sean Chaffin

May 9 marked the addition of another poker option on the Las Vegas Strip as Planet Hollywood held a ceremony to reopen the property's poker room. The Caesars-owned casino closed the former room back in 2021, which had been located in the middle of the casino floor.

Caesars Entertainment announced the room's reopening in April and released more specific details just before the opening. The room features 23 tables, a gothic interior, 21 televisions, and a balcony overlooking the casino's Pleasure Pit gaming area.

The room is located on the mezzanine level of the resort and features a mix of dark and light colors with plenty of lighting. Other amenities and features include a full-service bar, framed posters of various films featuring Las Vegas, and an attached bathroom.

The ceremony included words from Planet Hollywood Senior Vice President Ken Ostempowski and *World Series of Poker* Senior Vice President of Poker Operations Jack Effel.

The casino ran regular tournament series before closing the room four years ago, including an annual festival dubbed the *Phamous Poker Series*. The property already ran



a new mixed-game series from May 12-20.

The new room makes Planet Hollywood's poker room the largest Caesars-owned room in Las Vegas and the seventh-largest room on Las Vegas Boulevard.

The Venetian has the largest poker room on the Strip with 50 tables, after unveiling a new and larger venue in August. The Bellagio is the second-largest with 37 tables, followed by Resorts World with 29 tables. Wynn checks in fourth with 28 tables and MGM Grand has 25 tables. Aria boasts another 24, followed by the Horseshoe with 18 and Mandalay Bay's 10.

Caesars Palace poker room had 18 tables before shutting down last year. However, the property reopened a temporary room in a new location in May. A permanent and much larger space will open at a later date. ♠



# Ohio Lawmaker Files Online Poker Bill

By Sean Chaffin

There have been several failed attempts at the legalization of online casinos by state legislatures so far in 2025, but now it's Ohio's turn to take a crack at it.

A legislator in the Buckeye State has filed a bill to legalize online casinos, which would also bring online poker to Ohio.

Sen. Nathan Manning introduced SB 197, which would also legalize online lottery sales and horse race betting. The plan features two levels of taxation and fees, depending on whether a casino in the state runs its own platforms or partners with an outside operator.

"We kind of put this together very quickly, but I will say we've been working on this for years," said Manning in a Senate Select Committee on Gaming meeting.

Properties that own at least 50% of its online casino platform will pay \$50 million for a five-year license, with a \$5 million renewal fee and a 36% tax rate. On the other hand, platforms with third-party providers would pay \$100 million for a license with a \$10 million renewal fee and a 40% tax rate.

The latter tax rate would be the highest online casino tax rate of any state. New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Delaware, Connecticut, Rhode Island and West Virginia all have lower tax rates for online casinos.

Manning estimates his bill would generate between \$300



million and \$1 billion annually for state coffers. The proposal sends 99% of tax revenue to the Ohio general fund and 1% earmarked for problem gambling prevention and treatment.

Lawmakers appear ready to discuss the issue, however the high tax rate might be a dealbreaker. In April, legislators nixed Gov. Mike DeWine's efforts to raise the tax rate on online sports betting.

If passed, Ohio could be the latest addition to the Multi-State Internet Gaming Agreement. With a population of 12 million, it could be a significant boost to the 38 million Americans currently in the several jurisdictions the MSIGA covers.♠

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# NO PHONES! NO COACHES! WSOP CHANGES THE GAME

New Rules Aimed At Protecting Game Integrity, But Are They Too Restrictive?

By Steve Schult



Over the last two decades, phones, tablets, and other electronic devices have become commonplace in poker rooms.

Between the ability to play online, the sheer boredom of doing nothing after folding, and the basic necessity of being connected to the world outside the casino, phones are usually found either in a player's hand or sitting on top of the rail.

That visual will not be repeated this year at the *World Series of Poker*. The *WSOP* released the rulebook for the 2025 series in May, which gives the staff the option to heavily restrict the use of phones at this year's series.

Most of the published rules were identical to last year's, but Rules 63 and 64 put heavy restrictions on outside coaching, and the use of electronic devices.

The move was most likely a reaction to Jonathan Tamayo's main event victory last year, where 2015 main event champion Joe McKeehen and high-stakes tournament crusher Dominik Nitsche had a laptop in plain sight on the rail to help relay any strategy changes to Tamayo in between hands. (pg. 18)

Although within the rules and commonplace since the inception of the November Nine delayed final table, it generated a lot of discussion and blowback on social media.

Then, about a month after Tamayo's \$10 million score, a pair of poker pros were arrested in France after they were caught in a high-tech, high-stakes cheating scam using a cell phone.

With game integrity on the line, plus the optics of last year's final table, the *WSOP* opted to make some changes.

## Phone Cameras Gave Players Superuser Ability

Last August, a 37-year-old Lithuanian and a 63-year-old Ukrainian were arrested at a lakeside casino in Enghien-les-Bains on fraud charges for their actions in the casino's poker game.

The casino and the police alleged that one player put a microscopic camera on his phone and placed it on the rail. The filming angle allowed the camera to pick up the bottoms of the cards as the dealer pitched them around the table.

Those images were relayed to their partners at another location. The offsite team would track the cards and relay that information back to the players through microscopic earpieces that were so small they could only be removed using a magnet.

Since the equipment was incredibly sophisticated, *The Times of London* spoke to a source who said it was likely an organized crime ring, but high-stakes poker pro Matt Berkey believed that this type of cheating was occurring for as long as five years prior to the arrest.

As a result of the scandal, many European casinos no longer allow phones to rest on the table's rail, and a major tour has taken security measures even further.

## European Poker Tour Introduces Slide Dealing

The *EPT* banned electronic devices from being placed on the table's playing surface or rail as well, but players are allowed to keep their phone in their possession or on a side table.

On the other hand, the *EPT* prohibits players from

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Jason Somerville, Shaun Deeb, and Chance Kornuth Consult Cliff Josephy During 2016 Final Table

using laptops, tablets, or computers in the tournament area. Additionally, the tour “reserves the right to ask players to cease using any and all electronic devices” if the staff believes their presence is slowing down the pace of play.

Additionally, the *EPT* retrained its dealers to slide cards to players instead of using a traditional pitch, where the cards are slightly airborne. *PokerStars* has since implemented the procedure for all the company’s live events worldwide.

U.S. tours were slower to react. Stateside of the Atlantic, Tamayo’s “laptop-gate” received most of the scrutiny and the blatant European cheating scandal was overlooked by most casual poker fans.

The *World Poker Tour* didn’t make any substantial changes, and continues to simply lock up player phones during televised and live streamed final tables. The tour also defers to individual property rules. The Wynn, for example, has not allowed laptops on the rail for the last three years.

The *WSOP Circuit* didn’t implement any changes to its rulebook for the subsequent season, but the *WSOP* tested new phone rules during the *WSOP Paradise* festival in the Bahamas last December.

#### **‘Laptop-Gate’ Provided Poor Optics For Poker’s Future**

Just like some of his other opponents in the 2024 *WSOP* main event, and countless others that came before, Jonathan Tamayo had some help in his corner. He would occasionally visit his friends on the rail, where he would confer with them about any strategy adjustments he should make.

The laptop on Tamayo’s rail was situated in plain sight. Nitsche and McKeehen weren’t trying to hide their actions, because it was clear they didn’t think the laptop broke any rules. If they had been, the tournament staff could have and would have forced them to stop.

But even if it wasn’t cheating, those who believed that it was just a bad look for poker on its biggest stage held a valid point.

For poker to have a healthy ecosystem over the long run, it requires a steady influx of new players coming into the game. And having a player, much less the eventual champion, going to the rail and checking his strategy against a computer just doesn’t look good to potential newcomers.

The poker boom was sparked by personalities, not solvers. Players fell in love with the game by watching tournaments and cash games with eccentric characters relying solely on their wits to get by.

When the champion was a Tennessee accountant who won a satellite to get in, it felt like anybody could win. But when a seasoned pro is showcasing a finely-tuned, computer-assisted strategy, the dream becomes harder to sell.

#### **New Rule Cites Nevada Law**

Rule 64 is where the major changes have been implemented. (see pg. 17) The rule tries to curb three things:

- Players using charts or solvers
- Players receiving coaching from spectators
- Players outright cheating

The rule states clearly that coaching from the rail or receiving information from outside sources is strictly prohibited. And by giving staff the ability to take away phones or electronic devices once the field gets down to the final three tables, it limits the opportunity for players to engage in any foul play.

But there are just a few problems.

These practices have been commonplace for quite some time. In fact, you can argue using outside help was even somewhat promoted by the *WSOP*. (It’s hard to find a rail photo of Tamayo and his team last year without GTO Wizard prominently advertised in the foreground or background, for example.)

From its inception in 1970 until 2008, the \$10,000 no-limit hold’em main event was played straight through





to completion in consecutive days. In 2008, however, the WSOP implemented the November Nine format. The field would play down to the final nine and staff would pause the tournament and give the players a three-month break before coming back to Las Vegas in November to finish the event.

Tournament officials said the delay was to help generate buzz and hype around the final table while ESPN aired weekly recaps of each day of the tournament.

In some sense, they were right. Those players were able to coordinate with friends and family to come to Sin City after the pause and watch the tournament. The rails became bigger and louder than they were before.

But it also allowed those same players to improve their game in the interim timeframe.

In 2009, former *Card Player* publisher Jeff Shulman was part of the second-ever November Nine and publicly hired Phil Hellmuth to help coach him during those three months. Other players picked coaches as well and the downtime became less about media appearances and more of a three-month study session.

In 2012, Jacob Balsiger hired Mike “Timex” McDonald, while Russell Thomas hired Jason Somerville. These arrangements were not hidden and most of the time, the hired guns would show up and support their player on the rail.

As part of Thomas’ interim training, Somerville brought in a slew of other poker pros to run simulated final tables and help Thomas nail down his strategy. The group included high-stakes cash game grinder Matt Berkey, who discussed the coaching operations on his now-defunct *Only Friends* podcast in the aftermath of Tamayo’s controversy.

Not only did Berkey talk about it, he pulled up a screen-

shot of the 2016 final table. And with four players left, one of the rails had a laptop squarely on the rail, showing that these practices were the norm for about a decade.

“It’s nothing new for main event final tablists to have teams of people behind them,” said Berkey.

Patrick Leonard echoed those sentiments, pointing out that plenty of respected players like Scott Seiver, Shaun Deeb, and Chance Kornuth have been spotted at the final table over the years.

“Every year I’ve watched the WSOP final table, the most prominent members of the community have been there with laptops and/or headphones,” Leonard said. “It was never an issue, previously. Players would always go to their rails between hands and get advice on what to do next. It was almost always celebrated and seen as a cool part of the final table.”

#### A Questionable Carveout

The timing of the rule makes it appear that the WSOP is making this rule change in response to the social media backlash from Tamayo’s detractors. But a dubious carveout in rule 64(g)(1) makes it more likely that these changes are more about security theater instead of a genuine effort to shore up any game integrity leaks.

The subsection of the rule, which was confirmed by WSOP’s social media liaison Kevin Mathers, allows players to bypass any possible phone ban if they are playing on the WSOP online platform or betting with the Caesars Sportsbook.

Yes, this allows players to multi-table online while in live events, but it also creates a difficult situation for tournament officials to police. ♠





#### **Rule 63. Communication:**

a. All cell phones and other voice-enabled and "ringing" electronic devices must be silenced during Tournament play. Participants not involved in a hand (cards in muck) shall be permitted to text/email at the table but shall not be permitted to text/email any other Participant at the table. If Host Properties, acting in its sole and absolute discretion, believes a Participant is communicating with another Participant at the table, both parties will be immediately disqualified from the Tournament and face imposition of additional penalties as described in Rule 40.

b. All Participants desiring to talk on a cell phone must be at least one table length away from their assigned table during all said communication. Those individuals who talk on a cell phone not at least one table length away from their assigned table shall be subject to a penalty to be determined by the WSOP Personnel. Participants at Televised Final and Feature tables must leave the tournament area to text, email or talk on a cell phone. No cell phones or other electronic communication device (E.g... Phone, tablet, computer, headphone cases) can be placed on a poker table.

#### **Rule 64. Approved Electronic Devices; Prohibited Filming and Streaming:**

a. NRS 465.075 provides: Use or possession of device, software or hardware to obtain advantage at playing game prohibited. It is unlawful for any person to use, possess with the intent to use or assist another person in using or possessing with the intent to use any computerized, electronic, electrical or mechanical device, or any software or hardware, or any combination thereof, which is designed, constructed, altered or programmed to obtain an advantage at playing any game in a licensed gaming establishment or any game that is offered by a licensee or affiliate, including, without limitation, a device that:

1. Projects the outcome of the game;
2. Keeps track of cards played or cards prepared for play in the game;
3. Analyzes the probability of the occurrence of an event relating to the game; or
4. Analyzes the strategy for playing or betting to be used in the game, except as may be made available as part of an approved game or otherwise permitted by the [Nevada Gaming] Commission.

b. Participants are allowed to use approved electronic devices, iPods, MP3 players and other music playing or noise-reduction headsets during Tournament play until the Participants have reached the final three tables in any Tournament, so long as the approved electronic devices are not used to collude or cheat in any way, are not distracting to other Participants, and do not contain or use artificial intelligence or any other type of electronic assistance that could give a Participant an advantage over another Participant. Notwithstanding the foregoing, WSOP Personnel may require any Participant to cease using any electronic device at any time for any reason and may inspect any electronic device when there is a reasonable suspicion that such device is being used in violation of this Rule 64. Failure to comply with WSOP Personnel instructions will result in penalties up to and including disqualification, in accordance with Rules 40, 113, and 114.

c. Once Participants have reached the final three tables in any Tournament, all approved electronic devices must be removed. An announcement will be made to Participants once they have reached the final three tables to remove all such electronic devices. Failure to do so will result in penalties up to and including disqualification, in accordance with Rules 40, 113, and 114. Participants are also not allowed to use approved electronic devices if their table has been deemed a Feature Table for production purposes.

d. Electronic Assistance and Coaching: Participants and spectators are not allowed to use charts, apps, artificial intelligence or any other form of electronic assistance in the tournament room that could give a Participant an advantage over another Participant. For clarity, this restriction includes but is not limited to, electronic assistance that involves overlaying digital information on the real world onto a device; combining digital information with the real world onto a device; and showing information on a device. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in a penalty up to disqualification for the Participant and removal from the tournament room for the spectator. Spectators are also prohibited from providing live real-time assistance or coaching through direct (speaking) or indirect (text, e-mail, through any electronic device, etc.) communication to an active Participant in any WSOP event. Failure to adhere to this rule will result in a penalty for the Participant and removal from the tournament room for the spectator. Non-Participants in the tournament room must adhere to the WSOP Official Tournament Rules, including but not limited to, no viewing of live streams on an electronic device. Signage will be posted in all playing areas for spectators to acknowledge that by entering the tournament room they agree to abide by Rule 64.

e. Device Removal During Streaming Events: When a tournament reaches three (3) tables, WSOP Personnel reserves the right to remove all Participants' electronic devices. Participants will only be allowed to have their devices back during Participant breaks or after elimination unless approved by WSOP Personnel to retrieve earlier. No devices will be allowed to be used in the tournament room during these late stages of streamed events and no coaching from anywhere within the tournament room will be allowed; this includes viewing of the tournament stream and usage of any electronic assistance. Failure to adhere to this rule will result in a penalty for the participant and removal from the tournament room for the spectator.

f. Participants without an official media credential are prohibited from using any electronic or other devices to record or capture continuous video or audio footage at any time during Tournament play, whether the Participant is involved in a hand or not, with the exception of capturing their own all-in moment once all action is complete at their table. Recording, capturing and/or live streaming video or audio footage of the Tournament, and any attempt to use such recorded, captured, or streamed video or audio by a Participant without an official media credential, whether involved in a hand or not, will subject the Participant to penalties and potential disqualification, in the sole and absolute discretion of Host Properties, as described in Rule 40, 113, and 114.

g. Participants are prohibited from using betting apps, gaming charts, or any poker information tool while involved in a hand.

1. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Participants may utilize the WSOP+ Live registration app, WSOP.com, or Caesars Mobile Sports App while involved in a hand as use of these applications does not give an unfair advantage to the Participant.





# JONATHAN TAMAYO: POKER'S MOST UNLIKELY 'BAD BOY'

## Main Event Champ On Unintentionally Triggering Rule Change

By Tim Fiorvanti



Twelve months ago, you couldn't have picked out a less likely poker player to be surrounded by controversy than Jonathan Tamayo.

The 39-year-old from Houston has been attending the *World Series of Poker* every year since 2007, with highlights that included a runner-up showing in a \$1,500 half limit, half no-limit hold'em event in 2008 for six-figures and a 21st-place finish in the 2009 main event for \$352,832.

Tamayo cut as low a profile as a long-term tournament grinder could have, looking more ready for the golf course than the felt. You could always count on him to be sporting some version of a comfortable polo and khaki pants in a corner of the Rio, or more recently, the Horseshoe on the Strip.

