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NEWS FROM THE GAMBLING WORLD

WSOP CIRCUIT RELEASES SCHEDULE, CHANGES SEASON FORMAT

By Sean Chaffin



World Series of Poker officials have released tournament dates and locations for *WSOP Circuit* events from July through December of 2025. The announcement detailed a strategic transition to a January-through-December calendar-year format for the tour moving forward, in line with a dramatic restructuring of the prize format for *WSOP Circuit* ring winners.

The 2025 second half season features 17 U.S. stops and 12 international stops. The U.S. schedule includes stops in Oklahoma, North Carolina, Atlantic City, California, New Orleans, Lake Tahoe, and numerous other locations.

The international schedule includes three stops in Canada, as well as series in Belgium, Panama, the United Kingdom, Estonia, and others. As in previous seasons, most WSOPC stops will feature standardized tournament structures and payouts, ensuring consistency for players across events, according to *WSOP* officials.

The transition to a calendar-year format allows the series to replace its annual *Tournament of Champions* with a new "Ticket To Paradise" promotion.

"Quietly, the *WSOP Circuit* continues to be the biggest live tournament series in the world, bringing the excitement and prestige of *WSOP* action across the globe," *WSOP* CEO Ty Stewart said. "Continuing to elevate the *WSOPC* is a strategic focus of ours, and we hope that players enjoy the new benefit of winning any *WSOP Circuit* gold ring this fall."

WSOP+ Addition

The 2024-25 *WSOPC* season, which ended in the summer, awarded more than \$168 million. The season featured 45 stops, 729 individual tournaments, and more than 291,000 entries. This year's *Tournament of Champions* event was held in May and saw 485 entrants from 1,169 eligible qualifiers for the 2024/2025 season. Canada's Kevin Li came out on top in the \$1 million freeroll for a first-place prize of \$200,000.

For the rest of the year, every ring winner from July 1 through Dec. 2 will now receive a \$5,000 "Ticket To Paradise" package that includes a \$2,500 buy-in and complimentary accommodations in the Bahamas as part of the *WSOP Paradise*. The ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable.

The 2026 season will then run from January to December. As part of the changes, the annual *Tournament of Champions*

has been phased out. Additionally, all future *Circuit* stops will utilize the *WSOP+* app, which has helped reduce registration lines at the series in Las Vegas this year and provides other tournament information. GGPoker is expected to host online poker satellites to many of the international events.

The *WSOP* also announced some leadership appointments. Dennis Jones has been named the new *WSOP Circuit* Tournament Director for the U.S. Andy Tillman will take on the same role internationally. ♠

U.S. Schedule

Dates	Location
July 16-27	Choctaw Casino (Durant, OK)
Aug. 7-18	Harrah's Cherokee (Cherokee, NC)
Aug. 14-25	Harrah's Atlantic City (Atlantic City, NJ)
Aug. 14-25	Graton Resort and Casino (Rohnert Park, CA)
Aug. 21 - Sept. 1	Caesars New Orleans (New Orleans, LA)
Sept. 4-15	Horseshoe Council Bluffs (Council Bluffs, IA)
Sept. 10-21	Horseshoe Hammond (Hammond, IN)
Sept. 18-29	Caesars Southern Indiana (Elizabeth, IN)
Sept. 25 - Oct. 6	Thunder Valley Casino (Lincoln, CA)
Oct. 2-13	Horseshoe Baltimore (Baltimore, MD)
Oct. 9-20	Harrah's Pompano Beach (Pompano Beach, FL)
Oct. 23 - Nov. 3	Caesars Republic Lake Tahoe (Lake Tahoe, NV)
Oct. 29 - Nov. 9	Choctaw Casino Resort (Durant, OK)
Nov. 6-17	Grand Victoria Casino (Chicago, IL)
Nov. 6-24	Commerce Casino (Los Angeles, CA)
Nov. 21 - Dec. 3	Horseshoe Las Vegas (Las Vegas, NV)
Nov. 27 - Dec. 8	Harrah's Cherokee (Cherokee, NC)

International Schedule

Dates	Location
July 25 - Aug. 3	Olympic Casino (Tallinn, Estonia)
Aug. 1-12	Card Casino (Bratislava, Slovakia)
Aug. 18 - Sept. 2	Playground (Quebec, Canada)
Sept. 17 - Oct. 8	King's Resort (Rozvadov, Czechia)
Oct. 1-13	Deerfoot Inn & Casino (Calgary, Canada)
Oct. 9-21	Merit Royal Diamond (North Cyprus)
Oct. 22 - Nov. 4	King's Resort (Rozvadov, Czechia)
Nov. 3-18	Playground (Kahnawake, Canada)
Nov. 6-16	Hilton Hotel (Panama City, Panama)
Nov. 6-16	Partouche Casino (Middelkerke, Belgium)
Nov. 14-24	Dusk Till Dawn Poker Club (Nottingham, UK)
Nov. 21 - Dec. 2	Casino Sanremo (Sanremo, Italy)

WSOP Cancels Online Bracelet Event Over Technical Issues

By Sean Chaffin

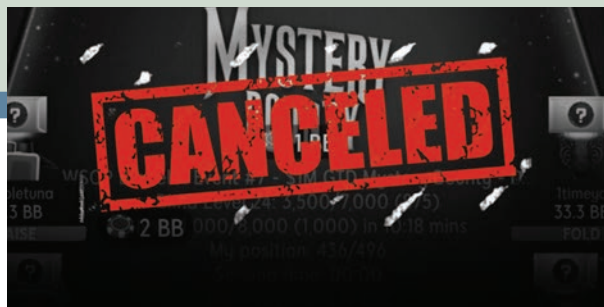
The *World Series of Poker* scheduled more online bracelet events for 2025 than any previous iteration of the series.

When *WSOP Online* announced its bracelet schedule in April, there were 30 online poker events on the schedule. In addition the *WSOP Online* platform had shared liquidity across Nevada, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and New Jersey, making it the first year where tournament officials only needed one set of online bracelet events.

However, after a technical issue in one of the first few events, the series will only crown 29 online bracelet winners. (Read about the winners on pg. 26.)

The *WSOP* canceled the seventh online event of the summer, a \$250 no-limit-hold'em mystery bounty event, after the restart of day 2. Tournament officials made the decision after the majority of players experienced geolocation issues and couldn't log into the client, about two hours after the restart time.

"With around 60% of the player field being unable to connect and play in the event, the *World Series of Poker* determined the disruption severely impacted the integrity of the game and made the difficult decision to suspend and ultimately cancel the event," the *WSOP* said. "As a result, the play on day 2 is considered null and void, and as such,



we have decided an Online Bracelet will not be awarded for this event, and play in the event will not count towards our Online Bracelet Leaderboard."

Prior to the cancellation, a player under the screen name 'DaSurrealist' reportedly knocked out a player and drew the \$100,000 top mystery bounty.

Some players posted screenshots that showed the platform continually trying to verify their location. Others replied that they experienced similar issues in other tournaments as well.

To make it up to the players, the *WSOP* opted to honor all pulled bounties and any prize money already awarded in the tournament, with the remaining prize pool "distributed in a way we believe upholds the integrity of the game and is the fairest and most respectful to the spirit of the competition."

Additionally, all 1,100 players in the event received their buy-in back plus a \$500 tournament ticket. ♠

TRITON UNVEILS NEW POKER TOUR

By Sean Chaffin

Poker's premier high-stakes tour is branching out to lower price points. At the end of June, Triton Poker announced the launch of its *Triton One* poker tour.

Exact details are still unclear, but the company appears to be calling for a tour with more moderate buy-in ranges for those with smaller bankrolls. The high-stakes brand announced that the tour is meant for "all aspiring poker superstars, to raise the bar even further."

"We're proud to be unveiling *Triton One*," Triton Poker CEO Andy Wong said in a statement. "The Triton Poker *Super High Roller Series* has redefined what's possible for a poker tour, and now *Triton One* builds on the foundation to present something both familiar and yet refreshingly new. Triton Poker's industry-leading team has put enormous effort into this product. We can't wait for the world to discover *Triton One* and come to create their own Triton experience."

Company officials said more details would be released soon. However, tour ambassador Danny Tang hinted that the *Triton One* tour would reach a broader spectrum of players.

"I think it's about time a wider audience gets a taste of the Triton experience," Tang said. "It's been a long time coming. I can't wait to meet a lot of new faces, and I wish them luck. Hopefully someone wins and parlays into the Triton Poker *Super High Roller Series* and does well there too."



Triton officials didn't say it specifically, but it appears they are mimicking a strategy used by other brands, creating a secondary tour with lower price points to cater to additional players and expand the brand's reach. For example, the *World Series of Poker* has the *WSOP Circuit*, and the *World Poker Tour* has the *WPT Prime* series. PokerStars operates the European Poker Tour, but also the *Asia Pacific Poker Tour*, *North American Poker Tour*, and the *Brazilian Series of Poker*.

Triton Poker was founded in 2015 by Malaysian businessmen and philanthropists Paul Phua and Richard Yong. The tour had catered to players willing to play at the highest stakes and features events from exotic locations around the world, including South Korea, Montenegro, the Bahamas, Monte Carlo, and more. ♠

BetRivers Poker Expands Into Three New States

By Sean Chaffin

Poker players in Michigan, Delaware, and West Virginia have another option.

In mid-June, Rush Street Interactive announced the company was expanding its online poker platform into those three states. BetRivers launched in Pennsylvania last November and is now one of just two operators sharing liquidity in four states.

WSOP Online is the only other four-state platform, and is available in Nevada, New Jersey, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

The move brings online poker back to Delaware after Rush Street Interactive became the state's sole online gaming operator in January 2024. West Virginia players now have the state's first online poker option since legalizing iGaming in 2019.

"The launch of a unified cross-state player pool significantly enhances the BetRivers Poker experience," Rush Street CEO Richard Schwartz said. "By expanding the network, we'll bring more players to our tables, offer a wider variety of games, and raise the stakes with larger tournament prize pools. We're thrilled to strengthen our poker footprint and deliver best-in-class competition and community-driven play across multiple states."

With the addition of the three states, BetRivers now covers a total population of about 26 million people. The brand began as Run It Once online poker, created and launched by poker pro Phil Galfond in 2019. Rush Street then purchased the company in 2022.

Galfond has remained heavily involved with the platform, helping design the gameplay, features, and rewards. That included seeking direct input from the poker community, according to RSI.

"As poker players, we built this platform for the players – all of them," Galfond said. "From brand-new poker players to seasoned pros, we focused on fairness, fun, unique features, and meaningful player rewards. I've been involved from day one to help shape BetRivers Poker into a platform that delivers the best possible player experience."

RSI also plans to launch BetRivers Poker in New Jersey later this year, which would cover another 9.5 million people and bring the entire network to about 35 million people.

BetMGM operates a shared player pool in New Jersey, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. PokerStars runs a shared platform in New Jersey and Michigan, but has yet to add the company's ringed-in Pennsylvania offering to those shared markets. ♠

THREE MEN CAUGHT CHEATING WITH RFID CARDS IN TEXAS POKER ROOM

By Sean Chaffin

Three men were recently exposed for engaging in a high-tech cheating operation at JokerStars Social Club in Houston.

The men allegedly exchanged a deck of cards at the property with an RFID-enabled deck and used a card reader during play. Club personnel later confronted the men after noticing their efforts on the security footage.

The suspects – named Carlito, Marcelo, and Ivan – allegedly worked together at the table to cheat opponents. Club staff later confronted them, but Marcelo and Ivan fled the property.

Security footage showed Carlito swapping out the deck and changing the cards. According to club owner Jerry Yen and general manager Jason Marshall, Carlito initially denied the allegations, but later confessed. Management also found a card reader in his backpack.

Carlito was a former employee and ambassador for the club. Consequently, JokerStars ownership apologized for the incident on social media.

"We at JokerStars do not tolerate any behavior of the sort," Yen noted on Facebook. "All money lost from this incident was returned and given back to the players affected. We are deeply saddened by Carlito's actions as he is a former employee that represented the Jokerstars name. This is a huge disappointment not just to us, but the entire poker community. We are here to provide the best gaming experi-



ence possible for our members and we are diligent everyday to keep our games fair."

The club will now use custom-made cards to prevent similar cheating efforts in the future.

According to the messages to *PokerNews*, Carlito said he was "dragged into the system."