And yet, on his way to becoming the 2024 main event champion and banking \$10 million, Tamayo drew a tremendous amount of attention beyond the bright lights and tense moments of the hands playing out on the *WSOP* broadcast. With his good friend Joe McKeehen, the 2015 *WSOP* main event champion, and four-time bracelet winner Dominik Nitsche supporting him, Tamayo's run to victory kicked off a long overdue conversation about coaching on the rail and

technology that still burns brightly heading into the 2025 series.

### Every Journey Starts With A Few Key Steps (And Pots)

Like a kid who imagines hitting a Game 7 home run in the World Series while swinging a bat in his backyard, Tamayo's existence in the poker world started with stakes as small as they could be. In his late teenage years, as the *WSOP* broadcasts on *ESPN* became a nationwide sensation, Tamayo first dipped his toe in the poker waters in a small-stakes home game.

"The game was, now that I think about it, really degenerate," said Tamayo. "Way more degenerate than I realized. It was an ante-only game that started at a nickel and turned into a \$2 ante by the end of the night. The buy-in was \$20. I remember the first time I had two aces in my hand, and I decided to put no extra money in preflop."

"Forty dollars later, I realized I didn't know anything."

That experience didn't discourage Tamayo, by any means. In fact, that \$40 mishap fueled a curiosity that led him to seek out online poker resources. He stumbled upon the now-defunct pokerroom.com, with its in-browser games, and



Not Much Has Changed For Tamayo Since His 2007 Debut



took advantage of how his class schedule was set up in his final year of high school to hit the online tables hard.

"I had a schedule in my senior year where I would be home two hours early every other day, and the other days I only had two classes and had to be at school from 7:30 to 10:45. I would be home to play all of those daily freerolls, and then I won a \$20 tournament for \$600."

Tamayo built up his bankroll to \$1,600 and had his first payout check mailed to his house. It was around this time that he was accepted to Cornell, an Ivy League university in Ithaca, New York.

During his very first week on campus, Tamayo found his people in a hurry. It just so happened that Cornell was just a 90-minute drive away from Turning Stone Resort Casino, which had a popular poker room that was open to players as young as 18.

"I walked into the lounge, and they were playing poker on a pool table," he recalled. "There was a group of friends that would drive up there every weekend."

While no-limit hold'em was obviously exploding in popularity in the post-Moneymaker era, limit hold'em was still going strong when Tamayo first started making the weekend trips. He started out in \$1-\$5 spread limit games and worked himself all the way up to \$30-\$60 over the course of his years in Upstate New York, admitting that he was "making money every weekend."

At the same time, while still managing his studies and maintaining his grades, Tamayo was racking up online tournament successes on PartyPoker, PokerStars, and Full Tilt Poker. There was a key fifth-place finish in a PokerStars *Sunday Million* event that netted him \$63,000 and signifi-

cantly juiced up his bankroll.

Tamayo made his first trip to the *WSOP* in the summer of 2007, between his junior and senior year of college, and then started a streak of being in Vegas every summer.

#### Early WSOP Success Kept Tamayo On Poker Path

Tamayo's first full summer at the *WSOP* nearly brought him a gold bracelet. He combined his experiences in online no-limit tournaments and live limit hold'em games to make a run in a split format event. He got all the way down to heads-up play against Floridian Frank Gary, until a brutal limit hold'em hand in which Tamayo flopped the Broadway straight with A-K, only for Gary to hit a runner-runner full house with pocket nines.

Still, the \$140,093 cash was far and away the best of his career to that point. It ultimately helped shape the trajectory of the next two decades of his life. Tamayo had other opportunities and an expectation that his full-time poker career could be short-lived, otherwise intending to use his degree from Cornell's School of Hotel Administration.

"If I don't have that good summer, then I am probably taking a job in Tampa, being on the road half the year and auditing sports stadium operations," Tamayo said.

He more than doubled his live tournament high-water mark the following year when he played down to the last three tables of the 2009 main event, finishing 21st for \$352,842.

While it gave him some valuable time under the bright lights of a televised broadcast, the poker he was playing in 2009 was drastically different from what Tamayo experienced in 2024.

"I was still strictly focusing on limit hold'em and holding



Tamayo Was In Joe McKeehen's Corner When He Won In 2015



on to that dying game at the time, as far as it being widely spread," said Tamayo. "In tournaments, knowing that I didn't know how to play deep, I was pretty much just waiting until I was shallow. At the time, you could always win a tournament knowing how to play 20 big blinds. I would register as late as possible, which was only two hours later back then.

"I also learned better eating habits on dinner breaks, like not overstuffing myself into a food coma. Because that's probably where I made a lot of my mistakes, post-dinner break on day 7 that year."

Tamayo has an excellent record in the main event overall, which includes another deep finish in 2015 when he took 78th place for \$79,668. He has seven main event cashes in total.

There have been ebbs and flows to Tamayo's life and poker career. He won a *WSOP Circuit* main event in Florida

in 2013 for \$206,020, one of his four *Circuit* rings overall. In 2021, he took down a *Wynn Summer Classic* title for \$237,935. Last year, he finished third in the *Texas Poker Open* for another \$180,000.

Tamayo also became deeply invested in daily fantasy sports, and in 2019 won a major fantasy hockey contest on DraftKings. And he's done this while maintaining a pretty unique day job. For the last 10 years, Tamayo has been a Texas high school football referee.

But every summer, like clockwork, Tamayo would show up at the *WSOP*, sharing a house and a rental car with a good friend and fellow poker pro who he met on one of his last college trips to Turning Stone. At the time, Joe McKeehen was a promising young player who wasn't yet old enough to play elsewhere. Neither of them could have possibly dreamed that one day they'd have the chance to take down the biggest event in poker, let alone that they'd both get the job done.

### A History Of Coaching In The *WSOP* Main Event

When the *WSOP* implemented the November Nine concept back in 2008, the final table of the main event was delayed and played out live several months later to coincide with the finale of the pre-taped television broadcasts on *ESPN*. It was during that era, which ran until 2016, in which players most publicly sought out coaching and assistance.

In 2015, McKeehen won the *WSOP* main event. As anyone who had an opportunity for such a life-changing sum on the line, McKeehen put together a team to help him prepare for his final table. On that team, naturally, was Tamayo, who to this day on his Twitter/X profile lists himself as the "Defensive Coordinator of the 2015 Main Event Champion."

While the delayed final-table format went away after 2016, there was still a scheduled day or two off before the conclusion of the tournament. That was still plenty of time for a crash course on stack and position strategy, ICM implications, and learning everything they could about their opponents.

Coaching remained part of the equation, with some top pros offering their services for a small cut of the payout. As technology improved and solver tools like GTO Wizard came to the forefront, players refined their approach even further in an effort to play unexploitable poker.

Trips to the rail on breaks or between hands to confer with coaches and friends during the *WSOP* main event final table became commonplace. And there was typically someone watching the broadcast in order to run through hand histories and relay hole card information.

It was that same environment in which Tamayo found



“The game was, now that I think about it, really degenerate. Way more degenerate than I realized.”







himself in 2024, making pay jump after pay jump until there were only three players and one day of poker remaining between him and a main event title of his own.

That's where the controversy began. A laptop belonging to a member of Tamayo's rail was visible on the live broadcast, and as Tamayo battled his way to victory, defeating Jordan Griff heads up, chatter began to surface.

Accusations of live simulations being run in real time were levied, and public figures including Doug Polk made strong statements condemning the optics of how everything played out.

Nitsche, the founder of DTO Poker and one of the coaches in his corner, was quick to defend his would-be pupil.

"People have this misconception about how deep you can get as a poker coach during the main event," he explained on the Dan 'Jungleman' Cates podcast. "You can't really do much. You can't run a full simulation on [an opponent]. You can't plug information into your dream machine and get an answer. That's not how this works. All this advice has to be quite general."

"I think it's a fair assessment that most [critics] just don't know how the software works. In general, it's just the fear of computers."

It was clear that no rules had been broken, but the public outcry triggered a response from the *WSOP*. (pg. 14) The now-GGPoker owned series made significant changes to the rules, adding several clear addendums intended to reduce and potentially eliminate any assisted coaching during televised final tables in the future.

Some even took to calling these alterations "the Tamayo rule," and yet, despite some frustration, Tamayo has

## TREAT YO SELF... A LITTLE

While he didn't get all of that \$10 million payout (coaches aren't free!) Tamayo did pick up life-changing money. That being said, he has not actually allowed the windfall to drastically alter the way he approaches life and his finances. He kept the side job reffing football games, and still drives around a 2019 Honda.

The main event win simply gives him more control of his schedule, and adds a few more bullets for tournaments he wants to play. He insists he hasn't made any exorbitant purchases, except for one, splurging on his favorite pastime of golf.

Tamayo was at one point a near-scratch golfer, and dropped a decent amount on some fitted TaylorMade clubs in an effort to get back there. The new P790 irons and Qi10 woods set him back \$4,000, not even a tournament buy-in. His Scotty Cameron putter, however, has been in the bag since 2002 and won't be replaced any time soon.





largely let things roll off his back.

“Whatever the rules are, I’m okay with them as long as it’s the same for everybody,” he explained. “There’s been instances in the past where players think certain people have gotten more favorable rulings than they deserve over the years, some less favorable than they deserve over the years. It’s been all over the place. The way the rules are this year, I really don’t care [what’s changed], because it’s the same for everybody.”

His stance should come as no surprise. After all, Tamayo loves rules. He had to memorize an entire book of them for his day job as a football referee.

### Moving Forward

The ideal outcome for Tamayo is fading back more towards the low-key, under-the-radar presence he enjoyed before 2024. While he’ll never quite experience that level of anonymity again, the attention he’s received in the aftermath of his big win seems likely to fade, at least to a degree, as time goes on.

He’s enjoyed some of the small quirks and benefits of



being a main event champion, from the occasional nod of recognition on the street or on the sidelines of a football game, to playing on some major live streams, and the unique experience of how differently some players approach playing hands with him at the table now.

“It’s changed,” said Tamayo. “The problem that I run into is, what the change is, you never truly know. Some people will play tighter. Some people just go out of their way to win pots against you. It’s all over the place, and you truly don’t know until it happens.”

Tamayo likened the rest of his experience to being a D-List celebrity, allowing him to wait in line at Chick-fil-A unbothered, but having to deal with a bit of added attention when he’s walking around a casino.

And while there’s certainly some added scrutiny from parts of the poker community following the controversy surrounding his win last year, Tamayo hopes that with time the loudest and angriest opinions will fade.

“Everybody’s entitled to their opinion, and it is what it is,” said Tamayo. “Probably best to leave it at that, I think.” ♠

## Top Tournament Scores

Date	Event	Place	Payout
July 2024	WSOP \$10,000 Main Event	1st	\$10,000,000
July 2009	WSOP \$10,000 Main Event	21st	\$352,832
May 2021	Wynn Summer Classic \$1,000 NLHE	1st	\$237,935
Feb. 2013	WSOP Circuit Palm Beach \$1,500 Main Event	1st	\$206,020
April 2024	PGT Texas Poker Open \$3,000 Main Event	3rd	\$180,000
June 2008	WSOP \$1,500 LHE/NLHE Split	2nd	\$140,093
June 2021	Venetian DeepStack \$1,000 MSPT	5th	\$107,694
Oct. 2017	WSOP Circuit Hammond \$365 NLHE	1st	\$101,404
June 2011	WSOP \$1,500 H.O.R.S.E.	4th	\$84,516
July 2015	WSOP \$10,000 Main Event	78th	\$79,668





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# Daniel Weinman Turns The Page On His Pro Poker Career

2023 Main Event Champion Is Focused On Growing The Game From The Tech Side

By Paul Oresteen



**D**aniel Weinman's pro poker story was as improbable as it was incredible, with two *World Poker Tour* wins, a *WSOP Circuit* ring, and two *World Series of Poker* bracelets, including the 2023 main event title.

In fact, Weinman had already achieved prominent status in gambling circles long before he took center stage to bank a cool \$12.1 million; in part because of his creation of the 'Fantasyland' concept for open-face Chinese poker, while also being a scratch golfer that had no problem taking on anyone and smiling ear-to-ear as he collected their money.

But at just 37 years old, he's ready to write a new chapter. He's ready for his legacy to expand beyond being the former champion of the biggest tournament in poker. He's ready to bring millions of new players into the game he lives and breathes.

## A New Chapter

Weinman followed the best year of his career with the best year of his personal life in 2024. Within months of winning life-changing money, he got married, bought a house, and just recently had his first child.

"I've always had this feeling that I never wanted to play poker forever," Weinman admitted. "I wanted to settle down, have a family. I always struggled with that while playing poker."

"My home base was Atlanta, but I lived out of a suitcase," said the Georgia Tech grad. "You know, I had relationships that failed mostly because I was always on the road. It's hard to make time for a relationship if you're really in this world full time."

"We got engaged, married, and pregnant in 2024 – so that was a lot," said Sarah Weinman. "Daniel stepped back from



poker a little bit, which has been interesting for us to navigate. It's been a fun ride and I try to be supportive."

By any measure, Mrs. World Champ jumped into the deep end of the poker world without any idea of what to expect.

"The first trip I did out there I walked into the big room and I saw so many butt cracks and half naked guys getting massages," she laughed. "I was like, 'Why would you want to be around this?' But I have a different opinion now after being involved. This world is eye-opening."

### Playing For Beer Money

I caught up with Weinman on just the second game of poker he played in 2025 – a suburban Atlanta bar league. We were seated at the most technologically advanced poker table in development, while we played for bar tab money.

Weinman, along with Maanit and Manish Madan, is also one of the founders of RF Poker – a high-tech poker table company that's looking to change the game. His win in 2023 coincided with the tech start-up, as he was writing code between trips to Las Vegas.

RF Poker uses RFID (radio-frequency identification) cards and chips to enhance the live poker experience.

"The reason that poker is slowly dying is we're not getting new players," Weinman said. "Gambling is kind of the number one barrier of entry that turns people away. I probably sound hypocritical about wanting to remove gambling from the game. Poker is such a great game and it's been played with money forever; gambling is part of it, but we're looking at a Top Golf concept. We have a private room for your group, a professional dealer, and an enhanced, social experience."

The tables are sleek with separate sensors to read cards and chips, a lighting system that changes with the action and are completely customizable. They have a few in use in Texas and are actively showcasing their technology for major poker tours.

Weinman first saw Maanit on Joe Ingram's podcast discussing the Robbi Jade Lew/Garrett Adelstein cheating controversy as a security expert.

"He had been building security features for tables, and had

a prototype in his basement," Weinman recalled. "It was a perfect fit because I was kind of getting out of playing poker full-time and wanted to do some sort of programming. I thought, 'what better than a poker company?'"

"It didn't really feel like work," he admitted. "So many people, me included, got into poker because we didn't want a boss or a 9-5 job. But ask anyone that's been playing for a living, everything becomes a grind. You're a slave to tournament schedules or when cash games run. The ultimate freedom you thought you once had, you don't really have anymore."

Weinman has become completely at ease without competitive poker, and the vibe wears him like a suit.

"So, it was the opposite for me, where I went from playing poker for a living to sitting at a desk writing code."

Back at the bar tournament, Daniel and Sarah played next to each other wearing goofy grins as one of poker's finest pure players was getting check-raised by patrons eating wings at the table. A lot of the players knew Weinman and his résumé, but others had no idea because he gets embarrassed by his notoriety and will never toot his own horn.

It was probably for the best, as Daniel was the first to be eliminated. He didn't even make the first break. Sarah later found pocket aces, and was unfortunate to run into my suited A-K. There was a king on the flop, then runner-runner clubs and House Weinman's chips became mine.

They shook hands with everybody, chatted about the league's monthly leaderboard invitational event and tipped the server before they left. It's been a while since we counted on poker's main event champion to be an ambassador for the game, as some over the years have shunned the spotlight while others gave it the middle finger. But here was the champ, on a Tuesday night, playing free bar league poker, planting the seeds for another boom.

### Giving Players A Reason To Show Up

Weinman didn't study hold'em charts, didn't study GTO (game theory optimal) play, and relied on his innate poker sense at the table.



"I was never someone who worked really hard at poker, it came naturally to me," he said. "I came up playing online in an era where you didn't have to be very good to make money."

"I think one of my biggest assets is that I've never had a big ego. I don't need to play the highest stakes. I don't need to go battle at *Triton* events because I know those guys are better than me. If poker is your job, then you have to put yourself in good spots to win."

Weinman is a lifetime learner from the game and when designing an efficient RFID streaming table, he wanted to fold in a teaching element. A large part of RF Poker's market is for inexperienced, social players, and the app allows players to review their games with proprietary software.

"I think it can attract new players to the game," he said. "We bring people in, track and analyze their play. It's not from a GTO perspective. We'll never show you a chart, but we'll show you that this player was aggressive and maybe you should have called him more."

"When I came up it was just poker, but there are so many things to gamble on now. It's the same quarter million people that poker is recycling. If RF Poker's market ends up just being poker players, then we've completely failed."