"I admitted that I made the wrong decision," he wrote. "I apologize to Jerry and everyone else."

The player and former club employee said the scope of the cheating was limited and took only about \$400 from players. However, JokerStars confiscated \$2,700 from him.

JokerStars has been in the news a lot recently. A week earlier, the club was home to a fight involving former NFL running back Adrian Peterson. *TMZ* obtained a video showing the former Minnesota Viking exchanging punches with another player in the poker game.

Texas doesn't have a legal online poker market or legal casinos. Social clubs are one of the only options for poker players in the Lone Star State. ♠

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TAMING TRITON: XUAN LIU BECOMES TOUR'S FIRST WOMAN CHAMP

Canadian Pro Details Last-Minute High Roller Win

By Sean Chaffin



With just a short time left on her contract as a WPT Global ambassador, Xuan Liu had some cash remaining in her account for tournament play. She'd always wanted to give a *Triton Poker* event a shot and the online poker brand was sponsoring the \$25,000 buy-in WPT Global Slam at the Triton stop in Montenegro.

It seemed like the perfect opportunity to use some of those tournament bucks, repping the brand for one of the last times and hopes to have a nice run in an event full of high rollers. Liu accomplished much more than that.

After three days of action, the 40-year-old Canadian poker pro came out on top to become the first woman ever to win a *Triton* event, collecting \$860,000, the biggest cash of her career. Liu topped a field of 155 entries including a stacked final table that included Daniel Dvoress, David Peters, Mike Watson, Kristen Foxen, and other poker sharks.

"I'd been thinking about playing *Triton*, kind of just dabbling in it, but never really got the opportunity just because it didn't quite fit into my schedule," said Liu, who divides her time between Toronto and Las Vegas. "It just so happened to be the very last event where I could spend some money in my budget. And so, it's very serendipitous that I had exactly 25 days to spend it. I was like, 'Okay, I guess I have to go to this now or else the money's just going to evaporate.'"

Liu spoke with *Card Player* about the big win, her unique life in poker, and how despite her success, her mother is still ready for her to get a more stable day job.

Conquering Triton

The last-minute decision to play in the Montenegro series couldn't have turned out much better, despite the tough competition. A few big moments stand out for Liu. Early in the tournament, she won a three-way all-in that made coasting into the money relatively easy, she admitted. Liu had A-K and got all the chips in against two players who both held A-Q.

"Working with a big stack all the way to the money is kind of nice," she said. When heads-up play began Dvoress held a 4:1 chip advantage, but she was able to cut into that and eventually wrangle the lead herself after a massive hand that saw her pocket fives hold up against his A-Q.

"It's definitely the biggest win of my career," Liu said. "At the final table, when I was short-stacked and just kind of hoping to ladder, I was like, 'Okay, what place do I need to beat my other biggest score,' and it worked out to be third place. So, once I beat that, there was very, very little pressure."

That's not to say that Liu shouldn't feel comfortable at a table full of top players. She has been playing poker professionally since the early 2010s. Liu didn't bring any particular strategy to deal with the tougher competition. Being a lone wolf in town with just a single mission also played to her advantage.

"I was just trying to play the best poker that I could play," she recalled. "I definitely was able to play a bit more because

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I knew it was kind of a one-off thing. It's not like they were going to get another chance to play with me really. So, they were feeling me out as much as anything. Whereas, I've seen a lot of these top guys play a bunch from following them and *Triton* over the years. I feel like my opponents were more on their toes in regard to me because there is so few stats and footage of me playing tournaments."

Poker Free Agent

That single win has meant some big opportunities professionally for Liu. She certainly made the most of her final few weeks as a brand ambassador for *WPT Global*, and may now parlay that into even more. As the *World Series of Poker* got underway, Liu was busy taking meetings regarding business deals, sponsorships, possible collaborations, and other

opportunities.

It has been a busy time since returning from Montenegro, but Liu says it feels good to be in the driver's seat.

"I haven't played a day of poker since I've been back, taking a bunch of meetings and strategizing in that department for the most part," she said two weeks after the win. "There are other non-endemic agencies and PR situations that would like to work with me. As for poker companies, there are a few of them, and I would say a couple of top contenders, but still working out the [details]. And not needing a sponsorship is very nice, because I just have all these options and leverage."

Along with *WPT Global*, Liu has been a hot commodity among online poker operators. Through the years she has represented *Natural8* and *888poker* and now may add another



© WPT

brand. But while life has changed a bit from a professional perspective after *Triton*, Liu says her outlook and the kind of person she is remains the same.

Along with playing, Liu is also a budding content creator with more than 60,000 YouTube subscribers. Her videos go beyond poker to include health and personal wellness, travel, and more. She's hoping to expand more of that in the future.

One of her latest videos documented her trip to Boston to be part of a poker panel at the MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference, where she joined fellow players Jen Shahade, Nate Silver, and Alexandra Botez. A video about her win in Montenegro included some insight on visiting Dubai along the way as well. Her interests beyond poker are on full display and that seems to resonate with viewers, but poker certainly remains a passion.

"I'm still going to play as much poker as before," she said, "but I like really picking my spots and being more intentional with my goals and focus."

College Poker To Six-Figure Wins

Like many pro players, poker became part of life for Liu at an early age. Born in Tianjin, China, her family immigrated to Toronto, Canada, when she was five years old. Her parents separated when she arrived in Canada and her grandmother raised her for many years. She remembers playing poker with family members as a kid.

Liu attended eight different universities before settling on Waterloo University, and she believes that background helped make her more of an independent person.

As a child, she quickly transitioned from English as a second language classes to gifted programs, including becoming valedictorian in grade school. She also became interested in sports, competing in volleyball, basketball, soccer, and baseball – earning athlete of the year in junior high.

She was a bit rebellious in high school, with missed dead-

lines and "an issue with authority," a history that might resonate with some other poker pros. Despite that, Liu earned a full scholarship to the University of Waterloo, which had also been the training ground for several other successful Canadian poker players, including Mike Watson, Will Ma, Nenad Medic, Glen Chorny, Steve Paul-Ambrose, and Mike McDonald. She studied political science and graduated in 2008, but credited that time in Waterloo, Ontario, with helping to hone her poker skills.

Always a games player, Liu said she simply loves challenges and that carries over to the poker felt.


"My dad's side of the family enjoys card games and Mahjong regularly, so part of me was predestined to play this game," she explained. "The main thing I enjoy about poker is the fact that it generally doesn't feel like work to me. Even when my game stagnates or I feel outmatched, I feel like I have all the qualities necessary to succeed. I enjoy making correct decisions when there are so many variables involved."

Some nice results came almost immediately after leaving college behind. In 2011, she finished third in the *European Poker Tour San Remo* main event for \$534,564. Another six-figure score came the next year when she took fourth in the *PokerStars Caribbean Adventure* main event for \$600,000.

She continued with more nice scores, including a runner-up in a side event at the *Aussie Millions* in 2015 for \$56,485 and a fourth-place finish in a \$2,500 event at the *Hard Rock Poker Open* for \$70,900. Another major victory came her way in 2017 after finding the top spot in the *WPT Fallsview Poker Classic* for \$228,042.

She now has almost \$4 million in live tournament winnings, moving her inside the top 10 all-time money list for women. However, Liu doesn't put too much stock in those kinds of rankings.

"It's kind of a cool list, but it doesn't matter that much



“The main thing I enjoy about poker is the fact that it generally doesn’t feel like work to me. Even when my game stagnates or I feel outmatched, I feel like I have all the qualities necessary to succeed. I enjoy making correct decisions when there are so many variables involved.”



because I just don't play that many tournaments," she said. "I know it's all just a matter of time and if I really wanted to... if one day I wake up and I'm like, 'I want to be top so and so,' I don't think it's rather difficult. That list just shows you your winnings, and not necessarily your ROI (return on investment) profit. So as long as you're playing and getting some cashes, you're going to move up in that list."

From a training perspective, studying becomes a bigger focus for Liu as a major event approaches. She tries to immerse herself and take a look at some of the most common scenarios she might see in a specific game or tournament. A few poker coaches offer some advice as well. While Liu has many friends in the game, she doesn't stick with just one group and seeks perspectives from a wide variety of players.

"I don't like to be cliquey, because I think you can learn something from almost every school book poker thought."

On And Off The Felt

Liu can often be found on live streamed cash games, and has been a regular through the years in streamed shows like Hustler Casino Live, High Stakes Poker, Poker At The Lodge, Bally Live Poker, and others. But most of the year, she plays simply when she feels like it and doesn't keep to a fixed schedule. When not hitting the tables, Liu has a wide variety of interests.

"Too many to count," Liu admitted. "I'm very ADHD

with my interests. I like to try everything. Right now, I'm a beginner golfer, but I'm obsessed with it and I'm constantly looking for times I can sneak away to golf. Spending time at the range is very meditative for me. And it's very humbling, starting from scratch at something you're not very good at."

Other pastimes include health and fitness, and even gaming. Liu is a regular *League of Legends* player and also enjoys traveling. "All the things that make life worthwhile," she added. "Away from poker, honestly, if I were to somehow pass away tomorrow, I'd still be very fulfilled."

As for her goals in poker, the Canadian pro would love to win a *WSOP* bracelet and add her name to the *WPT* Mike Sexton Champions Cup at some point.

When she first started playing, Liu's mother had her doubts about poker as a career. Liu promised to give it a year and to see how things went. It was sink or swim – and if she couldn't cut it Liu would find a "real" job. Those big wins meant that never happened.

After a decade and half of playing poker full time and millions of dollars in winnings, has her mother had a change of heart about her daughter's career choice?

"I just saw her a couple of weeks ago, and she still asked me when I was going to settle down and do something more stable," she says with a laugh. "I just told her I'm doing okay, and she doesn't have to worry." ♠



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SETH DAVIES ENJOYING ABSURD \$12 MILLION START TO 2025

Hot Streak Continues With \$250,000 WSOP High Roller Title

By Tim Fiorvanti



Seth Davies put together one of the most ridiculous two-month stretches in modern poker history, crushing the high-stakes circuit for millions between May and June of 2025.

After raking in over \$1 million in a €100,000 high roller at *EPT Monte Carlo*, Davies put on the performance of a lifetime at the *Triton Poker Montenegro* festival. Across four cashes, Davies banked \$6 million. He finally captured his first *Triton* title for \$1.5 million, finished second in the \$200,000 *Triton* Invitational for another \$4.2 million and rattled off a second runner-up finish to boot.

Those results on their own were enough to wipe away years of tough trips and results that didn't line up with what Davies is actually capable of at the tables. He'd set a new high score for himself in Montenegro, and Davies had the pressure off his back heading into the 2025 *World Series of Poker*.

Perhaps that's what unleashed him to promptly beat that career-best result just a few weeks later. Davies checked off another major career milestone in winning the *WSOP* \$250,000 super high roller for \$4.75 million and his first bracelet.

With over \$12.2 million in results already in 2025, Davies has already eclipsed every previous year of his career so far with half of the calendar still to come. The Oregon native,

who now calls Las Vegas home, had a lot to say to *Card Player* about his recent run of success, the social dynamics of the high roller scene, and what the future holds for him.

Tim Fiorvanti: After years of these high-stakes *Triton* trips, you had put together some good results and had some close calls, but also a lot of tough luck along the way. What was it finally like to break through on that stage in Montenegro?

Seth Davies: That whole trip was kind of... I guess vindicating would be the best way to describe it. Like you said, I've been going to *Tritons* forever, and I was down quite a bit, especially the two *Triton* stops before that.

I lost a ton of my net worth at the two *Tritons* preceding Montenegro, and I was just kind of thinking, 'Is this something I can continue doing?' Obviously, I can't continue losing like this, and is this ever going to happen for me? So, when it all just kind of happened at once, it was just vindicating. It felt like it was a long time coming.

Tim Fiorvanti: I imagine you have to have a lot of self belief to keep coming back after a tough run. What kept you focused and pushing forward?

Seth Davies: With poker, the people around you really are everything. The people you talk poker with and just go through these things with, my three or four closest friends are high-stakes poker pros who go and play all these *Tritons*.

© PokerGO



Jason Koon is my closest friend. He's had all the results and has been there supporting me through all the downswings, for sure. And then Nick Pietrangelo, Tim Adams, Daniel Dvoress, Ben Tollerene. Those guys are my core group. We watch each other win and watch each other go through the downswings, so we have formed a special bond.