Weinman got proof of concept when he had his wife invite all of her friends for a night out to play. Selfishly, he might hope to convert all these people into real money players, but if he can get 10 million people that have never played poker before an experience they won't forget, that makes an impression.

"One of my favorite parts about poker is when someone new comes in first place or they get to show a bluff," Weinman said. "Poker is 95% men, and there's no reason that we shouldn't be attracting women and younger people into the game. That's what we're trying to do here."

Compare and contrast Weinman's emotional rollercoaster during his main event coverage with that of Jonathan Tamayo's solver-based win in 2024 that prominently featured a laptop on the rail. (pg. 18)

"I don't think I ever stood up [from the table] besides running to my rail for all ins," Weinman recalled. "The laptop on the rail was weird, but it showed what direction poker is going in. Here's some guys playing for the most money ever and they're looking at what a computer says to do rather than be in the moment."

#### **Pulling A Hellmuth**

Weinman expects that 2025 will probably be a blank year on his *Card Player* profile.

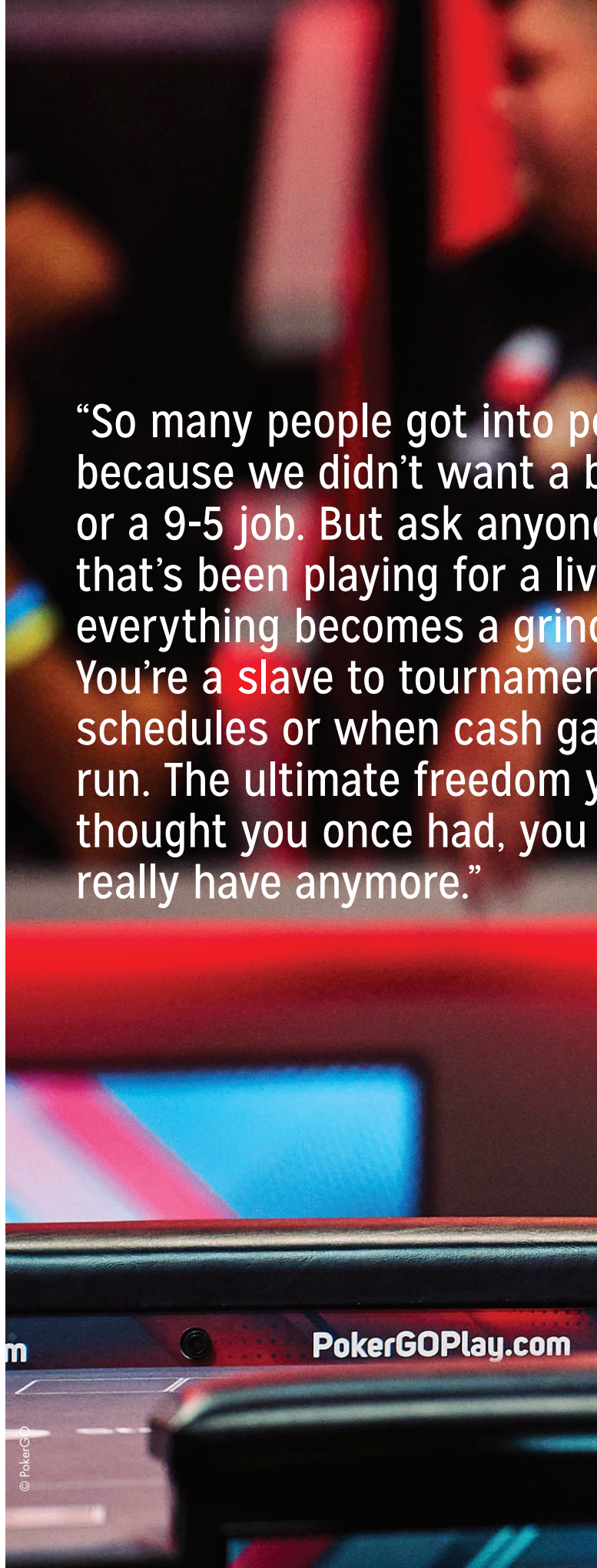
"I think Team Lucky (Weinman, Shaun Deeb, Matt Glantz, and Josh Arieh) is going to be without me this year," he revealed. "I used to play the entire summer, Sarah and Shaun famously convinced me to return in 2023 to play the main. I only played the opening and main events in 2024."

The formation of Team Lucky had a tremendous impact on all of their results. Weinman shipped the main, Glantz pulled a \$1 million bounty, and both Arieh and Deeb won their sixth bracelets while competing for Player of the Year honors.

"It's huge to have top-level players who see the game from a different perspective," said Weinman. "We're similar where we're not chart guys – Glantz is playing a \$2,000 average buy-in in Florida, Josh is playing PLO and mixed games, and Shaun is playing everything under the sun."

"We bounce ideas off each other to see what's working and what's changing in the game. A fly on the wall would think we hate each other, think all other people suck, but that's just

"So many people got into poker because we didn't want a 9-5 or a 9-5 job. But ask anyone that's been playing for a while, everything becomes a grind. You're a slave to tournament schedules or when cash games run. The ultimate freedom you thought you once had, you really have anymore."





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the nature of who we are – we like needling each other.”

“We give Josh the most crap because he’s a smart player, but does some things that are unexplainable,” Weinman added. “He has to be the luckiest player in the world to be where he is. Shaun makes fun of us for what we’re doing, but he’s in for 15 bullets every tournament he plays.”

From a pure poker perspective, what would one learn from the group?

“Not a ton,” he laughed. “But you’ll grow thick skin.”

Playing as the reigning main event champion didn’t stress him out, and he was able to secure a min-cash last summer.

“I almost think it’s easier. People want the story when you’re playing against them, so they’re doing wild things, giving me wild calls, and going for wild bluffs. I didn’t have to do anything special; my normal game became so much more profitable. I felt that I was getting called a lot more, so naturally, I stopped bluffing so much.”

But despite the advantage of being a former champ, much like Phil Hellmuth, Weinman will be skipping this summer’s main event.

“I’d love to go and play the main, but I don’t think Sarah’s going to be too happy if she’s at home with an infant and I’m not.”

### No Time For Life While Grinding

In the last couple of months, he’s found himself missing the game from time to time.

“The problem I had with poker and the reason I took a step back was that I was traveling to stops, spending all this money on hotels and within an orbit of sitting down, I’d be ready to [leave].”

“I never wanted to be the 60- or 70-year-old guy grinding in a casino to make a living,” Weinman said. “As much as I like poker, I never wanted it to be a job anywhere near as long as it ended up being.”

“If I’m this miserable playing poker, let’s do something else for a while. Occasionally, I find myself missing it a bit and think I want to go back because I know I can make a lot of money. I can continue that career, but I’m enjoying the other things more now.” ♠

## Top Tournament Scores

Date	Event	Place	Payout
July 2023	WSOP \$10,000 Main Event	1st	\$12,100,000
Jan. 2017	WPT \$3,500 Borgata Winter Open	1st	\$892,433
April 2017	WPT \$15,000 Tournament Of Champions	1st	\$381,500
Dec. 2015	WSOP Circuit Cherokee \$1,500 Main Event	1st	\$280,260
June 2022	WSOP \$1,000 PLO	1st	\$255,359
Dec. 2023	WSOP Circuit Cherokee \$1,500 Main Event	2nd	\$215,576
June 2017	WSOP \$1,500 Six-Max NLHE	3rd	\$170,477
June 2022	WSOP \$50,000 Poker Players Championship	9th	\$155,421
April 2013	WSOP Circuit Cherokee \$1,500 Main Event	2nd	\$154,772
July 2022	WSOP \$1,979 Hall Of Fame Bounty	4th	\$86,730
Jan. 2024	PokerGO Tour Championship	4th	\$80,000







# ALEKSANDR SHEVLIKOV TOPS SECOND-LARGEST EPT MONTE CARLO MAIN EVENT EVER

Mikita Badziakouski Moves Into Third Place On The All-Time Money List

By Erik Fast



The poker world once again descended on the luxurious French Riviera destination of Monaco for another massive *European Poker Tour Monte Carlo* series in the late spring.

More than \$48.6 million in prize money was awarded between April 30 and May 10 at Sporting Monte-Carlo, with over 40 events ranging from €330 buy-ins all the way up to the €100,000 super high roller. In total, there were 11 events that each paid out at least \$1 million in prize money during the series.

This stop has been a fixture since the *EPT* first hit the scene amid the 2000s poker boom and has played host to many of the tour's highlights. This year's running was another worthy addition, which was headlined again by the €5,300 no-limit hold'em main event.

Online poker player **Aleksandr Shevliakov** earned a seven-figure payday after qualifying for this event via a €530 buy-in online event at PokerStars. The 37-year-old Russian took home €1,000,000 (\$1,130,000) as the last player standing.

"I won," Shevliakov realized after dragging the final pot. "It's a dream come true. This is it."

The 1,195-entry turnout for this event was the second-largest in two decades of *EPT* action in Monaco, trailing only the record of 1,208 set in 2024. (pg. 42) The prize pool for this year swelled to \$6,751,750, with the top 175 finishers earning a share.

Among the many notables that ran deep in this event were four-time bracelet winner Ari Engel (34th), Jose 'Nacho' Barbero (31st), Spanish high roller Juan Pardo (19th), and

2019 *World Series of Poker Europe* main event champion Alexandros Kolonias (15th).

The final day began with six players remaining and Boris Angelov out in front. The 28-year-old Bulgarian had finished as the runner-up in this event just a year earlier after heading into the last day as the top stack, and was hoping to close out his incredible back-to-back final table run with a win.

The first knockout of the day saw Canada's Jamil Wakil get all-in with Q-J suited trailing the A-K suited of Shevliakov. Wakil opened to 270,000 with blinds of 60,000-120,000 and a 120,000 big blind ante. Shevliakov three-bet for less than a complete raise, putting out 360,000. He then claimed he didn't see Wakil's raise in front of him.

Tournament staff ruled that Shevliakov had to raise to the minimum of 420,000, which gave Wakil the chance to call, fold, or raise. He opted to move all in, and was quickly called. Wakil found no help on a king-high runout and was eliminated in sixth place for \$225,718, a sting made worse by what he took to be an angle shot by Shevliakov. (pg. 61)

This was the fourth-largest career cash for Wakil, who now has nearly \$2.9 million in recorded scores to his name after this latest deep run.

Shevliakov also scored the next elimination holding the same two cards with A♥ K♥. The chips went in preflop with Poland's Mariusz Golinski's A♠ 9♠ dominated. The flop came down Q♥ J♦ 10♥ to give Shevliakov the nut straight with a royal flush redraw. The 5♥ turn improved Shevliakov to a flush to leave Golinski drawing dead.



The 2024 *WSOP Europe* main event fourth-place finisher added \$293,687 to his lifetime haul with this latest deep run, surpassing \$1 million in earnings in the process.

Enrico Coppola's event came to an end when he shoved his last 14 big blinds from under the gun with  $J\heartsuit 3\clubsuit$ . Shevliakov made the call from the small blind with pocket sixes and held through a diamond-free, nine-high runout to narrow the field to three. The Italian earned a career-best score of \$381,827 for his efforts.

Angelov's incredible attempt at improving on his second-place finish in 2024 fell just short. The 2024 *WSOP* main event fifth-place finisher called off the last of his stack with  $A\clubsuit 8\heartsuit$  on a  $9\clubsuit 7\clubsuit 2\heartsuit 10\clubsuit$  board. His open-ended straight draw and overcard were trailing the  $10\clubsuit 6\clubsuit$  of Khossein Kokhestani. The  $3\clubsuit$  failed to connect with Angelov and he was eliminated in third place, pocketing a consolation prize of \$496,296.

Angelov has now cashed for more than \$1.1 million in this event over the past two years, having banked \$670,140 for finishing runner-up in 2024. He currently boasts nearly \$5.2 million in lifetime tournament scores, the vast majority of which has been earned in the last two years.

Heads-up play began with Kokhestani holding a slight lead over Shevliakov. It would be several more hours before a champion was decided, however. There were numerous lead changes along the way, but Shevliakov was eventually able to move ahead and then pull away before the final hand of the tournament.

Shortly after losing a big pot with fives full against the sixes full of Shevliakov on a double-paired board, Kokhestani limped in from the button with  $A\spadesuit 6\clubsuit$ . Shevliakov moved all-in with  $K\clubsuit 2\heartsuit$ , and Kokhestani called. The board ran out  $9\heartsuit 7\clubsuit 2\clubsuit Q\heartsuit 8\clubsuit$  to give Shevliakov a winning pair of deuces.

Kokhestani picked up \$694,950 as the runner-up. The 2024 *Eureka Poker Tour Hamburg* champion from Ukraine now has more than \$800,000 in lifetime cashes to his name.

### Chris Nguyen and Mikita Badziakouski Crush Super High Rollers

Monte Carlo is known as a hot spot for high rollers, so it's only fitting that this festival featured plenty of expensive events for the poker world's elite. 13 events cost five figures or more to enter, with eight over the €25,000 threshold.

The largest buy-in of the whole series was the €100,000 super high roller. The six-figure buy-in drew a record field of 74 entries, creating a final prize pool of more than \$8.1 million that was split amongst the top 11 finishers.

American pro Seth Davies picked up \$1,053,047 for third place to bring his career earnings to \$34,555,315, while Italy's Enrico Camosci added \$1,474,085 for second place. Camosci cashed seven times during the series, all in events with buy-ins of at least €10,000. He made six final tables, with three runner-up finishes and a third-place showing.

Germany's **Chris Nguyen** walked away with the largest payday, earning nearly \$2.3 million for a new career-high score. This beat out the \$2.1 million that the 25-year-old earned for a fifth-place showing in the 2024 *WSOP Paradise* \$25,000 super main event.

Nguyen backed that victory up with a third-place showing in the €50,000 high roller, the second-highest buy-in of the series. The score added \$397,760 to his career haul.

The former online cash game grinder is quickly making quite a name for himself on the live high-stakes tournament scene. He already has more than \$5.1 million in career cashes under his belt despite logging his first recorded score less than three years ago.

**Mikita Badziakouski** was the last player standing in the €50,000 high roller, earning \$891,005 for his latest high-stakes triumph. This was on top of the \$495,279 for his sixth-place finish in the €100,000 high roller.

At just 33 years of age, the Belarusian tournament crusher has already accumulated the third-highest tournament earnings total in poker history with \$65,736,054. Only Bryn Kenney (\$76,792,663) and Justin Bonomo (\$69,415,857) have cashed for more on the circuit. Badziakouski now sits roughly a quarter of a million dollars ahead of fourth-ranked Stephen Chidwick on poker's all-time money list.

This was Badziakouski's first title and fourth final-table finish of 2025. He now sits in 10th place in the POY standings, having cashed for more than \$3.3 million already this year.

### Lonis, Padilha, Tollerene, And Peters Headline Other Winners

The €30,000 super high roller 'warm-up' tournament drew 61 entries, with rising high-stakes star **Jesse Lonis** coming away with the trophy. Lonis struck a deal with fellow two-time bracelet winner Chris Brewer. The pair of American pros each earned over \$508,000 for their efforts.

Lonis later finished second in a €10,000 event during the final days of the festival, adding another \$162,268. With three titles won and 10 final tables made so far this year, Lonis has climbed to sixth place on the POY leaderboard.

There were five €25,000 buy-in events held throughout the series, the biggest of which was a three-day affair that



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Chris Nguyen



Mikita Badziakouski



Jesse Lonis



Pedro Padilha



Ben Tollerene



David Peters

attracted 226 entries to build a \$6,131,674 prize pool. Brazil's **Pedro Padilha** was the last player standing, earning a career-high payday of \$1,294,980 as the champion, while Thomas Santerne cashed for \$809,532 as the runner up.

Jose 'Nacho' Barbero finished seventh for \$222,723. The Argentinian was at his sixth final table of the year, and is now sitting in 20th place in the POY rankings thanks to this latest deep run.

**Ben Tollerene** took down the second-largest €25,000 event of the festival, outlasting 72 entries for \$485,742. He chopped with the UK's Ben Heath, who earned \$419,524.

Tollerene was at his sixth final table of 2025, with this being his first outright victory of the year. The score catapulted him into 17th place in the overall POY standings.

Yet another high roller from the USA came out on top in the next €25,000 no-limit event. **David Peters**, a four-time bracelet winner, made his way through a field of 67 entries to earn \$462,636 after a deal with Camosci. The victory pushed his career earnings past the \$52 million mark, placing him

10th on the money list for the time being.

There were five pot-limit Omaha events during the series, with the largest being the €25,000 buy-in. The prize pool hit seven figures thanks to a turnout of 46 entries, with another American hoisting the trophy when all was said and done. **Sean Rafael** was awarded a career-best payday of \$430,530 as the champion. Online high-stakes pro Laszlo 'omaha4rollz' Bujtas took second for \$280,805.

The final, and smallest, €25,000 tournament of the series was a single-day affair that wrapped up on the final evening of action. Two-time bracelet winner **Aleksejs Ponakovs** overcame a field of 22 entries to earn \$256,646 and the hardware.

Brazil's **Alisson Piekazewicz** took down the €12,000 no-limit hold'em cuatro knockout event during an impressive run at this stop that included four high-stakes final table showings. His win in this event totaled \$288,851. He also added a career-best \$342,119 for fifth in the big €25,000 high roller and another \$195,038 for fourth-place in a later €25,000 high roller, plus a seventh-place showing in the







## TOURNAMENTS



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€10,000 cuatro bounty for \$54,466.

Bracelet winner **Cesar Garcia** of Spain dragged the final pot in the €10,000 PLO event, banking \$187,430 for the second-highest payout of his career. Just a couple days prior he had taken third place in the €5,000 PLO for \$64,636.

Norwegian high-stakes online cash pro **Kayhan Mokri** walked away with the spade trophy in the €10,000 mystery bounty event, taking home \$129,885 for his first-place payout and an additional \$36,725 in bounty prizes after topping 91 entries.

This was the latest in a long run of successes for Mokri on the tour, following back-to-back €100,000 no-limit hold'em super high roller wins at *EPT Barcelona* in 2023 and 2024. He now boasts over \$8 million in total career live earnings.

France's **Eric Sfez** beat out 86 entries in a €10,000 no-limit hold'em affair, overcoming a stacked final table that featured the likes of Jesse Lonis, Erik Seidel, Adrian Mateos, and Steve O'Dwyer to secure the title and \$250,702.

**Virgile Turchi** was another winner crowned in a €10,000 event. The Frenchman bested a field of 40 entries in the bounty event for \$73,337. He also took seventh in the event won by Sfez for another \$45,652.

#### Kyte, Frankland, And Madanzhiev Take Down Big Side Events

There were plenty of other massive events throughout the festival. Perhaps most noteworthy was the record-setting €1,100 buy-in kickoff event. What had long been known as the *France Poker Series* main event was one of many smaller regional tour tentpoles to be unified under the *PokerStars Open* banner this year.

The name change was seemingly well received, as this year's running drew a record turnout of 2,387 entries to beat the previous record of 2,138 set in 2023. The sea of players created a prize pool worth nearly \$2.6 million.

The largest payout was the \$384,200 taken home by eventual champion **Jon Kyte**. This was the second-biggest score of the Norwegian player's tournament career, trailing only the \$694,440 he earned as the runner-up in the 2023 *EPT Prague* main event. Kyte now has more than \$3 million in recorded cashes to his name, including 10 titles.

**Stoyan Madanzhiev** of Bulgaria wrote his name in the poker history books when he took down the 2020 *WSOP Online* main event. Madanzhiev has accrued plenty of big live results since then, but had yet to record a signature victory on the circuit. That was the case until he won the €3,000 mystery bounty event at this stop, overcoming 739 entries for \$261,993. He also added \$40,680 in bounty payouts along the way.

One of the largest payouts of the festival outside of the high-stakes events went to the UK's **Mathew Frankland**. He bested 1,300 entries in the €2,200 event to bank a new personal best on the circuit of \$462,283. That just narrowly beat out the \$444,768 he earned later in the series in the €25,000 high roller.

Other notable side event winners included **Remy Murcia**, **Aku Joentausta**, **Laurent Polito**, **Mustapha Kanit**, **Sirzat Hissou**, and **Maria Konnikova**.

The *EPT* will next touch down in Spain for a series from Aug. 18-31 at Casino Barcelona. *EPT Malta* is slated for early October, while *EPT Prague* closes out the year in December. ♠

## European Poker Tour – Sporting Monte-Carlo – Monaco

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€1,100 NLH	1 Jon Kyte	\$284,200 (1,080)
April 30-May 4	2 Gilles Cadignan	\$241,899 (900)
Entries: 2,387	3 Conor Bergin	\$173,263 (720)
Prizepool: \$2,588,272	4 Razvan Scutaru	\$133,024 (540)
	5 Javier Tazon	\$100,932 (450)
	6 Jack Corrigan	\$79,371 (360)
	7 Pavlo Bilonozhko	\$61,054 (270)
	8 Patrik Jaros	\$46,748 (180)
	9 Michael Lichtle	\$36,036 (90)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€10,200 NLH KO	1 Kayhan Mokri	\$165,545 (540)
April 30-May 1	2 Enrico Camosci	\$83,168 (450)
Entries: 91	3 Manuel Carvalho	\$59,438 (360)
Prizepool: \$731,901	4 Pedro Chaves	\$68,252 (270)
	5 Aidyn Auyezkanov	\$36,499 (225)
	6 David Peters	\$97,067 (180)
	7 Alisson Piekazewicz	\$54,466 (135)
	8 Aleksejs Ponakovs	\$18,758 (90)
	9 Julien Sitbon	\$14,916 (45)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€12,300 NLH KO	1 Alisson Piekazewicz	\$288,851 (420)
May 1	2 Andras Nemeth	\$175,376 (350)
Entries: 70	3 Juan Pardo	\$109,271 (280)
Prizepool: \$935,098	4 Morten Klein	\$100,683 (210)
	5 Christopher Nguyen	\$83,733 (175)
	6 Jesse Lonis	\$70,625 (140)
	7 Isaac Haxton	\$47,121 (105)
	8 Govert Metaal	\$39,437 (70)
	9 Byron Kaverman	\$20,001 (35)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€550 NLH	1 Remy Murcia	\$141,250 (540)
May 2-3	2 Jean-Andre Mondoloni	\$87,711 (450)
Entries: 1,675	3 Roland Rozel	\$62,817 (360)
Prizepool: \$908,118	4 Massimo Armenio	\$48,127 (270)
	5 Jeremy Palvini	\$37,075 (225)
	6 Stuart Taylor	\$28,566 (180)
	7 Vardan Zakaryan	\$22,035 (135)
	8 Dmitrija Kohanovskis	\$16,882 (90)
	9 Jochen Kaiser	\$12,905 (45)



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Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€30,000 NLH  May 2  Entries: 61 Prizepool: \$2,013,101	1 Jesse Lonis	\$508,276 (504)
	2 Chris Brewer	\$508,277 (420)
	3 Joao Vieira	\$291,879 (336)
	4 Mikalai Vaskaboinikau	\$221,480 (252)
	5 Mario Navarro	\$171,082 (210)
	6 Alexander Zubov	\$130,854 (168)
	7 Markkos Ladev	\$100,683 (126)
	8 Alex Kulev	\$80,569 (84)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€5,200 PLO  May 2  Entries: 96 Prizepool: \$526,129	1 Aku Joentausta	\$140,572 (432)
	2 Yuriy Anisimov	\$90,513 (360)
	3 Cesar Garcia	\$64,636 (288)
	4 Davidi Kitai	\$49,720 (216)
	5 Vakhtang Javakhishvili	\$39,776 (180)
	6 Joachim Haraldstad	\$31,866 (144)
	7 Ewen Trevidy	\$25,425 (108)
	8 Maksim Shuts	\$20,340 (72)
	9 Nicolas Chouity	\$16,272 (36)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€2,200 NLH  May 3-4  Entries: 1,300 Prizepool: \$2,800,013	1 Mathew Frankland	\$462,283 (960)
	2 Glenn Keogh	\$289,054 (800)
	3 Ahost Mirzoyan	\$206,383 (640)
	4 Luke Marsh	\$158,776 (480)
	5 Kenny Hallaert	\$122,130 (400)
	6 Longmao Fan	\$93,937 (320)
	7 Foued Benjima	\$72,241 (240)
	8 Eros Calderone	\$55,585 (160)
	9 Jean Casabianca	\$42,748 (80)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€10,200 PLO  May 3  Entries: 56 Prizepool: \$613,816	1 Cesar Garcia	\$187,128 (300)
	2 Joao Simao	\$122,718 (250)
	3 Konstantinos Bouloutsos	\$89,044 (200)
	4 Lautaro Guerra	\$67,574 (150)
	5 Ka Kwan Lau	\$52,206 (125)
	6 Matthew Wantman	\$39,889 (100)
	7 Liangce Ni	\$30,736 (75)
	8 Farid Jattin	\$24,521 (50)



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€100,000 NLH  May 3-5  Entries: 74 Prizepool: \$8,112,812	1 Christopher Nguyen	\$2,284,860 (840)
	2 Enrico Camosci	\$1,474,085 (700)
	3 Seth Davies	\$1,053,047 (560)
	4 Orpen Kisacikoglu	\$810,097 (420)
	5 Leon Sturm	\$623,059 (350)
	6 Mikita Badziakowski	\$495,279 (280)
	7 Artur Martirosian	\$396,291 (210)
	8 Klemens Roiter	\$316,852 (140)
	9 Jason Koon	\$253,572 (70)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€5,000 Main Event  May 4-10  Entries: 1,195 Prizepool: \$6,501,672	1 Aleksandr Shevliakov	\$1,130,000 (1,920)
	2 Amir Kokhestani	\$694,950 (1,600)
	3 Boris Angelov	\$496,296 (1,280)
	4 Enrico Coppola	\$381,827 (960)
	5 Mariusz Golinski	\$293,687 (800)
	6 Jamil Wakil	\$225,718 (640)
	7 Miguel Capriles	\$173,568 (480)
	8 Leon Zeaiter	\$133,510 (320)
	9 Kestutis Jungevicus	\$102,661 (160)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 PLO  May 4-5  Entries: 46 Prizepool: \$1,248,040	1 Sean Rafael	\$430,530 (420)
	2 Laszlo Bujtas	\$280,805 (350)
	3 Stephen Chidwick	\$193,456 (280)
	4 Gergo Nagy	\$143,578 (210)
	5 Liangce Ni	\$112,322 (175)
	6 Dario Alioto	\$87,349 (140)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 NLH  May 5  Entries: 72 Prizepool: \$1,953,454	1 Benjamin Tollerene	\$485,742 (588)
	2 Ben Heath	\$419,524 (490)
	3 Jason Koon	\$253,572 (392)
	4 Alisson Piekazewicz	\$195,038 (294)
	5 Adrian Mateos	\$150,064 (245)
	6 Leon Sturm	\$119,215 (196)
	7 Siarhei Ahapau	\$95,372 (147)
	8 Manuel Fritz	\$76,275 (98)
	9 Byron Kaverman	\$61,020 (49)

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Event	Player	Payout (POV)
€3,000 NLH KO  May 6-8  Entries: 739 Prizepool: \$2,251,592	1 Stoyan Madanzhiev	\$302,008 (1,368)
	2 Benjamin Felson	\$171,478 (1,140)
	3 Davidi Kitai	\$133,769 (912)
	4 Chris Brewer	\$101,169 (684)
	5 Yuliyani Nikolaev Kolev	\$164,042 (570)
	6 Lukas Zaskodny	\$70,139 (456)
	7 Michail Manolakis	\$46,567 (342)
	8 Oleh Plaskii	\$49,539 (228)
	9 Franck Makaci	\$34,262 (114)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
€50,000 NLH  May 6-7  Entries: 50 Prizepool: \$2,740,815	1 Mikita Badziakouski	\$891,005 (510)
	2 Brian Kim	\$588,730 (425)
	3 Christopher Nguyen	\$397,760 (340)
	4 Nick Petrangelo	\$301,710 (255)
	5 Markkos Ladev	\$232,780 (213)
	6 Masashi Oya	\$185,320 (170)
	7 Enrico Camosci	\$143,510 (128)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
€25,000 NLH  May 7  Entries: 67 Prizepool: \$1,817,797	1 David Peters	\$462,636 (504)
	2 Enrico Camosci	\$437,602 (420)
	3 Artur Martirosian	\$251,990 (336)
	4 Manuel Fritz	\$193,230 (252)
	5 Pedro Neves	\$149,160 (210)
	6 Mario Navarro	\$114,130 (168)
	7 Stephen Chidwick	\$88,140 (126)
	8 Arthur Conan	\$67,800 (84)
	9 Danilo Velasevic	\$53,110 (42)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
€10,150 NLH KO  May 7  Entries: 40 Prizepool: \$212,440	1 Virgile Turchi	\$73,337 (300)
	2 Nicola Grieco	\$47,799 (250)
	3 Masato Yokosawa	\$32,883 (200)
	4 Ren Lin	\$24,408 (150)
	5 Leon Sturm	\$19,097 (125)
	6 Simone Salis	\$14,916 (100)



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
€1,650 NLH KO  May 8-9  Entries: 587 Prizepool: \$948,235	1 Laurent Polito	\$124,006 (840)
	2 Aram Zobian	\$141,171 (700)
	3 Georgios Vrakas	\$97,609 (560)
	4 Yannice Bahri	\$43,708 (420)
	5 Michel Leibgorin	\$35,539 (350)
	6 Alexandre Raymond	\$27,244 (280)
	7 Oleksii Didkivskyi	\$26,261 (210)
	8 Jean-Jacques Zeitoun	\$29,369 (140)
	9 Razvan Scutaru	\$11,323 (70)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
€25,000 NLH  May 8-10  Entries: 226 Prizepool: \$6,131,674	1 Pedro Padilha	\$1,294,980 (1,344)
	2 Thomas Santerne	\$809,532 (1,120)
	3 Patrik Jaros	\$578,221 (896)
	4 Mathew Frankland	\$444,768 (672)
	5 Alisson Piekazewicz	\$342,119 (560)
	6 Aliaksei Boika	\$267,245 (448)
	7 Jose Barbero	\$222,723 (336)
	8 Saar Wilf	\$285,659 (224)
	9 Arsenii Karmatckii	\$161,364 (112)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
€2,200 NLH  May 9-10  Entries: 266 Prizepool: \$577,112	1 Mustapha Kanit	\$117,972 (432)
	2 Eduard Barsegian	\$73,789 (360)
	3 Maxime Manzone	\$52,703 (288)
	4 Vasyl Zabrodskyy	\$40,544 (216)
	5 Adrien Favrefelix	\$31,188 (180)
	6 Victor Salinier	\$24,001 (144)
	7 Candido Cappiello	\$19,798 (108)
	8 Petr Hruska	\$16,498 (72)
	9 Luis Rayon	\$13,763 (36)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
€10,200 NLH  May 9-10  Entries: 86 Prizepool: \$942,646	1 Eric Sfez	\$251,199 (480)
	2 Jesse Lonis	\$162,268 (400)
	3 Erik Seidel	\$115,825 (320)
	4 Adrian Mateos	\$89,157 (240)
	5 Steve O'Dwyer	\$71,303 (200)
	6 Igor Pihela	\$57,065 (160)
	7 Virgile Turchi	\$45,652 (120)
	8 Enrico Camosci	\$36,499 (80)
	9 Tavares Da Costa	\$29,154 (40)



## TOURNAMENTS



© PokerStars / Manuel Kovsca / Jules Pochy / Eloy Cabacas / Danny Maxwell

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
€25,000 NLH May 10 Entries: 22 Prizepool: \$596,889	1 Aleksejs Ponakovs	\$256,646 (252)
	2 Steve O'Dwyer	\$161,138 (210)
	3 Enrico Camosci	\$107,463 (168)
	4 Artur Martirosian	\$71,642 (126)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
€5,150 NLH 6-Max May 10 Entries: 35 Prizepool: \$191,818	1 Sirzat Hissou	\$66,162
	2 Paulius Plausinaitis	\$43,166
	3 Byron Kaverman	\$29,719
	4 Brian Kim	\$22,035
	5 Aliaksandr Shylko	\$17,289
	6 Daisuke Ogita	\$13,447

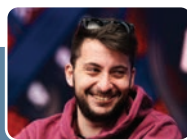
## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 EPT Monte Carlo  
€5,300 Main Event



Amir Kokhestani  
4,400,000 Chips

Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 65%  
After Flop: 83%  
After Turn: 100%



Boris Angelov  
7,810,000 Chips

Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 32%  
After Flop: 14%  
After Turn: 0%



### PREFLOP

With five players remaining and blinds at 60,000-120,000, Amir Kokhestani raised to 260,000 from the cutoff. Boris Angelov called from the big blind.



Angelov led for 175,000, and Kokhestani raised to 500,000. Angelov called.



Angelov bet 350,000, and Kokhestani raised to 800,000. Angelov folded.

### COMMENTARY:

You hardly ever see double donk leads and two raises in response, especially at a final table. This was one of those rare instances. Kokhestani was last in chips at this point, so he could afford to open wider with his 9-7 suited. Angelov, second in chips, faced much steeper ICM pressure with a pair of middling stacks closing in, but he still had a comfortable defend with his 6-4 suited. This particular flop slammed the big blind's range so much, Angelov should be leading about 25% pot over 80% of the time. He did exactly that. Kokhestani should almost never have raises in this spot in theory, though his particular hand doesn't mind raising once in a while. He's only supposed to fold 13% of his range, so Kokhestani could opt to conceal his hand. If he had something strong like an overpair or a set, he would want to call and receive more information on the turn. So, it's possible he gave away some information here. The rainbow seven paired the middle card. New-school poker strategy encourages a lot of leading on paired middle cards, as the equity usually switches to the big blind's favor. A GTO approach has Angelov leading again 64% of the time. And again, he nailed it. Kokhestani decided to, very quickly, raise the turn as well. There's no doubt alarm bells were ringing quite loudly in Angelov's mind. In theory, the decision was actually pretty close, but Kokhestani's actions were so strong that he was more comfortable folding the turn. Little did he know at that moment that he was actually drawing stone dead. Even though Kokhestani's raise led to Angelov folding the turn, he would have had trouble collecting more on further streets, regardless of what river would have appeared.