Because nobody besides us really knows exactly what we're going through, and what it feels like. Watching these guys who have won in the past, and they say, 'Listen, man, you have what it takes to be in the position that I'm in right now.' Those guys really get you through it. That's everything.

Tim Fiorvanti: Even with all of the success you've had over the years, how long does it take to process something like a \$6 million trip?

Seth Davies: Man, I've been thinking about that quite a bit, and I don't know if it ever really does sink in. If you're a full time tournament pro, when you're on a downswing, or on an extended period of not necessarily losing a ton, but it's not going great, you really just feel like you're on this constant slide down a mountain.

And then all of a sudden, a trip like this, and a stretch like

this happens. I think I'm at \$12 million in earnings for 2025, where that's a kind of break-even for two years of buy-ins. You can imagine that you have an okay two years, and you had the same amount of earnings as I had in the last six weeks. It's just kind of hard to even catch up with in your own mind.

But it is extremely relieving after all those hard times I went through. This is why. This is the payoff at the end.

Tim Fiorvanti: There is a really interesting dynamic with players who are competing in these high rollers, battling it out for these big prizes, and at the same time they're also your friends, confidants, and sometimes support systems.

Seth Davies: It is interesting with your closest friends also being your opponents. The fortunate thing for me and my friends, and I guess anybody who competes at the highest level in tournaments, is that we're all kind of poker nerds. We actually love poker strategy, so we never get tired of learning and getting better at poker.

When we're actually competing with each other, we all have an extreme amount of respect for each other, so we're not necessarily looking for major exploits. It's kind of this space where we're almost competing against poker theory, in

a way. What I'm getting at is, it's not as confrontational as it might seem.

It is confrontational with some people, however. We certainly all have people who feel like rivals to us in poker, and people we don't like to see win. But against each other, we're just trying to make the right play. Once the tournaments are over and the cards are put away, there's never any animosity towards each other, even towards people that you don't necessarily like that much. I'm never leaving a tournament thinking, 'this guy torched his hand in that spot, I hate him so much.' It's never like that. Let's look at the hand, see what happened, and see what we can take from it.

And fortunately, with poker, it's such a complex game that every single situation is unique, and can be fun. You're trying to unpack the spot and how the spot should play out theoretically. That's the cool part.

Tim Fiorvanti: At these exotic, luxurious stops, once poker is done for the night, is it just nerding out over poker, or is there any normal social banter going on?

Seth Davies: For me, it's just normal hanging out with my friends. At the end of the night on a *Triton* trip, the most common thing you'll see is that we'll go play tennis. There's a bunch of us who play tennis together. There's also a little individuality to this, because I do have some friends, like Nick Petrangelo. He really wants to dig deep into every single hand he plays.

It's always worked out best for me to detach as much as possible, because these *Triton* trips, there's so many hours of very super-charged, adrenaline-fueled poker being played. That means going to work out or play tennis or just go for a walk, just something to get my mind off poker, but that's definitely not how everybody handles it.

Tim Fiorvanti: You followed up Montenegro with your first bracelet, taking down the biggest high roller of the summer. Can you walk us through that experience, especially off the back of what had just happened?

Seth Davies: If you have a chip lead with 15 players left, your brain convinces you that you're just going to cruise to a win. If this heater has taught me anything, or reaffirmed anything, it's that in a poker tournament a million different things need to happen before it's over. Stacks are going to swing wildly.

It's almost never going to be the case where a chip leader comes into a final table and just cruises to the win. It just does not work out that way, at least not at high stakes. Maybe it's a little more likely at low stakes, where there's a lot more scared money involved, and someone can just raise every pot. But when you have eight or nine really good players battling with each other, chips are going to fly around.

It's just about who's going to end up with the most at the end, and that's what this felt like to me. I had the chip lead earlier in the tournament with maybe 20 or 25 left, but then towards the final table and during the final table, I was kind of a middle stack. Nothing crazy or exciting happened for me in those late stages, up until it was four-handed and all hell broke loose, with all these big pots and wildly swinging chip stacks.

I think whirlwind is a great way to describe it. Fortunately for me, coming off of such a big trip in Europe, there were considerably fewer feelings of pressure. Because I was just having such a good year already, I was kind of just along for the ride. I think I played pretty well, although I think I missed a couple things, but I was just sitting there trying to cruise along and do what I had to do to win. I ran great,

“It's almost never going to be the case where a chip leader comes into a final table and just cruises to the win. It just does not work out that way, at least not at high stakes. Maybe it's a little more likely at low stakes, where there's a lot more scared money involved, and someone can just raise every pot. But when you have eight or nine really good players battling with each other, chips are going to fly around.”



especially in the end, and it worked out.

Tim Fiorvanti: Do you have a sentimentality about winning trophies and winning bracelets, or is it more like a money in, money out thing for you when it comes to poker and your results?

Seth Davies: I have some sentiment towards trophies, for sure. What trophies mean is longevity. And for people who can start stacking up a number of trophies across a variety of different tours and games and locations like that, that's what means something to me.

At the end of the day, money is priority number one. This is my career. This is what I do for a living. This is how I hope to retire one day. But the trophies are a validation of all of that. Getting two of them in the last couple months, two very prestigious ones, it does feel really good.

But the other big thing is that the comedown from this big win has been kind of hard too. As funny as that might sound to somebody, I basically just had a headache for four straight days. These are such hormonally charged events where you're at a final table dealing with non-stop adrenaline for like seven, eight hours, that you really crash afterwards. And the crash has been pretty hard.

Tim Fiorvanti: When things are going this well, it might be hard to look at anything other than poker. But I'm curious how you envision your future over the next couple of years, and how much you have plotted out.

Seth Davies: I'm glad you asked that. I actually had a talk with Stephen Chidwick and Orpen Kisacikoglu about this on day 1 of the \$250,000 event. We are all dads now, and I've thought about, say four or five years from now, when my son gets a little older, starts playing more sports and stuff like that. Should I just stop playing and just be dad? And those guys made a really good point to me.

They talked about how important it is to have some purpose in your life, have something to work for, and how good that is for your happiness and your contentment. I want my

family to be proud of me, and I want them to look up to me, and I want to model behavior for my son and for my wife and everybody else in my life as well. I want to model for them what it looks like to be a hardworking, successful person who is worth being proud of.

So yeah, I plan on continuing doing what I'm doing for now, and I don't think I'm going to slow down too much anytime soon.

Tim Fiorvanti: You recently made some comments on social media talking about the outside perception of the high-stakes tournament poker scene, and how much action gets traded and sold around. What prompted you to speak out?

Seth Davies: This kind of started with Daniel Negreanu. He was talking shit on his podcast about high stakes tournament pros. Daniel was saying that none of us make any money, that we're all in for \$12 million in buy-ins every year, and nobody actually wins.

I commented by saying, 'Hey, this is completely wrong.' I play every single high roller tournament, and the most expensive it's ever been for a year was like \$7.3 million. Nobody's in for \$12 million. And there are a lot of people making a really good living from it.

It's just tilting because I'm the kind of guy he's coming after. These people on social media think all these guys have 10% of themselves, and nobody actually wins. Nothing could be further from the truth than that. I know I shouldn't pay attention to them, but it's kind of impossible not to.

All these guys playing high-stakes tournaments, for the most part, they're very successful. There are far more guys who sell 0% of themselves than guys who sell 90% of themselves. I'm a little younger than the core group of high-stakes tournament pros. But these guys have been winning players for 20 years. Of course they have a lot of money. There's lots and lots of money being risked and won with people playing high-stakes tournaments. ♠

Top Tournament Scores

June 2025	\$250,000 WSOP Super High Roller NLHE	1st	\$4,752,551
May 2025	\$200,000 Triton Montenegro Invitational NLHE	2nd	\$4,190,000
Aug. 2024	\$300,000 Super High Roller Bowl Cyprus NLHE	1st	\$3,206,000
Oct. 2024	\$100,000 Super High Roller Bowl PLO	1st	\$1,500,000
May 2025	\$50,000 Triton Montenegro NLHE	1st	\$1,490,741
Jan. 2023	\$100,000 PokerStars Caribbean Adventure NLHE	2nd	\$1,078,347
May 2025	€100,000 EPT Monte Carlo NLHE	3rd	\$1,054,746
Nov. 2019	\$250,000 Super High Roller Bowl Bahamas NLHE	5th	\$1,020,000
Aug. 2024	€100,000 EPT Barcelona NLHE	2nd	\$990,636
Nov. 2021	\$250,000 WSOP Super High Roller NLHE	4th	\$930,791
Dec. 2019	\$10,000 WPT Five Diamond Classic NLHE	3rd	\$827,285
Sept. 2022	\$75,000 Triton Cyprus NLHE	3rd	\$815,000
Aug. 2019	€50,000 EPT Barcelona NLHE	2nd	\$801,521
Sept. 2022	\$200,000 Triton Cyprus Invitational NLHE	8th	\$770,000
May 2022	€75,000 Triton Madrid NLHE	3rd	\$695,167
Aug. 2016	\$5,000 Hard Rock Poker Open NLHE	2nd	\$575,000
March 2024	\$25,000 PGT PLO Series Championship	1st	\$522,000



TRIO OF TRIUMPHS MAKES IT EIGHT WSOP BRACELETS FOR BENNY GLASER

Schulman, Rast, Koon, And Davies Headline Slew Of Notable Winners

By Card Player News Team



The 2025 *World Series of Poker* is now more than halfway complete, with 56 of the 100 live bracelets already awarded at the time of publishing. There has been more than \$210 million in prize money paid out thanks to the over 110,000 total entries in the first four weeks of action.

The average field size to this point now sits at 1,967 entries. The smallest turnout, understandably, came in the \$250,000 buy-in super high roller, which drew 63 entries at a quarter-million a pop. The largest field overall remains the 19,654 that turned out for the first event on the schedule, the *Mystery Millions*. The second-largest field was the 16,301 for the \$500 *Colossus*.

There have been many exciting storylines so far, but the clear throughline of the summer has been the dominance of bracelet veterans. To this point, 31 of the 56 events that have wrapped were won by a player with a bracelet already to their name. That amounts to more than 55 percent. That leaves 25 new bracelet winners this summer, but there are several big names among them.

Hot Trick For Glaser

A red-hot **Benny Glaser** blazed his name in the poker history books with yet another win at the 2025 *WSOP*. The 36-year-old poker pro from Southampton, England, took down the \$2,500 mixed triple draw lowball event in the early morning hours of June 22 for his third bracelet of the summer and eighth overall.

Just a few weeks earlier, Glaser won back-to-back titles in the \$1,500 mixed Omaha and \$1,500 dealer's choice events. His trio of bracelets this year make him just the

seventh player to earn as many in a single series, joining the likes of Scott Seiver (2024), Jeffrey Lisandro (2009), Phil Ivey (2002), Ted Forrest (1993), Phil Hellmuth (1993), and Walter 'Puggy' Pearson (1973) in that incredible achievement.

"It feels outrageous, honestly," said Glaser. "Three in one series. That's so many in one series and it's not even over yet. It's unreal."

The upshot of all this winning in 2025 is that Glaser's career bracelet count has grown to eight, which is good for seventh place all time. He broke out of an expanding glut of players at seven bracelets, and now sits just one win behind the late great Johnny Moss. Glaser is also the fastest to eight bracelets, just edging out Phil Ivey with 11 years between his first and eighth title. It took Phil Hellmuth 15 years to get to eight.

Glaser defeated a field of 463 entries for this latest triumph. The event featured a rotation of badugi, deuce-to-seven triple draw, and ace-to-five triple draw. In addition to the hardware, Glaser also earned \$208,552. This brought his haul for the festival to \$626,248, and his lifetime tournament earnings to more than \$9.4 million.

This was Glaser's third bracelet in a triple draw event, having won his first in the \$1,500 deuce-to-seven triple draw in 2015 and taken down the \$10,000 championship of the same game in 2023. He also has three victories in Omaha events, winning the \$1,500 and \$10,000 Omaha eight-or-better events in 2016 and the \$1,500 mixed Omaha earlier this year. Rounding out his wins are the

Nick Schulman



Brian Rast



2021 razz championship and this year's victory in the \$1,500 dealers choice.

Schulman And Rast Outlast Opponents For Seventh Titles

After four long days of competition and a heads-up battle for the ages, **Nick Schulman** joined one of the most exclusive clubs poker has to offer. Schulman took down the \$10,000 no-limit deuce-to-seven single draw championship, capturing that particular title for the third time in his career.