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)

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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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## EPT MONTE CARLO'S LARGEST FIELDS



Year	Buy-In	Entrants	Prize Pool	Champion	Top Prize
2024	€5,300	1,208	\$6,259,542	Derk van Luijk	\$1,080,000
2025	€5,300	1,195	\$6,751,750	Aleksandr Shevliakov	\$1,130,000
2016	€5,300	1,098	\$6,074,676	Jan Bendik	\$1,097,077
2023	€5,300	1,098	\$5,842,387	Mike Watson	\$801,885
2022	€5,300	1,073	\$5,488,712	Marcelo Mesqueu	\$986,832
2009	€10,000	935	\$12,181,000	Pieter De Korver	\$3,000,000
2019	€5,300	922	\$5,008,304	Manig Loeser	\$676,230
2010	€10,000	848	\$11,364,310	Nicolas Chouity	\$2,278,328
2008	€10,000	842	\$12,882,600	Glen Chorny	\$3,193,822
2018	€5,300	777	\$4,522,140	Nicolas Dumont	\$854,400

The *European Poker Tour* first traveled to Monte Carlo in 2005 for the conclusion of the debut season. The luxurious French Riviera destination was the site of the *EPT's Grand Final* for a decade, with the €10,000 buy-in tournament awarding several seven-figure top prizes.

The *EPT Monte Carlo* main event saw the buy-in halved in 2016, a change that likely contributed to a surge in participation after a falloff in the early 2010s. The newly-priced main event drew a record field of 1,098 entries that year, with champion **Jan Bendik** earning nearly \$1.1 million for the win.

That turnout has been met or exceeded several times since, with the current largest field size being the 1,208 entries made in 2024. That event was won by **Derk van Luijk**, who secured \$1,080,000 after coming out on top. This year's running slots in as the second-largest field with 1,195

entries. (pg. 32)

In the two decades since this event was first held, the tournament has seen many of the biggest names in the game hoist the trophy. Headlining the list of past champions are high-stakes crusher Steve O'Dwyer, four-time *World Series of Poker* bracelet winner Adrian Mateos, and Poker Triple Crown winner **Mike Watson**, who is one of just three players to have won multiple *EPT* main event titles. Watson took down the 2023 running, which is tied for the third-largest turnout in the tournament's history.

Rounding out the top five on this leaderboard is the 2022 main event, which saw **Marcelo Mesqueu** beat out 1,073 entries to win \$986,832.

**Pieter De Korver** bested the largest field of the €10,000 era for this event, outlasting 935 entries back in 2009 to walk away with \$3 million in prize money. ♠



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# 2025 Card Player Player of the Year

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As of  
5/14/2025

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	Jesse Lonis	3,173	3	10	\$1,767,029
7	Lautaro Guerra	2,947	1	9	\$1,404,760
8	Eric Blair	2,938	2	8	\$1,252,425
9	Umberto Ruggeri	2,828	1	4	\$812,242
10	Mikita Badziakouski	2,630	1	4	\$3,364,284
11	Calvin Lee	2,550	0	4	\$1,548,672
11	Wenjie Huang	2,550	1	2	\$5,978,000
13	Joey Weissman	2,477	1	7	\$1,053,700
14	Chino Rheem	2,409	2	8	\$928,850
15	Joao Simao	2,360	1	5	\$779,843
15	Igor Yaroshevskyy	2,360	0	2	\$1,469,000
17	Benjamin Tollerene	2,348	1	6	\$1,953,992
18	Cody Stanford	2,345	5	7	\$473,578
19	Matthew Wantman	2,327	1	10	\$845,247
20	Jose Barbero	2,274	0	6	\$1,835,023
21	Spencer Champlin	2,244	1	4	\$715,700
22	Maurice Hawkins	2,208	3	10	\$307,983
23	Kristen Foxen	2,194	3	4	\$891,500
24	Bryn Kenney	2,193	1	2	\$2,736,430
25	Artur Martirosian	2,192	0	4	\$3,363,923
26	Clemen Deng	2,163	0	6	\$1,514,572
27	Sam Greenwood	2,126	0	3	\$2,380,500
28	Ryan Leng	2,108	1	4	\$203,165
29	Joao Vieira	2,106	1	3	\$5,779,879
29	Russell Brooks	2,106	3	5	\$296,299



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## ACR POKER'S VENOM EVENTS ATTRACT THOUSANDS, AWARD MILLIONS

By Erik Fast

The latest running of ACR Poker's massive online poker tournaments, known as *Venom*, paid out over \$12 million in prize money across its two marquee events. The largest of the pair was the no-limit hold'em tournament, which drew 3,735 entries at \$2,650 apiece across six starting flights. The gigantic turnout fell just short of surpassing the \$10 million guarantee.

Brazil's Gabriel 'kingqueensuited' Tavares emerged victorious with the title and the staggering \$1,505,240 top prize. Runner-up Minh 'Bow2Me' Nguyen also secured a seven-figure payday, walking away with \$1,094,230 for his strong showing.

Several big names made the final table, including *World Series of Poker* bracelet winner Ryan Laplante who finished ninth for \$120,890 and ACR Poker ambassador Katie Lindsay who took seventh for \$226,850.

Laplante shared on social media that he had satellited into the event using rakeback funds, resulting in quite the return on investment for the 2016 *WSOP PLOssus* champion.

Lautaro 'Leko911' Guerra continued his domination of the pot-limit Omaha scene by taking down the \$2 million guaranteed *Venom PLO* tournament, banking \$436,927 after topping an 832-entry field.

The Spanish PLO specialist has secured several major



accolades in his career, including taking down the inaugural *PokerGO Tour PLO Series* championship, the 2024 *WSOP Paradise* \$100,000 PLO high roller, and a \$30,000 PLO event at the *Triton Jeju* stop this spring.

Guerra is currently ranked second on the all-time PLO money list, with more than \$6.4 million in recorded scores in the increasingly popular poker variant. Only Eelis Parssinen with \$7.4 million has accrued more.

Joining Guerra at the final table were notables such as two-time *World Poker Tour* champion and three-time bracelet winner Chad Eveslage, who finished seventh for \$47,103, and two-time bracelet winner Jesse Lonis, who earned \$104,004 for fourth place. ♠

© Mundo Poker / PokerGO

## DANIEL THALLER WINS MEDITERRANEAN POKER PARTY MAIN EVENT

By Erik Fast

Daniel Thaller made it down to the final few tables in the *Mediterranean Poker Party* back in 2022, only to have his run in the massive event end in 20th place. Three years later, Thaller found himself deep in the same tournament with another shot at glory.

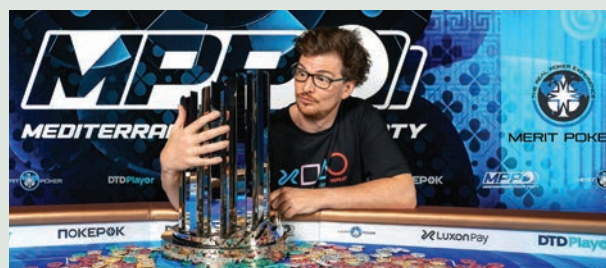
The Larnaca, Cyprus resident has been making the two-hour drive to the Merit Crystal Cove Hotel-Casino Kyrenia for about a decade now. His dedication paid off with this being his biggest score to date.

Thaller defeated 1,196 entries in the \$5,300 event, securing a \$786,670 payday. His previous top score had been a \$46,750 haul as the runner-up in another \$5,300 buy-in event at this venue back in 2021.

The prize pool swelled to \$5,740,800 thanks to the sizable turnout in this event, surpassing the \$5 million guarantee. The top 175 finishers all made the money, earning at least a min-cash of \$8,500.

Thaller came into the final table in the middle of the pack and worked his way up the leaderboard despite not scoring any of the early knockouts. Once down to the final three, Thaller and his two remaining opponents hashed out a deal to redistribute the remaining prize money while leaving the trophy and \$200,000 to play for.

Andreas Mavromoustakis ultimately finished third for



\$651,080 while Timothy Chung survived to heads-up play before ultimately falling in second place. Chung settled for \$637,250 as the runner-up, a new top cash for the 2022 *GUKPT London* champion. ♠

Player	Payout (POV)
1 Daniel Thaller	\$786,670 (1,920)
2 Timothy Chung	\$637,250 (1,600)
3 Andreas Mavromoustakis	\$651,080 (1,280)
4 Razvan Nicolae Sabau	\$316,000 (960)
5 Garik Tamasian	\$229,000 (800)
6 Dawid Smolka	\$162,000 (640)
7 Milad Oghabian	\$113,000 (480)
8 Hassanin Hashim	\$80,100 (320)
9 Italo Modena	\$63,000 (160)

© Merit Poker

# AKIRA TAKASUGI TOPS LARGEST MAIN EVENT IN APT HISTORY

By Erik Fast

The *Asian Poker Tour Taipei* 55,000 TWD (\$1,679 USD) no-limit hold'em main event attracted a record-setting turnout of 2,547 entries, the largest championship field in the 19-year history of the *APT*. As a result, the 70 million TWD guarantee was easily surpassed, with 121,033,440 TWD (or roughly \$3.7 million) paid out among the top 375 finishers.

After four starting flights and four more days of tournament action inside the Red Space venue in Taiwan's capital, Japan's Akira Takasugi came away with the title and the top prize of \$586,710. This was far and away the largest live tournament score yet for Takasugi, blowing away the \$13,766 he earned for a 20th-place finish in this same event back in 2023.

Takasugi surged from fourth to first early on, and then eliminated Shinichiro Kano in fourth place (\$163,350) with pocket queens holding against A-9 to add to his advantage.

The next knockout featured plenty of drama. The chips went in with Wayne Lam's pocket sevens trailing the pocket queens of Iat Man Leong. There was a seven in the window to give Lam hope, but the flop also included a queen to give Leong the better set. Lam was eliminated in third place (\$211,950).

Heads-up play began with Takasugi holding a nearly 2:1 advantage, which he converted into the title by open shoving from the button with K♦ 6♠. Leong made the call with Q♦ 2♦ and the board ran out K♣ Q♥ 10♣ 8♦ 4♠.

Leong walked away with \$312,750 as the runner-up, the largest score yet for the Macau resident. ♠



Player	Payout (POY)
1 Akira Takasugi	\$586,710 (1,200)
2 Iat Man Leong	\$312,750 (1,000)
3 Wayne Lam	\$211,950 (800)
4 Shinichiro Kano	\$163,350 (600)
5 Nishant Kumar	\$136,400 (500)
6 Kiwanont Sukhum	\$110,000 (400)
7 Rintaro Kagawa	\$84,000 (300)
8 Owen Chong	\$60,770 (200)
9 Dang Thi Hue	\$46,300 (100)

# NEWCOMER TUYEN DIEU WINS WSOP CIRCUIT CHEROKEE MAIN EVENT

By Ryan Lucchesi

Tuyen Dieu took home the top prize of \$287,230 at the *World Series of Poker Circuit* main event hosted at Harrah's Cherokee in North Carolina. This was the Lawrenceville, Georgia resident's first recorded *WSOPC* tournament cash ever, and his excitement was evident.

"What a turn card! What a f\*\*\*ing turn card! I'm a champion now. Here we go, I'm rich! Finally, I'm rich," he exclaimed. Dieu bought into this event after his friends in the cash games convinced him to. "They have a [big] percentage of me. A lot. I'm not happy about that right now."

The \$1,700 tournament attracted a field of 1,224 entries, boosting the prize pool to \$1,854,360 to almost double the \$1 million guarantee.

Dieu was at the bottom of the chip counts coming into the final day. Gold bracelet and ring winner Ryan Eriqezzo finished ninth.

Dieu then sent John Shepherd to the rail in sixth place, with bracelet winner David Moses out next in fifth. The exit of Leslie Nettles in fourth place took action down to the final three players, with Dieu out in front.

Dieu busted Joshua Palmer in third place to take a 2:1 chip lead in the final heads-up showdown for the title, which would last about an hour.

Toby Boas' chips went in on a K♥ 10♠ 10♣ A♦ board with Boas' Q♠ 10♥ trailing the pocket aces of Dieu. The 2♠ hit the river to send Boas home with \$191,474. This was the



second-largest cash of his career, trailing only the \$345,244 he earned as the runner-up in a \$3,000 event at the 2022 *WSOP*. ♠

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Tuyen Dieu	\$287,230 (960)
2 Toby Boas	\$191,474 (800)
3 Joshua Palmer	\$134,584 (640)
4 Leslie Nettles	\$96,069 (480)
5 David Moses	\$69,661 (400)
6 John Shepherd	\$51,324 (320)
7 Justin Levy	\$38,431 (240)
8 Phuong Ta	\$29,255 (160)
9 Ryan Eriqezzo	\$22,646 (80)

© APT

© WSOP



## CIRCUIT RESULTS



Event	Player	Payout
APT	1 Biao Ding	\$310,260 (360)
	2 Nicholas Go	\$286,564 (300)
Red Space Taipei City, Taiwan	3 Alex Wice	\$158,519 (240)
	4 Martin Finger	\$121,536 (180)
TWD 800,000 NLH April 28-29 Entries: 45 Prizepool: \$1,045,969	5 James Mendoza	\$95,108 (150)
	6 Calvin Lee	\$73,982 (120)



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
APT	1 John Juanda	\$110,723 (576)
	2 Myunghwan Han	\$74,571 (480)
Red Space Taipei City, Taiwan	3 Ming Teoh	\$52,576 (384)
	4 Kyosuke Nagami	\$42,625 (288)
TWD 85,000 NLH April 30 Entries: 230 Prizepool: \$523,637	5 Dong Lee	\$33,728 (240)
	6 Gaku Fujita	\$25,606 (192)
	7 Punnat Punsri	\$18,693 (144)
	8 Do Vu	\$13,671 (96)
	9 Leo Pang	\$11,315 (48)



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
APT	1 Chang Hwan Lee	\$138,437 (600)
	2 Gary Thompson	\$88,040 (500)
Red Space Taipei City, Taiwan	3 Jie Zhang	\$65,999 (400)
	4 Toan Chan Truong	\$53,398 (300)
TWD 75,000 NLH April 28-29 Entries: 354 Prizepool: \$746,442	5 Dorel Cohen	\$42,098 (250)
	6 Hao-Shan Huang	\$32,147 (200)
	7 Ryan Plant	\$23,607 (150)
	8 Abraham Ceevsin	\$17,345 (100)
	9 Cong Bui	\$14,229 (50)



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
APT	1 Chun Kwan	\$254,901 (840)
	2 Lester Edoc	\$158,596 (700)
Red Space Taipei City, Taiwan	3 Grant Wang	\$113,491 (560)
	4 Tharit Nanthana	\$87,808 (420)
TWD 80,000 NLH May 1-2	5 Gab Kim	\$69,192 (350)
	6 Chi Ho Lai	\$54,157 (280)
TWD 20,000,000 GTD Entries: 626 Prizepool: \$1,396,588	7 Nattawat Soontanont	\$40,052 (210)
	8 Jihwan Oh	\$27,544 (140)
	9 Kuan Lin	\$21,685 (70)

All payouts in USD.

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# TOURNAMENTS

Hung Lee



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Event	Player	Payout (POY)
APT Red Space Taipei City, Taiwan TWD 25,000 NLH May 2-3 TWD 15,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,700 Prizepool: \$1,225,651	1 Hung Lee	\$210,965 (540)
	2 Ryosuke Ikari	\$113,042 (450)
	3 Jaemoon Seok	\$79,050 (360)
	4 Ming Liu	\$57,288 (270)
	5 Ho Choy	\$45,648 (225)
	6 Po Chih Lee	\$36,317 (180)
	7 Chak Chan	\$27,745 (135)
	8 Chi Lin	\$19,592 (90)
	9 Jereld Sam	\$14,973 (45)

Trung Nguyen



© APT

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
APT Red Space Taipei City, Taiwan TWD 110,000 NLH May 3-4 TWD 11,000,000 GTD Entries: 415 Prizepool: \$1,289,241	1 Trung Nguyen	\$235,185 (1080)
	2 Alex Wice	\$149,064 (900)
	3 Yung-bing Chu	\$107,725 (720)
	4 Abraham Ceesvin	\$87,126 (540)
	5 Kaifan Wang	\$68,960 (450)
	6 Sung Yun	\$53,072 (360)
	7 Kok Teoh	\$39,510 (270)
	8 Sai Chau	\$28,598 (180)
	9 Yi Tseng	\$23,142 (90)

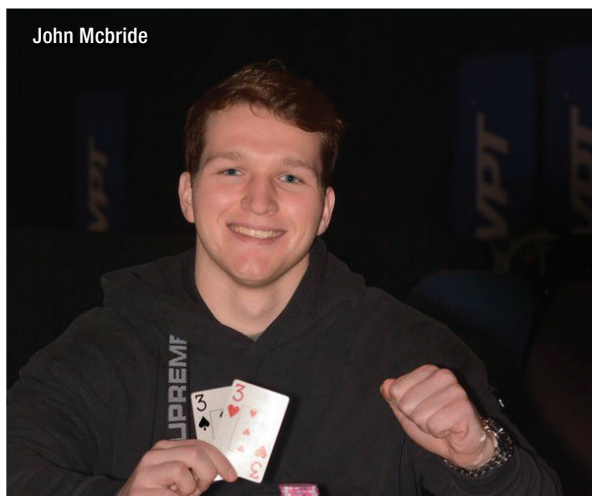
Chih Fan



© APT

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
APT Red Space Taipei City, Taiwan TWD 165,000 NLH May 2 Entries: 151 Prizepool: \$692,043	1 Chih Fan	\$166,109 (576)
	2 Steven Ng	\$112,809 (480)
	3 Andres Vasquez	\$74,400 (384)
	4 Rishi Mehra	\$61,458 (288)
	5 Chung Cheung	\$49,337 (240)
	6 Charlie Chiu	\$38,688 (192)
	7 Chi Chu	\$29,001 (144)
	8 Alfie Poetra	\$21,452 (96)
	9 Christian Harder	\$16,616 (48)

John McBride



© Choctaw

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WPT Choctaw Durant, OK \$1,100 NLH April 29-May 1 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 348 Prizepool: \$338,604	1 John McBride	\$77,881 (480)
	2 Christopher Staats	\$48,146 (400)
	3 Andrew Ostapchenko	\$35,123 (320)
	4 William Berry	\$26,052 (240)
	5 Sharon Aloor	\$19,625 (200)
	6 Tyler Phillips	\$15,010 (160)
	7 Trung Pham	\$11,648 (120)
	8 Bobby Baldwin	\$9,169 (80)
	9 Andrew Watson	\$7,321 (40)



## TOURNAMENTS

George Wolfe



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Mission Rungood bestbet Jacksonville, FL \$1,200 NLH May 1-4 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 465 Prizepool: \$483,600	1 George Wolfe	\$92,817 (720)
	2 Shane Scorza	\$61,879 (600)
	3 Damian Brewster	\$45,520 (480)
	4 Phuoc Nguyen	\$33,882 (360)
	5 Nikhil Sunku	\$25,521 (300)
	6 Edward Mroczkowski	\$19,457 (240)
	7 Nick Costa	\$15,015 (180)
	8 Kelly Slay	\$11,732 (120)
	9 Aja Owens	\$9,282 (60)

Rodney Colson



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Spring Championship Series Canterbury Park Shakopee, MN \$800 NLH May 1-4 Entries: 491 Prizepool: \$341,245	1 Rodney Colson	\$70,405 (360)
	2 Carl Carodenuto	\$45,080 (300)
	3 Mikey Wangh	\$32,485 (240)
	4 Leo Fussy	\$24,570 (180)
	5 Derek Crooks	\$18,425 (150)
	6 Bee Yang	\$13,990 (120)
	7 Brian Schummer	\$10,920 (90)
	8 Wesley Cannon	\$8,530 (60)
	9 Paul Becker	\$6,485 (30)

Bradley Gafford



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
100 Grand Stack Series Sycuan El Cajon, CA \$1,110 NLH May 1-4 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 417 Prizepool: \$402,990	1 Bradley Gafford	\$87,693 (720)
	2 Paul Ewen	\$54,208 (600)
	3 Jonathan Larkin	\$39,462 (480)
	4 Matthew Salsberg	\$29,098 (360)
	5 Kellan Kemp	\$21,923 (300)
	6 Richard Spirra	\$16,741 (240)
	7 Savo Mandrapa	\$13,154 (180)
	8 Astivan Batoo	\$10,364 (120)
	9 Andrew Merrick	\$7,574 (60)

Calogero Morreale



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
GUKPT Grosvenor Luton, United Kingdom £1,250 NLH May 1-4 £250,000 GTD Entries: 284 Prizepool: \$394,718	1 Calogero Morreale	\$75,438 (456)
	2 Zhicheng Miao	\$55,940 (380)
	3 Sebastien Jung	\$41,802 (304)
	4 Hussni Alkhuzai	\$31,375 (228)
	5 Andrew Hulme	\$23,647 (190)
	6 Mitchell Johnson	\$17,875 (152)
	7 Vadims Veksins	\$13,619 (114)
	8 Tommy Bingham	\$10,547 (76)
	9 Keith Littlewood	\$8,366 (38)

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## TOURNAMENTS



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Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Tampa Poker Classic  Seminole Hard Rock Tampa, FL  \$1,700 NLH May 1-5 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 396 Prizepool: \$594,000	1 Johnny Bromberg	\$90,020 (600)
	2 Jason Block	\$89,802 (500)
	3 Michael Morton	\$76,558 (400)
	4 John Tyler Kennedy	\$43,220 (300)
	5 Daniel Chalifour	\$32,450 (250)
	6 Drew Dodge	\$24,630 (200)
	7 Sanjay Dulabh	\$18,900 (150)
	8 Hassan El Hakim	\$14,660 (100)
	9 Gary Leibovitz	\$11,490 (50)



© Parx

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Big Stax  Parx Casino Bensalem, PA  \$1,500 NLH May 8-12 Entries: 259 Prizepool: \$352,240	1 Bin Weng	\$90,878 (408)
	2 Michael Bohmerwald	\$57,662 (340)
	3 Daniel Daconti	\$37,549 (272)
	4 Kevin Azydzik	\$27,404 (204)
	5 Will Failla	\$20,500 (170)
	6 Joe McKeenhen	\$15,463 (136)
	7 Xiaqiong Liu	\$11,765 (102)
	8 John Scrimenti	\$9,123 (68)
	9 Taerim Ku	\$7,221 (34)



© Parx

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Big Stax  Parx Casino Bensalem, PA  \$750 NLH May 1-5 Entries: 886 Prizepool: \$575,900	1 DeeAngelo Seng	\$95,510 (456)
	2 Matt Zambanini	\$76,683 (380)
	3 Vinny Pahuja	\$65,884 (304)
	4 Anthony Merlo	\$35,187 (228)
	5 John Merriam	\$26,261 (190)
	6 Robert Wood	\$19,753 (152)
	7 Luis Ortiz	\$15,146 (114)
	8 Stephen Silverman	\$11,633 (76)
	9 Keith Romer	\$9,214 (38)



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Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit  Harrah's Cherokee, NC  \$400 NLH May 1-4 \$750,000 GTD Entrants: 3,403 Prizepool: \$1,123,770	1 Matthew Higgins	\$132,204 (480)
	2 Daniel Kusnerak	\$81,715 (400)
	3 Elanit Hasas	\$61,858 (320)
	4 Hugh Henderson	\$47,243 (240)
	5 Travis Nowak	\$37,289 (200)
	6 Larry Slater	\$28,303 (160)
	7 Marcus Little	\$22,210 (120)
	8 Arthur Boatman	\$17,587 (80)
	9 Justin Carey	\$14,056 (40)



## TOURNAMENTS

Michael Esquivel



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
WSOP Circuit Harrah's Cherokee, NC \$400 NLH May 6-8 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 2,619 Prizepool: \$860,970	1 Michael Esquivel	\$108,705 (480)
	2 Eric Kim	\$67,191 (400)
	3 Matthew Lewis	\$59,298 (320)
	4 Beverly Grindle	\$38,033 (240)
	5 Brian Heaton	\$29,054 (200)
	6 David Moses	\$22,424 (160)
	7 Manoj Batavia	\$17,488 (120)
	8 Carlos Lam Wu	\$13,783 (80)
	9 Ravee Sundara	\$10,978 (40)

Mark Davis



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
WSOP Circuit Harrah's Cherokee, NC \$1,100 NLH May 7-9 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 564 Prizepool: \$549,900	1 Mark Davis	\$104,162 (840)
	2 Marshall White	\$69,442 (700)
	3 Matthew Beinner	\$47,296 (560)
	4 Artur Winstone	\$32,907 (420)
	5 David Walker	\$23,400 (350)
	6 Jason Maeroff	\$17,015 (280)
	7 Jennifer Zewe	\$12,657 (210)
	8 Eric Patterson	\$9,638 (140)
	9 Jason Gooch	\$7,516 (70)

Lei Yu



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Red Dragon Poker Tour Landing Casino Jeju-do, South Korea KRW 6,000,000 NLH May 3-4 Entries: 137 Prizepool: \$523,660	1 Lei Yu	\$128,609 (396)
	2 Zhu Haobo	\$84,987 (330)
	3 Jian Cai	\$57,901 (264)
	4 Jie Zheng	\$40,754 (198)
	5 Yong Li	\$29,678 (165)
	6 Hung Chen Co	\$22,401 (132)
	7 Zejin Shen	\$17,537 (99)
	8 Yuhan Liu	\$14,236 (66)
	9 Yang Chen	\$12,035 (33)

Shengfa Huang



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Red Dragon Poker Tour Landing Casino Jeju-do, South Korea KRW 2,500,000 NLH May 4-9 KRW 2,000,000,000 GTD Entries: 997 Prizepool: \$1,554,936	1 Shengfa Huang	\$255,600 (912)
	2 He Junjie	\$170,487 (760)
	3 Chenxu Zhang	\$119,685 (608)
	4 Yunfeng Sun	\$85,136 (456)
	5 Law Sheng	\$61,543 (380)
	6 Jiapeng Yu	\$45,220 (304)
	7 Si Peng	\$33,782 (228)
	8 Guan Lun Cheng	\$25,667 (152)
	9 Yepeng Ni	\$19,845 (76)

# TOURNAMENTS

Yunchao Yu



© Red Dragon Poker Tour

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Red Dragon Poker Tour	1 Yunchao Yu	\$148,712 (288)
	2 Hyunyeong Kang	\$91,945 (240)
	3 Anton Lu	\$63,474 (192)
Landing Casino Jeju-do, South Korea	4 Yuzhu Wang	\$45,866 (144)
	5 James Mendoza	\$34,719 (120)
	6 Martin Nielsen	\$27,655 (96)
KRW 12,000,000 NLH May 8-9 Entries: 63 Prizepool: \$494,626	7 Yunkyu Song	\$23,182 (72)
	8 Haohui Ma	\$20,519 (48)
	9 Joseph Cheong	\$19,277 (24)

Gytis Lazauninkas



© Merit Poker

Event	Player	Payout
Mediterranean Poker Party	1 Gytis Lazauninkas	\$227,085 (720)
	2 Nichan Khorchidian	\$189,963 (600)
	3 Yiannis Liperis	\$216,084 (480)
Merit Crystal Cove Kyrenia, Cyprus	4 Alessio Isaia	\$226,858 (360)
	5 Konstantin Voronin	\$85,000 (300)
	6 Oshri Lahmani	\$65,000 (240)
\$10,400 NLH May 12-13 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 149 Prizepool: \$1,430,400	7 Ramzi Karam	\$50,000 (180)
	8 Vedat Yilmaz	\$40,000 (120)
	9 Nikita Kalinin	\$32,900 (60)

Ivan Bryksin



© Merit Poker

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Mediterranean Poker Party	1 Ivan Bryksin	\$375,000 (960)
	2 Nasser Mujaibel	\$255,000 (800)
	3 Stefan-Sebastian Ionita	\$177,000 (640)
Merit Crystal Cove Kyrenia, Cyprus	4 Konstantin Voronin	\$130,000 (480)
	5 Vlado Banicevic	\$95,000 (400)
	6 Alvaro Gonza	\$72,000 (320)
\$2,200 NLH May 5-9 \$2,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,452 Prizepool: \$2,787,840	7 Julian Menhardt	\$57,200 (240)
	8 Tymofii Savkin	\$46,000 (160)
	9 Alexandru Lupuleac	\$37,540 (80)

Hai Tran



© SoMuchPoker

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
APPT	1 Hai Tran	\$155,225 (840)
	2 Somashekar Nahadeva	\$155,225 (700)
	3 Ngoc Le	\$85,300 (560)
NagaWorld Phnom Penh, Cambodia	4 Minh Thang Tran	\$65,620 (420)
	5 Yuanning Wu	\$50,480 (350)
	6 Bo Su	\$38,840 (280)
\$1,750 NLH May 8-13 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 643 Prizepool: \$1,000,000	7 Xiaosheng Zheng	\$29,870 (210)
	8 Abhishek Paul	\$22,970 (140)
	9 Shankui Li	\$17,670 (70)



## TOURNAMENTS

Ian Steinman



© RGPS

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Mission Rungood  Graton Rohnert Park, CA  \$800 NLH May 9-12 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 642 Prizepool: \$450,100	1 Ian Steinman	\$67,540 (420)
	2 Feiyue Wu	\$46,500 (350)
	3 Michael Lin	\$34,500 (280)
	4 Sasha Guerin	\$26,000 (210)
	5 Noel Rodriguez	\$19,500 (175)
	6 Hrishikesh Kulkarni	\$14,900 (140)
	7 Curtis Kowalk	\$11,400 (105)
	8 Scott Sanders	\$8,900 (70)
	9 Denis Lee	\$7,000 (35)

Maxim Lykov



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Event	Player	Payout
WSOP Circuit  Commerce Casino Commerce, CA  \$600 NLH May 9-11 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 1,368 Prizepool: \$704,520	1 Maxim Lykov	\$99,399 (480)
	2 Hayk Grigoryan	\$66,778 (400)
	3 Tri Dinh	\$48,542 (320)
	4 Frank Lin	\$35,712 (240)
	5 Mika Hilaire	\$26,594 (200)
	6 Phil Laak	\$20,049 (160)
	7 John Padilla	\$15,304 (120)
	8 Jeffrey Proctor	\$11,830 (80)
	9 Rachel Gardner	\$9,262 (40)

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 EPT Monte Carlo  
€5,300 Main Event

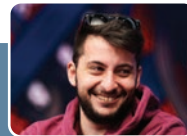


Amir Kokhestani  
12,000,000 Chips

Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 37%  
After Flop: 30%  
After Turn: 77%



Boris Angelov  
6,000,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 62%  
After Flop: 70%  
After Turn: 23%



### PREFLOP

With three players remaining and the blinds at 125,000-250,000, Amir Kokhestani raised to 625,000 from the small blind. Boris Angelov called from the big blind.



Kokhestani bet 700,000, and Angelov called.



Kokhestani went all in for 4,725,000 effective, and Angelov called.



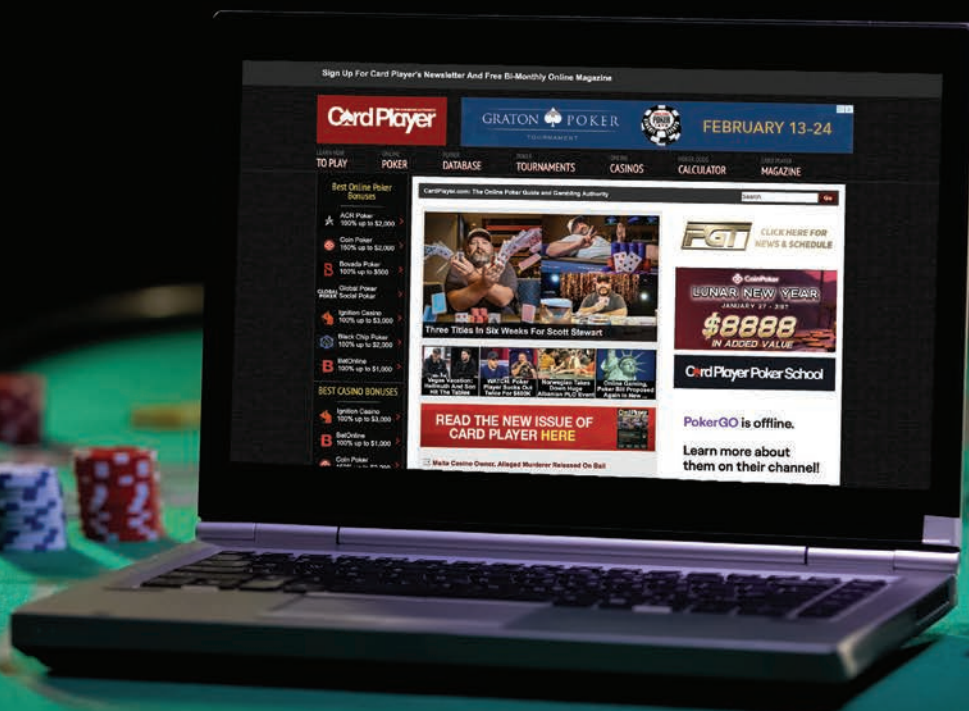
Kokhestani won 12,350,000 with a pair of tens.