To earn the gold, Schulman played *WPT* record-holder Darren Elias heads-up for nearly eight consecutive hours, with no dinner break, before finally closing out his seventh career gold bracelet. The 40-year-old poker pro hailing from New York became just the 13th player in history to have earned as many titles at the series.

The first-place prize, worth \$497,356, is the largest ever awarded in a deuce-to-seven tournament. Schulman outlasted a record-setting field of 233 in this event, adding to an illustrious list of career highlights that also includes winning this event in 2009 and 2012. He also finished second in this tournament in 2015 and fifth in 2011.

"I've just been around so many great players, and I've just kind of seen them all," Schulman told *Card Player* when asked about his dominance in this format. "It's my favorite game to play. And I think anytime you're doing something that you're really enjoying, it's, you know, it's good."

It was another close call for Elias, who remains one of the more decorated poker players without a *WSOP* bracelet. The four-time *WPT* champion had come close to this particular title twice before, finishing third in both 2017 and 2019.

Schulman now has more than \$24 million in recorded tournament earnings to his name. In addition to his incredible record at the series, he also boasts a *WPT* main event title, having won the 2005 *WPT World Poker Finals* at Foxwoods for nearly \$2.2 million. This win helped propel

Schulman all the way up to second in the *PokerGO Tour* rankings. For a closer look at the race, head to page 49.

It didn't take long for the count of players with seven or more bracelets to grow yet again. Just over a week after Schulman joined the list, three-time \$50,000 *Poker Players Championship* winner **Brian Rast** managed an epic comeback at the final table of the \$10,000 razz championship.

At multiple points during the final table, the 43-year-old poker pro swung from chip leader down to a nub of a stack, only to fight all the way back to the top. After a long battle, the 43-year-old Poker Hall of Fame member closed out the title for his seventh career bracelet. Rast also has wins in a \$1,500 pot-limit hold'em event back in 2011, the 2018 \$10,000 no-limit deuce-to-seven championship, and a \$3,000 no-limit hold'em six-max event from 2021.

"I feel like no one ever deserves to win a tournament because it's so crazy what has to happen to win," Rast told reporters. "I was very short at least twice, if not three times. I really liked my mindset on this one. I was just telling myself, even before the final table, to 'just focus on your play. If you bust at this point, no matter what happens, you have a great life, you're doing well, playing good poker.' And that's all I can control. That was the longest heads-up battle that I've ever had."

In outlasting 134 players for this latest win, Rast banked \$306,644 to eclipse \$28.3 million in career earnings in the process.

Vieira, ODB, And Johns Get To Four

Just three months after earning the largest prize of his poker tournament career, Portugal's **Joao Vieira** triumphed in another massive high roller at the series to secure his second-biggest payday ever, along with his fourth bracelet.

Vieira topped a field of 103 entries in the \$100,000 no-limit hold'em high roller to earn \$2,649,158 and the hardware. The 35-year-old former professional basketball player turned poker crusher has now cashed for more than \$8.8 million dollars this year, with more than half of that coming from his \$4.6 million victory in a \$150,000 buy-in



Joao Vieira



David 'ODB' Baker



Ian Johns

at the *Triton Poker Jeju* festival in the spring.

It was also this same event at the *WSOP Paradise* series in the Bahamas last December where Vieira settled for second place and \$2,590,000.

"I'm not thinking about what happened six months ago, or what's going to happen in the next six months," Vieira told reporters.

With 3,636 total POY points, Vieira is now sitting inside the top 15 in the overall standings heading into the back half of the year.

Given the buy-in, there were still some big paydays for the rest of the final table, with Aram Oganyan narrowly missing out on his first bracelet, but taking home a \$1,766,099 consolation prize. A total of \$1,212,020 went to Belgium's Thomas Boivin for third, while Isaac Haxton banked \$857,253 for fourth place.

David 'ODB' Baker may act more as a fantasy poker commissioner during the summer these days, but he still has plenty of on-the-felt skills to show off as well. Baker took down the \$5,000 no-limit hold'em seniors high roller for \$646,845, the second-largest result of his career. It trails only the \$1,015,000 he won as the champion of the 2019 *WPT L.A. Poker Classic*. This latest triumph brought the 52-year-old poker pro's career earnings to over \$8.5 million.

Baker has rightly built a reputation as one of the most consistent tournament poker players on tour over the last two decades. Since 2007, the only years in which Baker didn't make at least one final table at the series were 2009, 2016, and 2022. His previous bracelets came in limit hold'em, razz, and an eight-game mix.

"This one just felt different," Baker explained to PokerGO. "This was like a real score. Not only did I win the bracelet, but I won a lot of money, and just knowing that, I'm going to be able to take care of my wife and not have to grind so damn much."

Rounding out the triplet of four-timers was limit hold'em legend **Ian Johns**. He secured his fourth as the champion of this year's \$10,000 limit hold'em championship, besting a field of 118 entries to claim the most prestigious title in fixed-limit two-card poker for a second time.

Johns also won the same tournament in 2016, just 10 days after taking down that year's \$1,500 H.O.R.S.E. title. His first bracelet win had come a decade before those wins, topping 341 entries in a \$3,000 limit hold'em event for his debut triumph at the series.

"When I was 18 I started playing Limit Hold'em a lot online, I just became obsessed with that game and that game only – studied forums, played a gazillions of hands, playing eight tables – like for years and years," Johns told PokerNews. "The satisfaction of getting it done and knowing that I can come here and be competitive over so many years, just feels really good."

Johns earned \$282,455 for this latest victory after overcoming a stacked final table including a runner-up showing from high-stakes online legend Viktor 'Isildur!' Blom, who is having a standout summer despite still searching for his first bracelet. This was already the sixth cash and fourth final-table finish of the series for the Swede, who has already banked more than \$900,000 in total cashes.

Linde And Racener Now Three-Time Champs

Dylan Linde topped a field of 194 entries in the \$50,000 pot-limit Omaha high roller, securing his third career gold bracelet and the massive top prize of \$2,146,414.

This was his largest payday yet on the poker tournament

circuit, outstripping the \$1.6 million he earned for taking down the 2018 *WPT Five Diamond World Poker Classic*.

The 44-year-old professional player from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho now has more than \$14.5 million in career earnings, with more than \$4.3 million coming from his success in *WSOP* events. He captured his first bracelet in the 2021 \$1,500 mixed Omaha eight-or-better event, topping a field of 641 to earn \$170,269. His second came in a \$500 no-limit hold'em online bracelet event. He outlasted 717 entries to secure the hardware and \$60,336 in prize money.

The top three was rounded out by a pair of UK pros in Richard Gryko and Stephen Chidwick. Gryko, a PLO specialist, earned \$1,000,423 for third place, while Chidwick banked \$1,430,938 for second place. As a result, Chidwick is now in third place on the all-time PLO tournament money list with \$7.5 million in earnings, just a couple buy-ins shy of leader Ben Tollerene.

"I'm kind of stunned," Linde said following his victory. "It's been a few really deep runs in a row. I feel very fortunate, and I mean, incredibly lucky to win such a large amount, my third bracelet, and to get heads-up with one of my best friends. I can't imagine a better day."

Earlier in the series, **John Racener** sped to victory in the \$1,500 no-limit hold'em super turbo bounty event. The 39-year-old Floridian poker pro had just made his way to Las Vegas a couple days earlier, and overcame a field of 2,244 entries in the quick affair to earn his third career gold bracelet and the top prize of \$247,595.

The 2010 *WSOP* main event runner-up now has over \$13.8 million in career tournament earnings to his name. His previous two bracelets came in the 2017 \$10,000 dealers choice championship and the 2024 \$10,000 limit hold'em championship.

Koon Headlines Nine Who Earn Second Bracelets

The rest of the 'rich getting richer' crowd, when it comes to bracelet winners adding to their career haul, consists of nine players who had one prior victory at the series under their belts.

Jason Koon stands out among this crowd, with his win coming in the massive \$50,000 no-limit hold'em high roller. His first win came in the \$25,000 heads-up championship back in 2021. This latest win saw Koon earn \$1,968,927 after topping a field of 171 entries. The 39-year-old 12-time *Triton Poker* champion has five multi-million-dollar scores on his long list of accomplishments, with another 10 cashes between \$1 million and \$2 million.

Koon has been particularly hot recently, cashing for more than \$6.5 million since the start of May. This includes two wins at *Triton Montenegro*, which extended his lead as the tour's title leader by seven more than any other player. The largest of this streak saw him take down the \$150,000 event at that stop for just shy of \$3.4 million. Koon climbed to 15th in the POY race thanks to this high-stakes spree.

"I've dedicated my entire life to being very good at this game," Koon said after the win. "Every person in here is trying to win. It's not like these guys have been around for 2 or 3 years. You're talking about guys who have multiple decades of [scores] and somehow we're still here and we're playing the biggest game and winning. It's amazing."

Koon now sits in fourth place on poker's all-time money list with more than \$68.2 million in lifetime scores, just behind Chidwick, who surpassed \$68.7 million thanks to his seven-figure payday in the \$50,000 PLO event.

Dylan Linde



John Racener



Jason Koon



TOURNAMENTS



Another one-time winner to capture their second bracelet over the past fortnight was **Tyler Brown**. The 2023 *Mystery Millions* champ was reportedly almost disqualified late in the \$600 no-limit hold'em/pot-limit Omaha mix event due to a color up dispute with tournament staff. Despite the distraction, he remained in the tournament, ultimately besting the 2,775-entry field to earn \$178,126 and the hardware.

Ukraine's **Renat Bohdanov** managed his biggest victory on the live circuit in a \$3,000 buy-in no-limit hold'em event with 1,027 entries to earn a career-best score of \$451,600. He previously took down a €350 buy-in event at the 2019 *WSOP Europe* for his first taste of gold.

Andrey Zhigalov's second bracelet came in a \$1,500 H.O.R.S.E. event for the second time, having already won the same tournament at the 2018 *WSOP*. The 36-year-old Russian-born pro now has more than \$1 million in career tournament earnings after beating out the 867-entry field to earn \$197,923.

Allan Le took down this year's \$1,500 razz event for his second bracelet. He outlasted a field of 472 entries for \$126,363, defeating Shaun Deeb heads-up for the hardware. Incredibly, this was Le's very first razz event ever, having only played the game in events like dealers choice and the eight-game mix.

"I only entered it because I busted out of the \$1,000 PLO for three bullets," Le told *Card Player*. "And that's the maximum you could register for."

It was a win-win in the \$500 *Salute To Warriors*, which saw **Joey Couden** best 3,937 entries for his second gold bracelet and the top prize of \$187,937. The other clear winners were veterans groups like the United Service Organizations who are set to receive over \$155,000 raised from this tournament. \$40 from each buy-in was set aside for that donation.

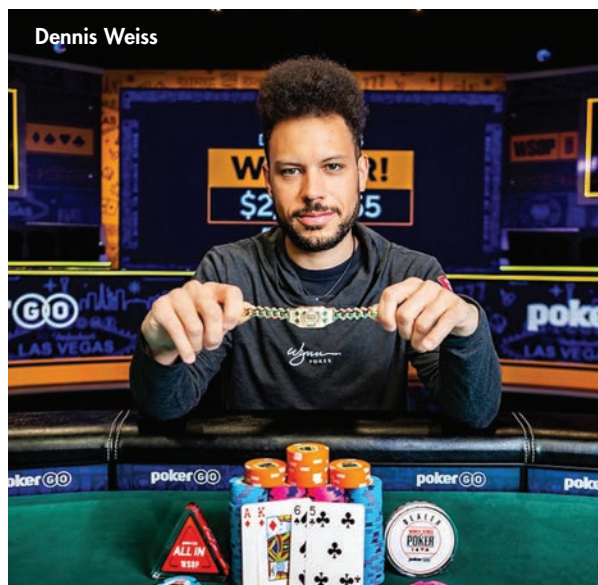
Jason Daly surged across the finish line in the \$2,500 mixed Omaha and stud eight-or-better event, scooping the final four knockouts after chopping up the sixth-place finisher. Among those to fall during Daly's final push to the title was all-time bracelet leader Phil Hellmuth, who ultimately fell just a couple of spots shy of capturing a record-extending 18th bracelet.

Just a few minutes after eliminating Hellmuth in third place, Daly closed out the victory to earn his second career bracelet and the top prize of \$244,674. This was the second-largest career score for the 41-year-old Texas resident.

A new top tournament score for longtime live scene fixture **Tyler Patterson** also came with his second bracelet. The *WPT* champion from Washington navigated his way through a 1,421-entry field in the \$3,000 no-limit hold'em six-max event to earn \$574,223, surpassing the \$4 million earnings mark for his career.

Dennis Weiss triumphed over a massive field of 489 entries in the \$25,000 pot-limit Omaha high roller, earning his second bracelet and the staggering \$2,292,155 top prize. The German PLO specialist's first win came last fall, when he took down a €5,000 PLO event at *WSOP Europe* for \$177,486.

Former *WSOP* main event third-place finisher Michael Duck took second for \$1,528,077. Duck has been particularly successful in PLO events as well, climbing to eighth on the all-time money list in just the last few years. Bracelet winner Jeffrey Hakim took third for \$1,062,669.



TOURNAMENTS



Davies And Sternheimer Chief Among First-Timers

Seth Davies has been on fire the past couple of months, accumulating nearly \$12 million dollars across nine cashes since the start of May. Along the way, he has made five final tables, finishing third once, second twice, and winning twice.

The latest win was the biggest of Davies' career. He beat out 63 entries in the \$250,000 super high roller to earn \$4,752,551 and his first *WSOP* gold bracelet. The two-time *Super High Roller Bowl* champion had set his highest-score record less than a month earlier, when he finished as the runner-up in the \$200,000 *Triton Montenegro Invitational* for nearly \$4.2 million. For more on Davies' win and his incredible run of late, head to page 20.

Alex Foxen, who currently leads the *PGT* points race and sits in third in the POY standings, was the runner-up for \$3,060,314. Foxen came ever so close to winning this event a second time, having taken it down back in 2022 for a career-best score of nearly \$4.6 million.

Third place finisher Thomas Boivin earned his second seven-figure score in the span of a week, having also placed third in the \$100,000 buy-in. The two paydays added more than \$3.2 million to the Belgian's tally.

The sixth final table was the charm for mixed-game specialist **Philip Sternheimer**. After many close calls over the years, the German-born, UK-based poker pro finally broke through to hoist the gold. He topped a record field of 386 entries in the \$10,000 Omaha eight-or-better championship to secure a \$763,087 payout.

Bruno Furth, who won his second bracelet earlier in the series, finished as the runner-up, just edging out other multi-time *WSOP* champions like Shaun Deeb (3rd), Brian Hastings (4th), and Chris Vitch (5th).

More Bracelet Breakthroughs

That leaves another baker's dozen of first-time champions. First up is \$500 *Colossus* winner **Courtenay Williams**. The Los Angeles player overcame a 16,301-entry field, besting a final table that included Ryan Leng (7th) and Matt Glantz (3rd). The \$542,540 first-place prize represents almost five times Williams' previous combined live tournament earnings.

Next up on the first-timers list was **Chang Lee**, a South Korean high-stakes cash game player who had reportedly played in only one other tournament before opting to fire in the \$25,000 buy-in no-limit hold'em event at the series.

Lee beat out a field of 392 entries to take home \$1,949,044. Andrew Ostapchenko took second for \$1,299,333, while Eli Berg finished third for \$894,265.

Igor Zektser weathered a rollercoaster heads-up match to close out the title in the \$1,500 Big O event. There were 1,499 total entries made in the five-card pot-limit Omaha eight-or-better tournament, with Zektser earning \$297,285 from the \$1,989,922 prize pool after scooping the final pot.

Colorado's **Mark Darner** walked away with \$496,826 as the champion of the \$2,500 no-limit hold'em event. This was a new high score for Darner, topping the \$132,169 he earned as the fourth-place finisher in the 2014 \$3,000 six-max event. He now has more than \$1.8 million in recorded scores to his name.

Jonathan Stoeber emerged victorious from the field of 4,481 entries that turned out for the \$800 deepstack event, securing \$352,610. This breakthrough came nearly a year after Stoeber's closest call in a bracelet event, which saw him place sixth in the 2024 *WSOP Online \$777* event for

\$35,574.

Limit hold'em was once dominant in the live poker world, especially on the cash game scene, but has long since been replaced. That doesn't mean the format doesn't have its devotees, though. A total of 491 entries turned out for this year's \$1,500 limit hold'em event at the series, an increase of nearly 11 percent over 2024. Canada's **Jason Duong** emerged victorious in the end, walking away with \$130,061.

Klemens Roiter had already accumulated multiple millions in recorded tournament earnings prior to showing up in Las Vegas for this year's *WSOP*. The 34-year-old Austrian boasted nine six-figure scores already, including several deep runs in high-stakes events. What Roiter had not yet done, though, was lock up a major title on the live circuit.

Roiter finally broke through to make a statement win this summer, outlasting a massive field in the \$1,500 *Monster Stack* to earn the hardware and the top prize of \$1,204,457. David Uvaydov settled for second place and \$802,346.

More than a decade after recording his debut cash, Argentina's **Carlos Leiva** survived a field of 1,932 entries in the \$1,000 pot-limit Omaha event to take home \$237,852 and the bracelet. This was the second-largest score on Leiva's résumé, trailing only the \$440,000 he secured with a win in the 2023 *Enjoy Poker Tour Gran Final Millonaria*.

51-year-old day trader and poker hobbyist **Veerachai Vongxaiburana** scooped the title and the \$784,353 top prize in the \$10,000 Big O championship. The Las Vegas resident topped 400 entries on his way to securing the gold, including runner-up Phil Hui, who narrowly missed out on his fifth bracelet.

58-year-old **Brett Lim** topped a massive field of 7,575 entries in this year's \$1,000 seniors event. The tournament was composed entirely of players aged 50 or older, each hoping to get their hands on the gold and the top prize of \$653,839.

Samuel Rosborough of Texas was the last player standing from a field of 2,320 entries in the \$1,500 buy-in no-limit hold'em freezeout to earn \$410,426.

New York native **Matt Vengrin** recorded his first *WSOP* cash all the way back in 2007, finishing ninth in a \$1,500 no-limit hold'em event at his first final table. He would go on to record more than 100 in-the-money performances at the series between that first run and this year's festival. Along the way, he came painstakingly close to winning his first bracelet several times, including three runner-up finishes and one third-place showing.

Finally, more than 18 years after that first cash, a now 40-year-old Vengrin broke through and secured his first bracelet. He defeated a field of 1,564 entries in the \$1,500 pot-limit Omaha eight-max event, earning \$306,791 for the win.

"It feels as good as I thought it would," Vengrin said on social media after the win.

If you were to craft the most difficult path to a *WSOP* title, it would likely resemble the one that **Kristopher Tong** traveled along his way to winning the \$10,000 H.O.R.S.E. championship. Five of the seven players standing in Tong's way at the final table owned at least two *WSOP* bracelets. Future Poker Hall of Famers Scott Seiver (seven times a *WSOP* champion) and Jason Mercier (six bracelets) were both in contention, as was recently crowned five-time bracelet winner Bradley Ruben. But Tong would not be denied. He overcame a field of 207 players to win a career-best \$452,689 and his first bracelet. ♠

World Series of Poker – Horseshoe and Paris – Las Vegas, Nevada



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$500 Colossus June 4-9 Entries: 16,301 Prizepool: \$6,664,102	1 Courtenay Williams	\$542,540 (720)
	2 Ramaswamy Pyloore	\$361,690 (600)
	3 Matthew Glantz	\$273,260 (480)
	4 Kaiwen Wei	\$207,740 (360)
	5 Jason Blodgett	\$158,910 (300)
	6 Antonio Filho	\$122,330 (240)
	7 Ryan Leng	\$94,760 (180)
	8 Sigrid Dencker	\$73,880 (120)
	9 Justin Gutierrez	\$57,970 (60)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$25,000 NLH 8-Max June 7-9 Entries: 392 Prizepool: \$9,212,000	1 Chang Lee	\$1,949,044 (2,100)
	2 Andrew Ostapchenko	\$1,299,333 (1,750)
	3 Eli Berg	\$894,265 (1,400)
	4 Mathew Frankland	\$626,823 (1,050)
	5 Masato Yokosawa	\$447,613 (875)
	6 Joe McKeen	\$325,757 (700)
	7 Orpen Kisacikoglu	\$241,701 (525)
	8 Byron Kaverman	\$182,902 (350)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,500 Big O June 7-9 Entries: 1,499 Prizepool: \$1,989,922	1 Igor Zektser	\$297,285 (960)
	2 Paul Sincere	\$198,134 (800)
	3 Ryan Hoenig	\$141,315 (640)
	4 Shiva Dudani	\$102,079 (480)
	5 Nicolas Milgrom	\$74,693 (400)
	6 Joshua Biedak	\$55,372 (320)
	7 Kevin Ho	\$41,595 (240)
	8 Shawn Daniels	\$31,667 (160)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$600 NLH/PLO 8-Max June 8-9 Entries: 2,775 Prizepool: \$1,398,600	1 Tyler Brown	\$178,126 (600)
	2 Bjorn Gravlien	\$118,618 (500)
	3 Easton Orem	\$86,268 (400)
	4 Noah Bronstein	\$63,367 (300)
	5 Bryan Andrews	\$47,013 (250)
	6 Jacob Mendelsohn	\$35,235 (200)
	7 Caio Sobral	\$26,679 (150)
	8 Oliver Tot	\$20,411 (100)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$2,500 NLH June 8-10 Entries: 1,493 Prizepool: \$3,321,925	1 Mark Darnier	\$496,826 (1,440)
	2 David McGowan	\$331,163 (1,200)
	3 Christopher Puetz	\$238,204 (960)
	4 Dylan Linde	\$173,435 (720)
	5 Jon Vallinas	\$127,841 (600)
	6 Yaroslav Ohulchanskyi	\$95,415 (480)
	7 Alexander Greenblatt	\$72,119 (360)
	8 Dragos Trofimov	\$55,212 (240)
	9 Ian O'Hara	\$42,819 (120)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,000 NL 2-7 Lowball June 8-10 Entries: 233 Prizepool: \$2,166,900	1 Nick Schulman	\$497,356 (960)
	2 Darren Elias	\$336,421 (800)
	3 Chad Eveslage	\$231,321 (640)
	4 Oscar Johansson	\$161,721 (480)
	5 Ben Yu	\$114,989 (400)
	6 Dan Smith	\$83,179 (320)
	7 Daniel Negreanu	\$61,231 (240)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$800 NLH 8-Max June 9-10 Entries: 4,481 Prizepool: \$3,136,700	1 Jonathan Stoeber	\$352,610 (660)
	2 Daniel Cosner	\$234,908 (550)
	3 Matthew Morin	\$172,724 (440)
	4 Shawn Buchanan	\$128,100 (330)
	5 Geoffrey Coater	\$95,834 (275)
	6 Nicholas Seward	\$72,327 (220)
	7 Ryan Hohner	\$55,071 (165)
	8 Peter Fox	\$42,308 (110)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$50,000 NLH 8-Max June 9-11 Entries: 171 Prizepool: \$8,122,500	1 Jason Koon	\$1,968,927 (1,326)
	2 Andrew Lichtenberger	\$1,312,610 (1,105)
	3 Benjamin Tollerene	\$914,634 (884)
	4 Brock Wilson	\$650,074 (663)
	5 Sergey Lebedev	\$471,473 (553)
	6 Viktor Blom	\$349,068 (442)
	7 Regan Silber	\$293,944 (332)
	8 Aliaksei Boika	\$203,919 (221)