### COMMENTARY:

Kokhestani raised to 2.5x with 10-6 offsuit. A GTO approach with this combo raises more than it limps, so it was a pretty standard open. Angelov was third in chips sitting on 24 big blinds, so it was surprising that a player of his skill level didn't go all in with A-8 offsuit in a blind-on-blind battle, which is what the solver recommends. It would also be the case with the majority of offsuit aces and low-to-middling pairs. On the nine-high flop, Kokhestani is checking over 80% of the time, and when he does bet, it should be 100% pot. Holding the 10♣, Kokhestani didn't need to bet for protection just yet. He could have check-called or check-raised instead. Alas, Kokhestani bet small and Angelov called with ace high and tons of backdoor equity. The 10♠ was a crazy card for both players and Kokhestani jammed for 1.6x pot, a questionable decision with top pair, weak kicker. Angelov would have a comfortable call with about 40% of his range, holding better tens, two pairs, and trapped pocket aces. Only combo draws and pair-plus-draw hands would call and be behind. In theory, Kokhestani may have been trying to deny equity and take down the pot quickly. Angelov could have folded his specific hand, which is a very negative EV call. The A♣ blocked potential ace-high bluffs and flush-draw jams, and having the eight kicker blocked K-8 and Q-8 high-equity bluff jams. In hindsight, Angelov should have considered his skill edge against his opponents and taken a better spot. Kokhestani was fortunate as Angelov ended up calling with only 23% equity and was bounced out in third.

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

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# UNDERPAIRS ARE TOUGH TO PLAY

By Jonathan Little

I was recently told about a hand from a \$1-\$2 no-limit cash game that shows two errors that many amateur poker players regularly make.

A tight player raised to \$5 out of his \$200 stack from second position at a nine-handed table. Another reasonable player called from the hijack seat. Our Hero in the small blind opted to call with 9♠ 9♥.

While some players three-bet with their decent hands like 9-9 from out of position, I like Hero's call. If Hero three-bets and gets four-bet or called, he will be in a tough spot with an ordinarily strong hand.

By calling, Hero keeps his opponents in the pot with all their marginal hands and also gets to see the flop before playing a significant pot. If the initial raiser was from a later position (and therefore should have a wider range), three-betting would become a better option.

The big blind folded. The flop came 10♣ 8♦ 5♦, giving Hero an underpair. Hero checked, the initial raiser checked, and the hijack bet \$10 into the \$17 pot.

While Hero could be crushed by top pair, he is in decent shape against the various draws and he is in great shape against worse pairs and unpaired overcards. Hero should make a point to protect his calling range in this spot by also calling with some hands that can easily call bets on the turn and river, such as top pairs.

If this 9-9 is one of the best made hands Hero has in his flop check-calling range, his opponent will be able to easily triple-barrel him off almost his entire range by the river.

Hero called. The turn was the 7♣, giving Hero an open-ended straight draw in addition to his underpair. Hero led for \$25 into the \$37 pot.

This is Hero's first mistake. He has a decently strong marginal made hand that can easily call a turn bet. When you have that hand type, checking from out of position is almost always best.

While Hero can extract a bit of value from various worse pairs and draws, he is never making a better hand fold, meaning when Hero's bet gets called, he will usually be against a better made hand or a strong draw.

That is not the spot you want to be in from out of position with deep stacks. Hero should instead check, looking to check-call with his marginal made hand and open-ended straight draw.

The river was the 6♦, giving Hero a straight, but putting three to a flush on the board. Hero checked.

Checking is fine against players who will fold the vast majority of their hands worse than a straight to a bet, but in many small-stakes games, some players will call a small river bet with marginal made hands like overpairs, two pairs, and top pairs. If Hero bets the river and gets raised, he should fold against most competent opponents.

After Hero checked, the opponent pushed all-in for \$160 into the \$87 pot.

This is certainly a difficult spot for Hero. When trying to figure out if you should call in situations like this, figure out your pot odds and how likely your opponent is to be bluffing.

First, Hero has to put \$160 into a pot that will be a total of \$407 after he calls, so he needs to win 39% (\$160/\$407) of the time to break even. Next, Hero needs to compare the number



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of value hands his opponent would play in this manner to the number of bluffs he would play in this manner, while accounting for the fact that he does not actually know how the opponent will play his hands.

Hero loses to roughly 14 combinations of reasonable flushes, so in order to call, based on the pot odds, Hero needs to find at least nine realistic bluffs ( $9/(9 + 14) = 39\%$ ). If Hero can find nine or more combinations of hands he is confident the opponent will bluff with, he should call. If not, he should fold.

Considering the opponent's range, it is quite difficult to come up with many natural bluffs. A♦ Jx is the main bluffing hand that makes sense, but many players would fold that to a turn lead. Perhaps the opponent would use a hand like A♦ 10x, A♦ 7x, or A♦ 6x as a bluff, but that may not happen because many players would check behind with those, thinking they have showdown value, plus the opponent may not play those hands before the flop.

Since there are very few logical bluffs, I think Hero has an easy fold. Also, as a general rule, most generally tight small-stakes players do not overbet all-in as a bluff often at all, which should also lead Hero to fold.

Hero called and lost to A♦ 10♦, the nut flush. Notice that if Hero simply check-called down on all three streets, he would have still lost the pot, but he would have lost much less while also inducing bluffs.

If you want to avoid making the most common mistakes I see my students make, I put together a course called The 25 Biggest Leaks and How to Fix Them. 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](https://PokerCoaching.com/CardPlayer).

# PUNT OF THE DAY: A THREE-BET POT VS. ALEX FOXEN

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.*

My first Punt of the Day column (Vol. 38, Issue 11) featured a hand where I had an easy continuation-bet strategy and played it correctly, but got myself into trouble barreling a hand that was too weak on the turn and too strong on the river. I ended up losing around a quarter of my stack.

In today's hand, I also make an ambitious turn barrel that doesn't lose EV, but the big error in the hand stems from me not understanding what my flop strategy should look like.

Let's dive into it!

**Event:** 2024 WSOP Paradise - Triton \$500,000 Invitational  
**The Hand**

It is day 2, tournament registration is closed and about half the field remains with 46 remaining from 96 entries. The final 17 will make the money.

The blinds are 25,000-50,000 with a 50,000 big blind ante. The average stack sits at 2,100,000, while I am slightly below that with 1,800,000.

It folds around to Alex Foxen in the lojack and he raises to 100,000. I look down at A♦ J♠ in the hijack and three-bet

to 270,000. It folds around back to Foxen, who calls.

**Flop:** Q♠ 5♥ 3♠ (Pot: 665,000)

**Foxen checks, and I bet 130,000. Foxen calls.**

**Turns:** 3♦ (Pot: 925,000)

**Foxen checks. I bet 350,00, and Foxen folds.**

**What Was I Thinking?**

My preflop play with A-J offsuit is a mix. I rolled an aggressive number and decided to three-bet, but there were a couple factors that made me want to three-bet more often than I would at equilibrium.

Foxen was opening into Ferdinand Putra and Wai Kin Yong, who are strong, experienced poker players, but less aggressive preflop than most pros. So, I thought Foxen would be opening wider than normal.

Wai Kin is a loose defender in the big blind and A-J offsuit doesn't play well in multiway pots. With this lineup, I'd rather three-bet bluff more often with offsuit combos like A-J offsuit, A-10 offsuit, and K-Q offsuit, and flat call with more suited combos like A-9 suited and K-10 suited.

The flop was dry, and I thought I'd always bet dry flops as the preflop aggressor. I considered betting a variety of sizes, but settled on a split between either 20% or 50% pot. I figured that betting half-pot with my range would only

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## POKER STRATEGY

work if I could get pocket pairs to fold on the flop, and I wasn't sure if I could do that, so I chose 20%.

I thought having the J♠ made barreling the turn appealing for me because I blocked some flush draws he might check-raise all-in with, and it allows me to bluff when a spade hits the river. I didn't think I'd three-bet K-J offsuit preflop very often so I thought this was my worst hand with the J♠, which also made it a good hand to bet.

I didn't think I needed to bet big because my value bets don't need much protection and the stack-to-pot ratio is so small I can comfortably shove any river for value. Betting 40% seemed like a size that could get some pocket pairs to fold, but still left enough behind that my river shove would be capable of generating folds. Plus, I'd still be left with a starting stack if I gave up on the river.

### What Did I Get Wrong?

My preflop logic remains sound, but my flop logic is lazy.

A common mechanic in three-bet pots is that specific ranks of cards matter a lot more. Dry boards are good for the three-bettor, but queen-high boards are not.

I rarely three bet A-Q offsuit or A-Q suited because they are indifferent to calling a four-bet shove and I'd rather three-bet a more polar range. Foxen will frequently call a three-bet with A-Q/K-Q so he will show up with top pair more often than I do. He also never has A-K, a hand I have a lot.

A-J with a spade is the exact type of hand that has a lot of pot share, but has trouble calling a check-raise. Betting the flop doesn't lose EV from me, but pure c-betting this flop with all of the middle of my range will lose EV in the

long run against players who exploit this strategy.

On the turn, I overweighted the value of having the J♠ in my hand. If I wasn't dealt the J♠, Foxen would only have it in his range around 5% of the time, and he would continue against a 40% pot bet on the turn 70% of the time with it, and 80% of the time with his entire range. Basically, it's a card he would rarely have and his hands with it actually fold more often than a random hand in his range.

Betting doesn't lose substantial EV, but if I bet hands like this too often, he should never fold pairs on the turn. Fortunately, I got him to fold this time.

### Types Of Errors I Made

Misunderstanding range strategy

Defaulting to lazy play

Misunderstanding blocker effects

### Grade

I made a lazy, obvious play that didn't lose EV, but could be exploited in the future. But I got Foxen to fold 7-7 and looked smart on the livestream, so I'll give this one a B.

He did get the last laugh, however, busting me one level later after I ran A-K into his pocket aces preflop. ♠



*Sam Greenwood is one of the winningest tournament poker players ever and is third on Canada's all-time money list, having cashed for \$42 million and counting in high roller events all over the world. The former stock trader-turned-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.

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# CONTRACTS AND POKER: DISSECTING THE NEW WSOP RULES

By Scott J. Burnham



The *WSOP* rules on electronic devices have finally arrived. When examining a rule, it is always helpful to ask, “What is the purpose of the rule?” That is, “What problem is it trying to solve?”

Poker is very much an individualistic game. Every decision is completely up to one person – no teammates, no coaches, no study aids. In a simpler era, this goal was pretty much achieved with the rule, “One player to a hand.”

But things have become more complicated with the availability of assistance coming in various forms – charts, computers, cell phone apps, coaches on the rail – and with greater incentive to get help with complex GTO decisions to make and millions of dollars on the line. How can access to this assistance be limited?

When fashioning a rule, there is often the problem of Scylla and Charybdis. As you may recall, Greek sailors had to navigate a strait on one side of which was a monster and on the other side a whirlpool. Navigating between these two dangers is the challenge. In drafting a rule, the problem is to navigate between the Scylla of limited measures with a narrow focus and the Charybdis of broad measures with a sweeping effect.

For example, if you want to limit a cell phone to particular uses, the rule could say you may access X, but not Y. But the limited approach is impractical to monitor – how do you know what a player is looking at on their phone?

So, the broad approach is a tempting alternative -- no cell phones period. This approach is easier to administer, but the price we pay is the loss of harmless activities that get caught up in the ban.

This is the dilemma the *WSOP* has faced in trying to achieve that laudable goal of levelling the playing field by restoring poker to a game of autonomous actors. By dissecting Rule 64, we can see the advantages and disadvantages of the limited and the broad approaches.

This column is based on the version of rules available on May 15; it discusses only live events and not online events. (See rules on pg. 17)

Subsection A reproduces, without comment, a criminal statute, NRS 465.075. Players in Nevada are of course already bound by Nevada law, so this was undoubtedly added for its *in terrorem* effect – to scare players into compliance.

In an earlier column (Vol. 37, Issue 26) I called into doubt whether this statute is applicable when a device is not used during the play of a hand. In any event, if there is violation of the *WSOP* rules, the *WSOP* will seek its own remedies rather than rely on the state to prosecute a player. So I don't think anyone will be scared into compliance by this statute.

Subsection B uses the limited approach. It allows players to

use electronic devices and headsets until the final three tables. However, this is true only if the devices “do not contain or use artificial intelligence or any other type of electronic assistance that could give a Participant an advantage over another Participant.”

The rule raises obvious policing problems. On its face the rule goes too far, for what is the problem with the device “containing” the assistance if it is not used? And what exactly constitutes “electronic assistance?” Can a player consult GTO charts on their phone between hands?

Subsection C eliminates the policing problem by using the broad approach: no electronic devices at the final three tables of a tournament or a feature table. It makes sense to have an easily enforced rule at this late stage of the tournament. And because of its limited application, it should not cause much inconvenience.

Subsection D finally gets around to suggesting what is actually banned: “charts, apps, artificial intelligence or any other form of electronic assistance.” This definition is ambiguous, for it is not clear whether “other forms of electronic assistance” modifies charts.

That is, can one consult paper charts? In any event, this rule applies the prohibition to spectators, thereby also preventing players from obtaining information indirectly. It also provides that “Spectators are also prohibited from providing live real-time assistance or coaching through direct (speaking) or indirect (text, e-mail, through any electronic device, etc.) communication to an active Participant in any *WSOP* event.”

This limited approach presents an almost unsurmountable problem with policing the rule – how do you know the purpose for which spectators are using a phone or computer, how do you know what they are saying to players at the rail, and how do you know what is in messages they are sending to players?

I find subsection E confusing. It starts off straightforward enough, allowing *WSOP* personnel to remove electronic devices during the final three tables. This will help enforce subsection C.

But then it states: “No devices will be allowed to be used in the tournament room during these late stages of streamed events and no coaching from anywhere within the tournament room will be allowed; this includes viewing of the tournament stream and usage of any electronic assistance.”

Will there be a special room for the final three tables or does this rule apply to every other table in a vast ballroom? Since players have already been told in subsection C that they can't use devices, this ban must be directed to spectators.

If there can be “no coaching,” will rail visits be allowed? Will anyone police what is being said at those visits to prevent coaching? Why state that “this includes viewing of the tournament stream and usage of any electronic assistance” if you have already been told you can't use devices at all?

Subsection F is not relevant to the present discussion so I am skipping over it, but let's look at subsection G in its entirety, which states that “Participants are prohibited from using betting apps, gaming charts, or any poker information tool while involved in a hand.”

But it goes on to say that “Notwithstanding the foregoing, Participants may utilize the *WSOP+* Live registration app, *WSOP.com*, or *Caesars Mobile Sports App* while involved in a hand as use of these applications does not give an unfair advantage to the Participant.” The rule begins by prohibiting apps and tools during the play of a hand. This suggests that these items are not necessarily prohibited between hands. It then itemizes some exceptions – things that may be used during the play of a hand.

Why in the world are there exceptions?

I always thought the rule was that you can't use your phone during the play of a hand, but curiously there is no rule that says that. Why invite the need to police the purpose for which the phone is being used? Is Caesars afraid it is going to lose online tournament entries or revenue from sports betting if it prohibits players from using the app during play of a hand?

The WSOP made a good start at fashioning rules aimed at restoring the individualistic aspects of poker. The broad

approach at the final three tables should prevent any issues there. But prior to that, because of the limited approach, there are too many unanswered questions and too many policing problems to achieve the desired results. ♠



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## ‘I DIDN'T SEE THE RAISE’: ANGLE OR NOT, IT'S AN ISSUE

By Blaise Bourgeois

At the *European Poker Tour Monte Carlo* main event, eventual champion Aleksandr Shevliakov was accused of angle-shooting by sixth-place finisher Jamil Wakil.

Wakil claims Shevliakov “fake mislicked” with a strong hand to induce a shove from Wakil. The potential angle ultimately led to Wakil's elimination.

The blinds were 60,000-120,000 with a 120,000 big blind ante. Wakil raised to 270,000 under the gun with Q♦ J♦. The action folded around to Shevliakov from the small blind, who looked down at A♥ K♥ and tried to raise to 360,000.

According to Shevliakov, he didn't see Wakil's raise in front of him. The floor was called, and it was ruled that Shevliakov would be forced to make the minimum raise to 420,000.

Wakil then moved all in for nearly 4,000,000 and Shevliakov snapped him off. Big slick held, and Wakil was sent to the rail.

After the hand, Boris Angelov accused Shevliakov of an angle, saying that he also “fake mislicked” with about 20 players remaining. Wakil refused to reciprocate Shevliakov's fist bump as he said his goodbyes to the rest of the table.

Suddenly, the tournament became more about Shevliakov's intent, rather than his big win.

PokerStars commentator James Hartigan was quick to fan the flames, immediately pointing out on the broadcast that this was the only time that Shevliakov had verbally announced his raise despite multiple days playing on the livestream.

Wakil took to Twitter/X to share his thoughts, saying he was “extremely confident” that Shevliakov angled, citing his own verbal raise declaration and confirmation by the dealer.