Event	Player	Payout (POY)	Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,500 LHE June 9-11 Entries: 491 Prizepool: \$651,802	1 Jason Duong	\$130,061 (720)	\$1,500 Monster Stack June 11-17 Entries: 9,920 Prizepool: \$13,148,390	1 Klemens Roiter	\$1,204,457 (1,320)
	2 Adam Tyburski	\$86,673 (600)		2 David Uvaydov	\$802,346 (1,100)
	3 Lawrence Robinson	\$59,263 (480)		3 Ashish Gupta	\$603,277 (880)
	4 Andrew Beversdorf	\$41,318 (360)		4 Ivan Ruban	\$458,090 (660)
	5 Nicholas Tsoukalas	\$29,384 (300)		5 Daniel Lei	\$349,562 (550)
	6 Bobbi Harrell	\$21,324 (240)		6 James Leonard	\$268,520 (440)
	7 David Rogers	\$15,798 (180)		7 Dylan Linde	\$207,647 (330)
	8 Christopher Hunichen	\$11,954 (120)		8 Mario Colavita	\$161,656 (220)
	9 Ian Johns	\$9,242 (60)		9 Jeremy Dan	\$126,705 (110)
Event	Player	Payout (POY)	Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,500 NLH KO June 10 Entries: 2,244 Prizepool: \$1,834,567	1 John Racener	\$247,595 (1,080)	\$100,000 NLH June 11-13 Entries: 103 Prizepool: \$9,939,500	1 Joao Vieira	\$2,649,158 (1,200)
	2 Liran Betito	\$164,964 (900)		2 Aram Oganyan	\$1,766,099 (1,000)
	3 Xinwen Zhang	\$120,457 (720)		3 Thomas Boivin	\$1,212,020 (800)
	4 J.C. Tran	\$88,865 (540)		4 Isaac Haxton	\$857,253 (600)
	5 Jeremie Toledano	\$66,242 (450)		5 Ben Heath	\$625,491 (500)
	6 Gaetano Logrande	\$49,899 (360)		6 Andrew Lichtenberger	\$471,281 (400)
	7 Paul Saso	\$37,988 (270)		7 Emilien Pitavy	\$367,069 (300)
	8 Angela Shade	\$29,231 (180)		8 Vinny Lingham	\$295,883 (200)
	9 Shant Marashlian	\$22,738 (90)		9 Phil Ivey	\$247,130 (100)
Event	Player	Payout (POY)	Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$3,000 NLH June 10-12 Entries: 1,027 Prizepool: \$2,742,090	1 Renat Bohdanov	\$451,600 (1,440)	\$1,500 HORSE June 11-13 Entries: 867 Prizepool: \$1,150,943	1 Andrey Zhigalov	\$197,923 (912)
	2 Dennys Ramos	\$300,830 (1,200)		2 Thomas Taylor	\$131,916 (760)
	3 Tsz Chan	\$212,820 (960)		3 Marcel Vonk	\$91,545 (608)
	4 Ryan Wolfson	\$152,760 (720)		4 Tal Avivi	\$64,607 (456)
	5 Anatoly Nikitin	\$111,270 (600)		5 Travis Kubota	\$46,384 (380)
	6 Hattori Lopez	\$82,260 (480)		6 Joseph Santagata	\$33,885 (304)
	7 Santiago Garza	\$61,750 (360)		7 Sachin Bhargava	\$25,198 (228)
	8 Boris Kolev	\$47,060 (240)		8 Stanislav Ivanov	\$19,078 (152)
	9 Brian James	\$36,440 (120)			
Event	Player	Payout (POY)	Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,000 PLO 8/OB June 10-13 Entries: 386 Prizepool: \$3,589,800	1 Philip Sternheimer	\$763,087 (1,500)	\$5,000 Seniors June 12-14 Entries: 801 Prizepool: \$3,684,600	1 David Baker	\$646,845
	2 Caleb Furth	\$508,705 (1,250)		2 Chuanshu Chen	\$431,173
	3 Shaun Deeb	\$348,304 (1,000)		3 Carmino Argiero	\$302,208
	4 Brian Hastings	\$243,144 (750)		4 Ron West	\$215,095
	5 Christopher Vitch	\$173,121 (625)		5 Peter Kiem	\$155,498
	6 Magnus Edengren	\$125,772 (500)		6 Ramana Epparla	\$114,208
	7 Sam Soverel	\$93,273 (375)		7 John Esposito	\$84,244
	8 Dennis Weiss	\$70,639 (250)		8 Stephen Bierman	\$64,674
				9 Joseph Mole	\$49,891

TOURNAMENTS



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,000 LHE June 12-14 Entries: 118 Prizepool: \$1,097,400	1 Ian Johns	\$282,455 (600)
	2 Viktor Blom	\$188,295 (500)
	3 Anthony Zinno	\$130,447 (400)
	4 Pedro Neves	\$92,774 (300)
	5 Ryan Bambrick	\$67,782 (250)
	6 Max Hoffman	\$50,915 (200)
	7 David Lieberman	\$39,349 (150)
	8 Daniel Negreanu	\$31,316 (100)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,000 PLO 8-Max June 13-14 Entries: 1,932 Prizepool: \$1,700,160	1 Carlos Leiva	\$237,852 (1,080)
	2 Hooman Nikzad	\$158,481 (900)
	3 Brian McKain	\$114,399 (720)
	4 Dylan Weisman	\$83,503 (540)
	5 Kyle Rosnes	\$61,641 (450)
	6 Joshua Palmer	\$46,024 (360)
	7 Florian Ribouchon	\$34,761 (270)
	8 Eric Buchman	\$26,562 (180)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,500 Razz June 13-15 Entries: 472 Prizepool: \$626,580	1 Allan Le	\$126,363 (720)
	2 Shaun Deeb	\$84,221 (600)
	3 Clint Wolcyn	\$57,296 (480)
	4 Maxx Coleman	\$39,787 (360)
	5 Jeanne David	\$28,213 (300)
	6 Jason Lipiner	\$20,438 (240)
	7 Gabriel Ramos	\$15,134 (180)
	8 Mengqi Chen	\$11,459 (120)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,000 Big O June 14-17 Entries: 402 Prizepool: \$3,823,020	1 Veerachai Vongxaiburana	\$784,353 (1,800)
	2 Phillip Hui	\$522,878 (1,500)
	3 Marco Johnson	\$360,711 (1,200)
	4 Shawn Rice	\$253,276 (900)
	5 Viktor Blom	\$181,841 (750)
	6 Christopher DeMaci	\$131,841 (600)
	7 Noah Kelley	\$97,806 (450)
	8 Brian Battistone	\$73,950 (300)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$500 Salute to Warriors June 15-17 Entries: 3,937 Prizepool: \$1,614,170	1 Joseph Couden	\$187,937 (660)
	2 Richard Buckingham	\$125,034 (550)
	3 Ofer Saha	\$92,221 (440)
	4 Yu Hsiang Huang	\$68,619 (330)
	5 Aleksandr Savchenko	\$51,511 (275)
	6 Brandon Sowers	\$39,015 (220)
	7 Roger Hendren	\$29,818 (165)
	8 Tim Caziarc	\$22,998 (110)
	9 Luciano Melo	\$17,901 (55)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$250,000 NLH 8-Max June 15-17 Entries: 63 Prizepool: \$15,584,625	1 Seth Davies	\$4,752,551 (720)
	2 Alex Foxen	\$3,060,314 (600)
	3 Thomas Boivin	\$2,057,430 (480)
	4 Bryn Kenney	\$1,446,929 (360)
	5 Chris Brewer	\$1,066,731 (300)
	6 David Peters	\$826,348 (240)
	7 Martin Kabrhel	\$674,359 (180)
	8 Benjamin Tollerene	\$581,411 (120)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$2,500 Mixed Omaha June 15-17 Entries: 575 Prizepool: \$1,279,375	1 Jason Daly	\$244,674 (1,260)
	2 Kevin Choi	\$163,085 (1,050)
	3 Phil Hellmuth	\$112,360 (840)
	4 Tobias Hausen	\$78,825 (630)
	5 Jon Kyte	\$56,327 (525)
	6 Alexander Orlov	\$41,013 (420)
	7 Christopher Claassen	\$30,439 (315)
	8 Ruiko Mamiya	\$23,036 (210)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,000 Seniors June 16-21 Entries: 7,575 Prizepool: \$6,938,700	1 Brett Lim	\$653,839
	2 Elan Lepovic	\$435,572
	3 Dennis Carlson	\$326,508
	4 Jose Boloqui	\$246,464
	5 Lawrence Rabie	\$187,351
	6 Jason Reels	\$143,425
	7 Manish Madan	\$110,581
	8 Ron Fetsch	\$85,872
	9 Peter Fellows	\$67,166

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Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$3,000 NLH 6-Max June 16-17 Entries: 1,421 Prizepool: \$3,497,247	1 Tyler Patterson	\$574,223 (1,440)
	2 Matthew Wantman	\$382,774 (1,200)
	3 Michael Walsh	\$267,626 (960)
	4 Andy Wilson	\$189,863 (720)
	5 Yohwan Lim	\$136,701 (600)
	6 Jakub Michalak	\$99,913 (480)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,000 Razz June 16-18 Entries: 134 Prizepool: \$1,246,200	1 Brian Rast	\$306,644 (660)
	2 Andrew Yeh	\$204,423 (550)
	3 Brian Yoon	\$142,579 (440)
	4 Joao Vieira	\$101,983 (330)
	5 Nikolay Ponomarev	\$74,857 (275)
	6 Christian Roberts	\$56,424 (220)
	7 Ali Eslami	\$43,706 (165)
	8 Maksim Pisarenko	\$34,817 (110)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$25,000 PLO 8-Max June 17-20 Entries: 489 Prizepool: \$11,491,500	1 Dennis Weiss	\$2,292,155 (2,520)
	2 Michael Duek	\$1,528,077 (2,100)
	3 Jeff Hakim	\$1,062,669 (1,680)
	4 Evan Krentzman	\$751,149 (1,260)
	5 Talal Shakerchi	\$539,817 (1,050)
	6 Phil Ivey	\$394,531 (840)
	7 Najeem Ajez	\$293,329 (630)
	8 Lautaro Guerra	\$221,920 (420)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,500 NLH June 17-19 Entries: 2,320 Prizepool: \$3,077,145	1 Samuel Rosborough	\$410,426 (1,080)
	2 Asher Conniff	\$273,545 (900)
	3 Michael Rossitto	\$200,173 (720)
	4 Tanupat Punjarajanakul	\$147,952 (540)
	5 Eric Berman	\$110,463 (450)
	6 Bryan Piccioli	\$83,318 (360)
	7 Carlos Kinil	\$63,494 (270)
	8 Charlie Cuff	\$48,892 (180)
	9 Julio Belluscio	\$38,047 (90)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,500 PLO 8-Max June 18-20 Entries: 1,564 Prizepool: \$2,076,210	1 Matthew Vengrin	\$306,791 (1,080)
	2 Bryce Yockey	\$204,425 (900)
	3 Punnat Punsri	\$146,266 (720)
	4 Qiaonan Liu	\$105,947 (540)
	5 Jacob Snider	\$77,703 (450)
	6 Matthew Beck	\$57,711 (360)
	7 Antti Marttinen	\$43,413 (270)
	8 Tomer Daniel	\$33,082 (180)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,000 HORSE June 18-21 Entries: 207 Prizepool: \$1,925,100	1 Kristopher Tong	\$452,689 (900)
	2 Maximilian Schindler	\$301,786 (750)
	3 Bradley Ruben	\$206,747 (600)
	4 Jason Mercier	\$144,965 (450)
	5 Marco Johnson	\$104,089 (375)
	6 Alexander Livingston	\$76,581 (300)
	7 Scott Seiver	\$57,766 (225)
	8 Walter Chambers	\$44,703 (150)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$2,500 Mixed Triple Draw June 19-21 Entries: 463 Prizepool: \$1,030,175	1 Benny Glaser	\$208,552 (1,080)
	2 Schuyler Thornton	\$135,506 (900)
	3 George Alexander	\$90,139 (720)
	4 Mark Klecan	\$61,409 (540)
	5 Michael Balan	\$42,872 (450)
	6 David Baker	\$30,690 (360)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$50,000 PLO June 20-22 Entries: 194 Prizepool: \$9,215,000	1 Dylan Linde	\$2,146,414 (1,428)
	2 Stephen Chidwick	\$1,430,938 (1,190)
	3 Richard Gryko	\$1,000,423 (952)
	4 Biao Ding	\$713,762 (714)
	5 Manuel Stojanovic	\$519,892 (595)
	6 Ka Kwan Lau	\$386,768 (476)
	7 Quan Zhou	\$294,013 (357)
	8 Dirk Gerritse	\$228,489 (238)
	9 Frank Crivello	\$181,621 (119)



Alex Foxen



Andrew Lichtenberger



Viktor Blom



Andrew Ostapchenko



Aram Oganyan



Daniel Negreanu



Darren Elias



David Peters



Phil Ivey



Martin Kabrhel



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JONATHAN LITTLE, BREK SCHUTTEN HEADLINE WSOP ONLINE WINNERS

By Erik Fast



The 2025 *World Series of Poker Online* features 30 gold bracelet events, with this year's *WSOPO* being the first to combine player pools from Nevada, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. Pennsylvania signed the Multi-State Internet Gaming Agreement in April of this year, becoming the sixth state to do so.

Results from the first third of this year's series are now in the books. Several big names came out on top, including *Card Player* columnist and two-time *World Poker Tour* champion Jonathan Little, who took down event no. 8 to earn his first *WSOP* bracelet. Little made the trip to Las Vegas to collect the bracelet from *WSOP* Vice President Jack Effel at a bracelet ceremony held on June 18.

Little's breakthrough came in the \$1,000 no-limit hold'em freezeout. The longtime poker professional and founder of *PokerCoaching.com* was one of 533 entrants. He earned \$90,663 and the hardware as the last player standing.

The win came almost two decades after his first *WSOP* cash back in 2006, when Little finished 171st in a \$1,500 buy-in event. There were numerous close calls along the way, including a third-place finish in a 2010 shootout event and a third-place showing in a 2013 six-max no-limit event. Now, he finally has his hands on his first bracelet.

Little now boasts recorded earnings in excess of \$9.6 million. His two largest triumphs remain his seven-figure wins in the 2007 *WPT Mirage Poker Showdown* (\$1,091,295) and the 2008 *WPT World Poker Finals* (\$1,120,310).

While Little was the most accomplished first-time vic-

tor among the nine champions crowned so far during the *WSOPO*, there were also a few tournament stars who added to their bracelet collections with online triumphs.

A total of 2,206 entries were made in the \$400 *Kick Off* event, building a prize pool of \$97,762. In the end it was Germany's Konstantin 'delaypenalty' Held who emerged victorious with the bracelet and the top prize of \$97,762. This was Held's second bracelet, having taken down a 2024 *WSOP Online International* \$500 event for \$574,199.

Brek Schutten topped a field of 770 entries in the \$1,000 no-limit hold'em progressive bounty event, earning his second career bracelet and \$46,396 from the main prize pool.

This win came just over a year after he took down the \$25,000 six-max event in person last summer for a career-best score of \$1.4 million. Schutten is also a *WPT* champion, having won the 2021 *WPT Seminole Hard Rock Poker Showdown* main event for nearly \$1.3 million.

The largest top prize awarded so far during the 2025 *WSOPO* was captured by Nick Maimone. He bested 1,107 entries in the \$1,000 six-max no-limit event to earn \$181,625 and his second bracelet.

Maimone first secured virtual gold back in 2020, taking down the \$1,500 *Marathon* during the *WSOP Online International* series for \$302,472. He now has more than \$5.2 million in career tournament earnings.

Other storylines from the early results include 2021 *WPT Online Borgata Poker Open* champion Orson Young winning the *PLOssus*, a \$400 pot-limit Omaha version of the popular

low-buy-in *Colossus* event, for his first bracelet.

Corey Thompson also stood out thanks to his runner-up finish in event no. 1 and win in event no. 3, the \$888 buy-in *Crazy 8's* tournament. The latter event saw Thompson outlast 920 entries to capture the gold and the top prize of \$136,160.

The seventh event on the *WSOPO* schedule did not declare a champion, as the \$250 buy-in \$1 million guaranteed mystery bounty tournament was canceled on day 2 due to technical difficulties that impeded a critical mass of players from taking their virtual seats. ♠



WSOP Online – WSOP.com – Nevada, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, And Michigan

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$400 NLH May 31 Entries: 2,206 Prizepool: \$794,160	1 Konstantin Held	\$97,762
	2 Corey Thompson	\$69,807
	3 Ankush Mandavia	\$49,873
	4 Morgan Magee	\$35,658
	5 Daniel Coen	\$25,651
	6 Aaron Pinson	\$18,663
	7 Michael Holtz	\$13,660
	8 Gerson Gomez	\$10,006
	9 Lachezar Petkov	\$7,386

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$555 NLH KO June 1 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 2,551 Prizepool: \$1,275,000	1 Joseph Casseus	\$95,464
	2 Tim Flattery	\$68,166
	3 Ian Crampton	\$48,701
	4 Vlad Revniaga	\$34,820
	5 Gaetan Balleur	\$25,049
	6 Zachary Grech	\$18,224
	7 Christopher Bauer	\$13,339
	8 Michael Torio	\$9,771
	9 Albert Ascitutto	\$7,212

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$888 NLH June 1 Entries: 920 Prizepool: \$736,000	1 Corey Thompson	\$136,160
	2 Yuri Dzivielevski	\$95,754
	3 Matt Affleck	\$73,600
	4 Cooper Feltham	\$55,200
	5 Jonathan Dokler	\$36,800
	6 Thomas Hickner	\$25,670
	7 Quang Ngo	\$16,560
	8 Soheb Porbandarwala	\$11,187
	9 Frank Funaro	\$8,317

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,000 NLH KO June 3 Entries: 770 Prizepool: \$693,000	1 Brek Schutten	\$46,396
	2 Jed Hoffman	\$46,396
	3 Matthew Preziosi	\$28,760
	4 Tauan Naves	\$21,310
	5 Anthony Chin	\$15,766
	6 Kyle Lorenz	\$11,781
	7 Yen Han Chen	\$8,836
	8 Justin Saliba	\$6,722
	9 Nicholas Palma	\$5,128

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$600 NLH June 7 Entries: 1,465 Prizepool: \$791,100	1 Joshua Palmer	\$109,251
	2 Sin Chen	\$79,743
	3 KC Vaughan	\$58,621
	4 Vitor Dzivielevski	\$43,431
	5 Daniel Cummings	\$32,119
	6 Ryan Belz	\$23,970
	7 Pedro Neves	\$17,958
	8 Ryan Andrada	\$13,607
	9 Hunter Cichy	\$10,363

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$333 NLH June 8 Entries: 2,119 Prizepool: \$635,700	1 Sean Rosenthal	\$78,218
	2 Joshua Arie	\$55,852
	3 Mario Fata	\$39,903
	4 Jacob Thibodeau	\$28,529
	5 Jerry Morrell	\$20,523
	6 Owen Goodrich	\$14,932
	7 Bahbak Obodi	\$10,929
	8 Francis Alegado	\$8,006
	9 Dario Marinelli	\$5,909

TOURNAMENTS

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,000 NLH June 10 Entries: 533 Prizepool: \$479,700	1 Jonathan Little	\$90,663
	2 KC Vaughan	\$66,438
	3 Julien Van Pelt	\$48,929
	4 John Forlenza	\$35,978
	5 Carmelo Pugliese	\$23,985
	6 Chris Hunichen	\$16,790
	7 Steven Kelly	\$11,993
	8 Matthew Iles	\$8,395

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$400 PLOssus KO June 14 Entries: 1,916 Prizepool: \$689,760	1 Orson Young	\$38,800
	2 Allen Feldman	\$38,799
	3 Haleigh Gennetts	\$23,624
	4 Caleb King	\$17,244
	5 Abteen Vaziri	\$12,692
	6 Ryan Leng	\$9,312



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$1,000 NLH 6-Max	1 Nick Maimone	\$181,625
	2 Matthew Iles	\$129,519
June 15	3 Edward Grinko	\$99,630
	4 David Valden	\$74,723
	5 Jonathan Dokler	\$49,815
	6 Scott Eskenazi	\$33,376
Entries: 1,107 Prizepool: \$996,300		

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WANG HEADLINES EARLY WINNERS AT WYNN SUMMER CLASSIC

By Erik Fast



While the *World Series of Poker* dominates the headlines during the summer, it is far from the only game in town. A couple of miles up the Las Vegas Strip, the *Summer Classic* is underway at Wynn Las Vegas, with more than \$40 million in guarantees to be paid out along the way.

There are more than 90 events on the schedule, with the centerpiece being the \$10 million guaranteed \$10,000 buy-in Summer Championship no-limit hold'em event slated for June 26-July 2. Check back next issue for

the results of that event.

A number of sizable tournaments have wrapped up so far, however, including several with seven-figure guarantees. The \$1,600 buy-in \$2.5 million guaranteed no-limit hold'em event attracted 2,405 total entries to beat the guarantee by nearly seven figures.

Two-time bracelet winner and 2024 *World Poker Tour Playground* champion **Michael Wang** emerged victorious in the end, earning the trophy and the top prize of \$555,528.

This was a new career-best for the longtime tournament fixture. It grew his career haul to more than \$7.7 million, with 21 recorded titles and 470 in-the-money finishes.

The \$1,100 buy-in with a \$1.5 million guarantee on the prize pool drew 1,579 total entries to narrowly surpass the promised prize pool. **Maxim Lykov** came away with the title in the end, earning \$230,842 as the last player standing.

Terry Fleischer topped a field of 961 in a \$1,600 seniors event that sported a \$1 million guarantee. The final prize pool swelled to \$1,374,230, which resulted in a \$188,520 payout for Fleischer.

David Stefanski took down the other \$1,100 buy-in with \$1.5 million guaranteed. This was a new top score for Stefanski, besting the \$325,034 he earned with a 16th-place showing in the 2015 *WSOP* main event.

With a total of 79 entries, the \$10,500 no-limit hold'em progressive bounty event wound up with \$790,000 in prize money, which was paid out to the top 11 finishers. Two-time bracelet winner **Santhosh Suvarna** captured the title in the end, earning \$114,165 from the main prize pool and another \$98,000 in bounty payouts. India's all-time money leader now has nearly \$19 million in career earnings to his name.

Bulgaria's **Boris Angelov** defeated Cherish Andrews heads-up in the \$500,000 guaranteed \$3,000 buy-in eight-max event for the title and the top prize of \$142,978. The 2024 *WSOP* main event fifth-place finisher now boasts career earnings in excess of \$5.3 million. The event ended up with 256 entries, resulting in a final prize pool of \$698,880.

Phong 'Turbo' Nguyen took down the \$10,000 seniors high roller event, with 100 entries building a prize pool of \$950,000 to nearly double the \$500,000 guarantee. Nguyen struck a three-way deal to bring the tournament to a close, with the final three all earning \$186,026 for their efforts. Ernest Bush and Jun Liu joined Nguyen on the podium.

© Wynn



Maxim Lykov



Terry Fleischer



David Stefanski



Santhosh Suvarna



Boris Angelov



Phong 'Turbo' Nguyen

Summer Classic - Wynn - Las Vegas, Nevada

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
\$1,100 NLH May 25-29	1 Maxim Lykov	\$230,842 (1,080)
	2 Francisco Moreno	\$210,841 (900)
	3 Bin Weng	\$133,770 (720)
\$1,500,000 GTD Entries: 1,579 Prizepool: \$1,523,735	4 Matthew Lambrecht	\$99,422 (540)
	5 Qing Lu	\$76,626 (450)
	6 Axel Bayout	\$58,374 (360)
	7 Chunyu Yang	\$43,864 (270)
	8 Georgios Tsoulftas	\$32,229 (180)
	9 Andrew Kang	\$23,365 (90)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
\$1,600 Seniors May 30-June 3	1 Terry Fleischer	\$188,520
	2 Skipper Pearson	\$165,315
	3 Adam Wilkinson	\$148,650
\$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 961 Prizepool: \$1,374,230	4 Tongguang Sun	\$123,902
	5 Jason Bullock	\$73,250
	6 Nick Phoenix	\$55,328
	7 Karim Lehoussine	\$41,847
	8 Aaron Hyatt	\$30,837
	9 Ernest Ward	\$22,491

TOURNAMENTS



Event	Player	Payout (POV)
\$1,100 NLH June 2-6 \$1,500,000 GTD Entries: 2,466 Prizepool: \$2,379,690	1 David Stefanski	\$376,595 (1,080)
	2 Ryan Hunsinger	\$248,622 (900)
	3 Daniel Kusnerak	\$191,884 (720)
	4 Francisco Sanchez	\$148,204 (540)
	5 Davis Harari	\$114,392 (450)
	6 Jacob Stone	\$87,144 (360)
	7 Timur Margolin	\$65,484 (270)
	8 Cory Rock	\$48,113 (180)
	9 Yang Lu	\$34,425 (90)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
\$10,000 Seniors June 9-11 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 100 Prizepool: \$950,000	1 Phong Nguyen	\$186,026
	2 Ernest Bush	\$186,026
	3 Jun Liu	\$186,026
	4 Kevin Nathan	\$86,688
	5 Paul Newey	\$65,312
	6 Mike Lang	\$49,875
	7 Judith Bielan	\$39,662
	8 Konstantinos Nanos	\$32,300
	9 John Morgan	\$27,075