Many in the poker community were quick to back the Canadian, offering their words of support. Others, meanwhile, had little sympathy that Wakil still chose to bluff shove for nearly 33 big blinds. He made his bed, and he had to lie in it, so to speak.

A small group even went so far as to defend the angle, saying that if it's not addressed in the rules, it's fair game. “That's poker baby!”

While Shevliakov is undoubtedly happy with his €1,000,000 payout, he is definitely not a fan of the spotlight this incident has put on him. Prior to his big win, he had even requested to keep his results hidden from the public by *Card Player* and other results databases.

But the angling accusations were too much to ignore.

“I've already been labeled as an angle shooter, even though no one outside of the Russian-speaking poker community



knows my full version of the events,” Shevliakov wrote. “The dealer told me the sizing was wrong and pointed to the raise. It was only at that moment that I realized Jamil had already raised. I hadn't seen it or processed it — I was focused on my action, my tea, the timer, and avoiding mistakes.”

“I didn't understand what the ruling would be — raise or call — but I immediately realized how bad this would look if ruled a raise. I had no idea what to do,” he continued. “So I sat there, drank tea, and waited for the situation to resolve. Jamil made a correct shove but ran into the top of my range. Before revealing my hand, I said, ‘this wasn't angle shooting,’ and apologized.”

In the lengthy post, Shevliakov claimed several factors had clouded his mental state at the final table and blamed his poor English, an issue with electronic devices on the rail (pg. 14), and being distracted by a waitress with his tea for the mistake.

He also claims to have an extremely strong reputation in the Russian poker scene, with “no debts, no broken deals, no history of angle shooting.”

Several players showed support for the explanation, saying he came across as reasonable, relatable, and truthful.



## A Fix Is Needed

But whether Shevliakov performed an angle or not, it's clear that the door is wide open to benefiting from the "fake misclick" angle whenever the situation presents itself. Let's first break down how the angle/mistake works:

Preflop aggressor (Player A) performs the original raise.

Player B picks up an extremely strong hand.

Player B verbally announces a raise and puts in an illegal amount.

The floor comes over and declares that Player B verbally announced a raise and must put in a min-raise.

Player A is now subjected to having to decipher whether Player B's action is accidental or if Player B is being unethical.

Player A attempts to take advantage of Player B's "accidental action" by four-betting.

Player B (usually) collects a giant pot.

So, how do we solve this particular angle? Here are three potential solutions, with their drawbacks.

### 1. Original Raiser Chooses Whether It's A Call Or A Min-Raise

In this hypothetical, Player A would determine whether Player B's illegal raise is a call or a min-raise.

While this would partially solve the angle, it could still become a psychological headache for Player A on later streets.

This would also be an unprecedented act in the game of poker and could also create new angles.

### 2. An Illegal Raise Results In A Dead Hand

This would be a very controversial move, but one that would completely solve the problem. While legitimate, accidental illegal raises happen occasionally, many would agree that closing the loophole would be worth it, albeit at the occasional expense of a guiltless party.

On the flip side, accidental illegal raises happen far more often in low-stakes tournaments. Applying this rule to those tournaments could turn many recreational players off from playing live poker.

Perhaps a compromise is to only enact this rule in high-stakes events or past a certain point in major tournaments (day 2 or in-the-money). After all, players should be paying attention.

### 3. Harsher Penalties For Anglers

In recent times, tournament directors have been accused of being far too lenient when penalizing players who abuse rules or other players.

Occasionally, a tournament director will punish players for unethical actions by penalizing them. Unfortunately, the penalty is usually a forced sit-out, typically lasting an orbit. It's hardly a deterrent when large sums of cash are on the line. It's like giving a billionaire a parking ticket.

If tournament directors were to put their foot down in instances like this and say, "This isn't right," players may think twice about attempting future angles.

Potential penalties, including financial repercussions (like a fine on winnings to be redistributed to the field), multiple-level penalties, or disqualification, could convince a player to play within the unwritten ethical guidelines.

Anybody have a better idea? Tell it to Matt Savage. The Tournament Director's Association will meet again to discuss the official rules in the summer of 2026. ♠



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

# TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 EPT Monte Carlo  
€5,300 Main Event



Amir Kokhestani  
16,400,000 Chips

Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 51%  
After Flop: 16%  
After Turn: 7%



Aleksandr Shevliakov  
18,900,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 48%  
After Flop: 84%  
After Turn: 89%



## PREFLOP

In heads-up play with the blinds at 200,000-400,000, Amir Kokhestani limped from the button. Aleksandr Shevliakov raised to 1,200,000, and Kokhestani called.

FLOP



Shevliakov bet 600,000, and Kokhestani called.

TURN



Shevliakov bet 2,000,000, and Kokhestani called.

RIVER



Shevliakov bet 3,000,000, and Kokhestani called. Shevliakov won 14,000,000 with two pair, tens and fours.

## COMMENTARY:

Kokhestani's pocket threes could be played as either a raise or a limp, and he opted for the more conservative approach. A hand as strong as Shevliakov's K-10 offsuit was plenty strong enough for a raise, and Kokhestani made a standard call. He would have the option to limp-jam with threes at 20 big blinds and open-jam them at lower depths, but the two players were far too deep to get all in pre. On the flop, the GTO approach had Shevliakov continuation-betting 25% pot with his entire range. With no spade and no heart in his hand, Kokhestani had one of the best combos that could have raised on this board, as he could have folded out junky overcards and got potential value from hands with naked flush draws, ace highs, and backdoor flush draws with one over. He should still just call about 70% of the time, according to the solver, however. The turn put a second flush draw on the board and Shevliakov put out a half-pot bet. It was a bit of an odd size given he could have targeted strong draws and worse made hands with pot-sized bets, or attempted to induce bluffs by checking. There's also room for small bets to try to squeak value out of hands like ace high. EV-wise, Kokhestani had a difficult decision with his threes, especially with his specific combo. Calling was a slightly profitable play, and likely more so given Shevliakov had been a bit more out of line than average. All the draws missed on the river and Shevliakov had a decision to make with top pair, second-top kicker. Did he want to try all or try to get thin value? Kokhestani had been aggressive with his strong hands, so Shevliakov likely used that knowledge to go for it. Kokhestani again faced a close decision. Given Shevliakov's image, the call was likely the correct play. Unfortunately for him this time he was behind, and Shevliakov took down a massive pot to surge back out in front.

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



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	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 13-15	Summer Poker Classic	Turning Stone Casino & Resort ■ Verona, NY
	June 15	Father's Day Tournament	Ocean's Eleven Casino ■ Oceanside, CA
	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
JULY	July 29-Aug. 12	Seminole Hard Rock Poker Open	Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino ■ Hollywood, FL
AUGUST	Aug. 20-24	Summer Poker Round Up	Wildhorse Resort Casino ■ Pendleton, OR
SEPTEMBER	Sept. 25-Oct. 14	Trailblazer Poker Tour	Texas Card House ■ Dallas & Las Colinas, TX

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**KO**- Knock Out or Bounty **LH**-Limit Hold'em **MIX**-Mixed Games **MP**-Mexican Poker **NLH**-No-Limit Hold'em  
**O H/L**-Omaha Eight-or-Better **PLO**-Pot-Limit Omaha **RB**-Rebuy **SH/L**-Seven-Card Stud Eight-or-Better **SLH**-Spread-Limit Hold'em

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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

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

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### BESTBET - JACKSONVILLE

#### MONDAY

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

#### WEDNESDAY

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

#### FRIDAY

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

#### SUNDAY

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

### BESTBET - ORANGE PARK

#### TUESDAY

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

#### THURSDAY

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

#### SATURDAY

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

#### SUNDAY

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

### BESTBET - ST. AUGUSTINE

#### MONDAY

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

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

#### TUESDAY

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

#### WEDNESDAY

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

#### THURSDAY

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

#### FRIDAY

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

# TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 EPT Monte Carlo  
€5,300 Main Event



Amir Kokhestani  
8,000,000 Chips

Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 63%  
After Flop: 81%  
After Turn: 89%



Aleksandr Shevliakov  
27,300,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 35%  
After Flop: 19%  
After Turn: 11%



## PREFLOP

Heads-up, with blinds of 200,000-400,000, Amir Kokhestani limped from the button and Aleksandr Shevliakov checked his option.

FLOP



Shevliakov checked. Kokhestani bet 1,000,000, and Shevliakov called.

TURN



Shevliakov checked. Kokhestani bet 1,500,000, and Shevliakov called.

RIVER



Shevliakov checked once again, and Kokhestani bet 2,000,000. Shevliakov called. Kokhestani won 10,200,000 with a pair of eights.

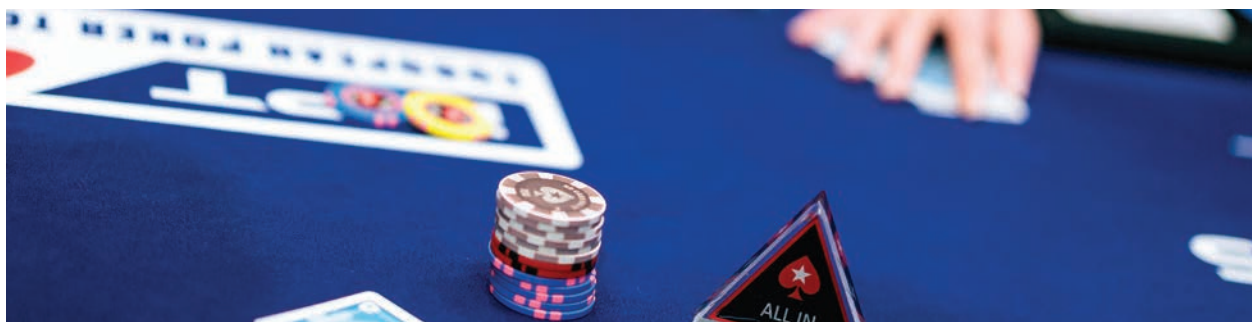
## COMMENTARY:

Amir Kokhestani limped in with 10-8 offsuit. He could have decided to limp or raise to two big blinds, as the solver likes either choice at about a 50% frequency. This frequency rings true with many middling offsuit tens, jacks, queens, and kings. Eventual champion Aleksandr Shevliakov could have opted to apply pressure with his 3-2 suited but chose to check it back. On the eight-high flop, Kokhestani made top pair and a backdoor flush and used an 83% sizing. The solver suggests Kokhestani could have profitably used any sizing he liked, even up to an overbet of 133%. In a GTO setting, against such a large sizing, Shevliakov should actually fold all bottom pairs that aren't capable of making top pair or a flush. The two players had been battling for some time, however, and were not afraid to get out of line, and Shevliakov definitely wasn't in the business of folding pairs. The turn brought in an overcard and a second flush draw. Kokhestani was correct in thinking that he should be double-barrelling the majority of his range on this card. The solver suggests going for an 80% sizing with all of his betting combos in order to have a nice stack-to-pot ratio (SPR) on the river. Kokhestani went for 50% pot, which still was able to get the SPR under one. Even though he unblocked both flush draws, Shevliakov's call, in the long run, would be torching EV. But once again, he just simply didn't believe him. The river was classic street poker. Kokhestani bet about 33% pot, about 40% of his remaining chips, hoping to be called by a sticky three or a six. He got his wish and added much-needed chips to his stack.

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)



## POKER GLOSSARY



**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.

**Felted** - 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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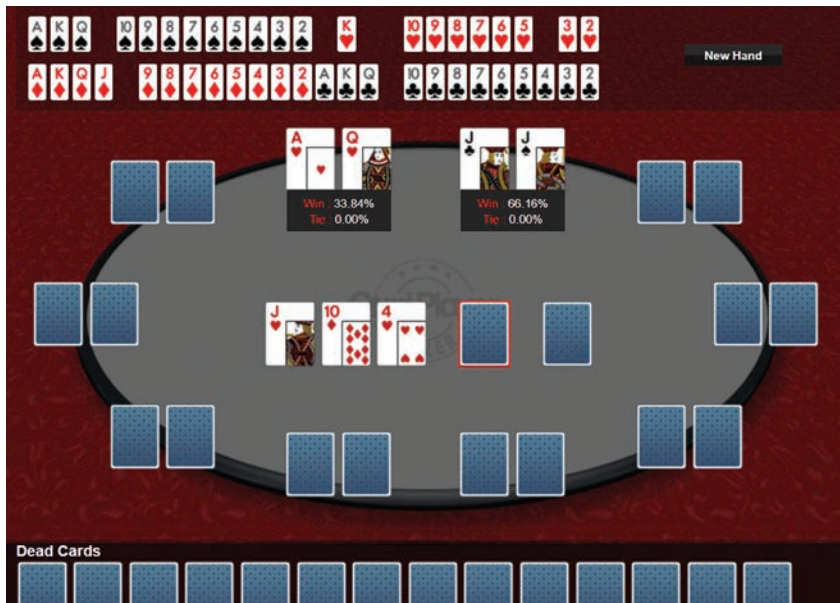


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## POKER ODDS



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## CALCULATING ODDS

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%

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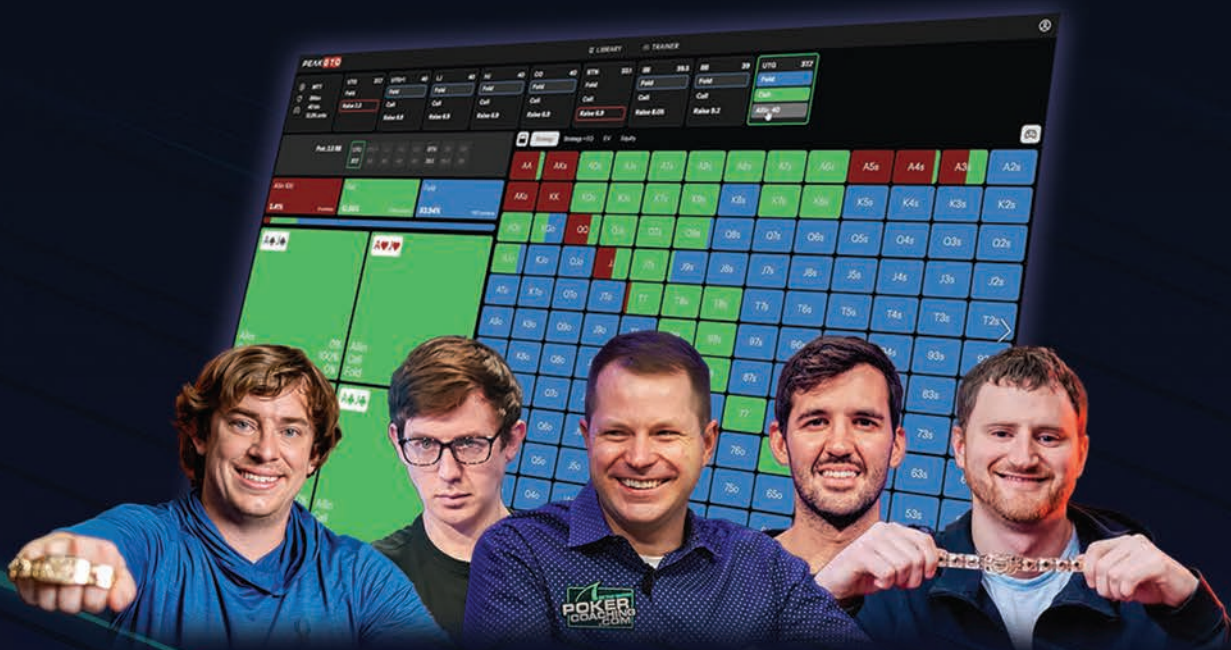
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You are seven-handed in a \$10,000 buy-in tournament, and are sitting on 352,000 at 4,000-8,000. The action folds around to the small blind, a tight, aggressive player, who raises to 18,000. You are in the big blind with Q♠ 6♥.

**Question 1:** Should you fold, call, raise to 60,000, or go all-in?

**Answer:** You should call. You are in position with excellent odds. The only problem is that your hand is quite bad.

Even though your opponent's small raise size may indicate a premium range, you should still call. If you thought your opponent was raising

with a wide range to their default (but horribly incorrect) size, three-betting as a bluff with your queen blocker gains some merit.

You call and the flop comes 9♥ 6♠ 3♦. The small blind bets 25,000.

**Question 2:** Should you fold, call, raise to 67,000, or go all-in?

**Answer:** You should always call when you have a middle pair in a spot like this and are facing a bet. Any aggressive action could result in huge losses, and folding would be far too tight. Call and proceed to the turn.

You call, and the turn is the J♥. The small blind checks, and appears annoyed and "done with it."

**Question 3:** Should you check, bet 25,000, bet 50,000, or bet 100,000?

**Answer:** When your opponent is visibly done with the pot, only a tiny bet is required to win. If you had no read, checking behind with middle pair would be ideal, but when you have a strong read that the pot is most likely yours, unless you have the super-nuts and want to keep your opponent in, bet small and take it down.

You bet 25,000 and your opponent folds. ♠



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