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
\$1,600 NLH June 9-13 \$2,500,000 GTD Entries: 2,405 Prizepool: \$3,439,150	1 Michael Wang	\$555,528 (1,080)
	2 Antonio Ortega	\$367,623 (900)
	3 Alexandre Reard	\$283,735 (720)
	4 Stoyan Madanzhiev	\$216,575 (540)
	5 Rudy Cervantes	\$166,620 (450)
	6 Trong Ngo	\$125,942 (360)
	7 Dean Ruan	\$94,757 (270)
	8 Baruch Forst	\$69,533 (180)
	9 Cecile Ticherfatine	\$49,751 (90)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
\$3,000 NLH June 12 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 256 Prizepool: \$698,880	1 Boris Angelov	\$142,978 (612)
	2 Cherish Andrews	\$99,416 (510)
	3 Scott Margereson	\$74,232 (408)
	4 Michael Rossitto	\$58,409 (306)
	5 Vlad Darie	\$45,678 (255)
	6 Mauro Ferreira	\$35,006 (204)
	7 Brian Altman	\$25,896 (153)
	8 Ihar Soika	\$19,573 (102)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
\$10,500 NLH KO June 13 Entries: 79 Prizepool: \$790,000	1 Santhosh Suvarna	\$114,165 (420)
	2 Ignacio Chavero	\$114,165 (350)
	3 Ludovic Uzan	\$61,380 (280)
	4 Fahredin Mustafov	\$45,030 (210)
	5 Barak Wisbrod	\$33,775 (175)
	6 Boris Kolev	\$26,330 (140)
	7 Michael Berk	\$21,090 (105)
	8 Manuel Fritz	\$17,301 (70)
	9 Mathew Frankland	\$14,694 (35)



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SAMUEL BIFARELLA TAKES DOWN MSPT VENETIAN

By Ryan Lucchesi

Samuel Bifarella topped the field in the second *Major Series of Poker: The Tour* main event hosted at The Venetian Las Vegas. Earlier, *MSPT* Hall of Famer Josh Reichard took down a \$1,600 event for his second title on the tour.

The second event concluded on June 12, with Bifarella claiming \$141,905 as the champion. This was the second-largest recorded score yet for the Frenchman, trailing only the \$225,506 that came in a runner-up showing in the 2022 *World Series of Poker* \$1,500 freezeout. Bifarella now boasts career earnings in excess of \$550,000.

The win came in a \$1,100 buy-in tournament, which drew 1,171 entries across three starting flights to build the prize pool to \$1,142,896, topping the \$1 million guarantee in the process. The top 129 players all grabbed at least \$2,353 in prize money for their efforts.

When cards got into the air at the final table livestream, Bifarella was the runaway chip leader with nearly double the stack of his closest competitor, and he maintained his lead as players continued to hit the rail.

Claudiu Burlacu took out Hrachya Ohanyan, who earned \$88,850 as the third-place finisher. But even with that elimination, Bifarella still held the chip lead over Burlacu going into heads-up play. Burlacu was able to briefly take over at one point after doubling up with pocket threes, but lost his advantage with top pair against Bifarella's two pair.

Burlacu got the rest in with A♣ 6♣, but he was called, covered, and dominated by the A♦ Q♥ of Bifarella. The final



board of the tournament was dealt A♥ 9♦ 10♥ 2♥ 10♣ and Burlacu was awarded \$131,905 for the runner-up finish. That six-figure score was the largest ever for the Romanian poker player. ♠

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Samuel Bifarella	\$141,905 (960)
2 Claudiu Burlacu	\$131,905 (800)
3 Hrachya Ohanyan	\$88,850 (640)
4 Baurzhan Akimov	\$67,896 (480)
5 Brett Bader	\$52,366 (400)
6 Robert Nemeskeri-Kiss	\$40,769 (320)
7 Andre Rieder	\$32,039 (240)
8 Alexander Tafesh	\$25,421 (160)
9 Brad Sailor	\$20,365 (80)

© MSPT

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 World Series of Poker
\$250,000 Super High Roller



Martin Kabrhel
8,400,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 41%
After Flop: 87%
After Turn: 77%



David Peters
8,925,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 3%
After Flop: 4%
After Turn: 23%



Daniel Negreanu
6,725,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 8%
After Flop: 4%
After Turn: N/A



PREFLOP

With the blinds at 100,000-200,000 with a 200,000 ante, 11 players remained, with 10 players making the money. Playing six-handed, Martin Kabrhel opened to 200,000 from the lojack, and Daniel Negreanu called from the cutoff. David Peters defended his big blind.

FLOP



Peters checked, and Kabrhel bet 200,000. Negreanu called, and Peters check-raised to 750,000. Kabrhel three-bet to 1,450,000. Negreanu folded, and Peters called.

TURN



Peters checked, and Kabrhel checked behind.

RIVER



Peters checked, and Kabrhel bet 2,000,000. Peters moved all in for 6,575,000, and Kabrhel folded.

COMMENTARY:

David Peters pulled off the bluff of the *WSOP* so far, one that shook the entire poker world. On the stone bubble of the \$250,000 Super High Roller, Martin Kabrhel flopped trip eights in a three-way, single-raised pot and put in a standard continuation bet on the two-tone board. Daniel Negreanu, who flopped top-top, had a straightforward call, and David Peters raised from the big blind with the same hand to push his value and clear out some equity. Kabrhel put in a small three-bet, which forced Negreanu out, and Peters put in a call to continue. He turned a flush draw on the 3♠, and Kabrhel was forced to check back given the ICM implications on the bubble. On the 9♣ river, Peters checked it over to Kabrhel with some tricky intentions in mind if Kabrhel decided to put in a bet. Kabrhel put in a bet of about 40% of the pot, which was trivial given that it was the stone bubble and the pot was already quite bloated. Unfortunately for the talkative high roller, he wouldn't have been called by too much that he beat, and even worse, he opened himself up to getting bluffed. Peters could have flushes, rivered a full house, or even had a better eight, and had the brave option to turn a naked top pair into a bluff jam. With the nut flush blocker and a crucial jack, which blocked many full houses, Peters went in the tank before putting in the daring shove. Kabrhel didn't take too long before making the fold, opting to preserve his tournament life with half a million dollars on the line.

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

POKERGO TOUR STANDINGS

As of
6/30/2025

Rank	Player	Points	Titles	Top Threes	Final Tables	Cashes	Payouts
1	Alex Foxen	1,746	2	6	7	14	\$4,402,174
2	Nick Schulman	1,529	1	5	9	18	\$1,544,865
3	Daniel Negreanu	1,470	2	4	10	18	\$2,123,536
4	Chino Rheem	1,327	2	5	9	15	\$1,410,103
5	Andrew Lichtenberger	1,211	1	2	4	7	\$2,040,132
6	Eric Blair	1,157	2	4	6	13	\$1,174,570
7	Philip Sternheimer	1,156	1	2	4	8	\$1,303,528
8	Kristen Foxen	1,086	3	3	3	9	\$883,077
9	Dylan Linde	1,015	1	1	3	7	\$2,316,739
10	Joey Weissman	1,002	1	4	6	10	\$1,121,420
11	Michael Duek	977	0	2	3	4	\$1,854,148
12	Richard Gryko	964	0	2	4	6	\$1,256,513
13	Stephen Chidwick	906	0	2	2	5	\$1,658,259
14	Patrick Leonard	902	1	3	7	15	\$837,523
15	Thomas Boivin	900	0	2	2	2	\$3,269,450

The *PokerGO Tour* first launched in April of 2021. The high-stakes-centric points race has already crowned several season-long champions, including legends of the game like Stephen Chidwick (2022), Isaac Haxton (2023), and Jeremy Ausmus (2024).

The 2025 season got underway with the fittingly named *PGT Kickoff* series, and the tour has already accounted for more than 65 events with nearly \$156 million in prize money awarded along the way. In this update, we examine the *PGT* standings roughly halfway through the season.

Leading the way is **Alex Foxen**, who has accrued six top-three showings and two titles in *PGT*-qualified events. Both of Foxen's wins came in \$15,000 events during the spring. He is joined in the top 10 by his wife **Kristen Foxen**, who has three *PGT* titles so far in 2025, the most of any player on tour.

A couple of seven-time bracelet winners in **Nick Schulman** and **Daniel Negreanu** round out the top three. Schulman's lone

win of the year so far came in the *World Series of Poker* \$10,000 no-limit deuce-to-seven lowball championship, which he took down for the third time.

Negreanu took down a \$15,000 dealers choice event during the *PGT Mixed Games* festival in early March, then triumphed in a \$5,000 buy-in at the *PGT PLO Series* a few weeks later, and has several deep runs in the ongoing *WSOP*. Schulman and Negreanu are tied for the most cashes of any *PGT* contenders, with 18 each.

There are 10 players who have already racked up multiple millions in *PGT* cashes, with **Seth Davies** and his \$4.9 million leading the pack in that statistical category. With just one qualified final-table showing (for his gigantic win in the *WSOP* \$250,000 high roller), Davies sits in 24th place in the points race.

The top 40 players at the end of the season will qualify for the *PGT Championship*, a \$1 million freeroll. ♠



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Final Table Takedown: Limit Hold'em Specialist Ian Johns Wins Fourth Bracelet

By Craig Tapscott



Ian Johns grew up in Seattle, Washington in a bowling-obsessed family. Both parents worked in and/or owned a bowling alley from the time he was born until their retirement in 2023. Both alleys had a cardroom, and his parents spent countless hours in them, playing mostly just for fun, but also as a way to promote their business. They were essentially their own props.

Ian's poker journey began in 2003 during the tail end of his senior year of high school with friends in his parents' garage, cards spread out on the family pool table. He was quickly obsessed and read every book and forum he could find. By the next summer, he was already racking up cash online.

Just a few years later, Johns showed the poker world that he was one of the top limit hold'em players around, taking down the *World Series of Poker* \$3,000 limit event. In 2016, he won two more bracelets, finishing first in both the \$1,500 H.O.R.S.E. event and the \$10,000 limit hold'em championship.

Over the years Ian played tons of live cash games in Seattle, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and now Austin, Texas where he currently resides. Most recently, Johns won the *WSOP* \$10,000 limit championship for a second time, bringing his bracelet count to four and giving him more than \$2

million in career tournament cashes.

Card Player caught up with Johns to break down a couple key hands from his latest victory.

Event: WSOP Limit Hold'em Championship

Buy-In: \$10,000

Entrants: 118

Prize Pool: \$1,097,400

First-Place Prize: \$282,455

Craig Tapscott: Can you set this final table up for us? It was stacked with some great players like Daniel Negreanu, Anthony Zinno, and Viktor Blom. What was your plan coming in?

Ian Johns: Coming into the final table, my plan didn't change at all. When I sit down to play any poker tournament I focus on playing solid, playing aggressively, and not making mistakes. I focus on hand reading, and try not to make impulsive decisions. These are the self-talks I give myself whether it's day one at 3 pm or day 3 in the middle of the final table.

I'm always looking to essentially wait people out, and that was my approach at the final table. Don't do anything



stupid, bide your time, stay afloat, and wait for things to start going your way.

Does that always work? Of course not, but I think trying to press the issue too much can lead to so many negative outcomes that I try to stay away from that approach.

Luckily for me, I had loads and loads more experience than each of my opponents once we got to four-handed play.

Craig Tapscott: What are some of the keys to excel at short-handed play in limit hold'em?

Ian Johns: You have to stay balanced. You have to find ways to make your betting actions consistent and sensible across a wide array of holdings you may have, because you're forced to play hands that are much wider than your typical ring game hand ranges. A call can't always be weak, and a raise can't always be strong. Mixing things up will keep your opponents from honing in on your exact tendencies.

You also have to keep your emotions in check. Short-handed limit hold'em is an incredibly swingy game. If you get off kilter after a bad beat or a couple losing hands, it'll snowball the wrong direction for you quickly.

Stay patient. Just because you're playing short-handed doesn't mean you have to play every single hand. Figure out what ranges you're comfortable playing and don't deviate too wildly. Obviously, you have to loosen up quite a bit, but do it with a plan.

**HAND
NO. 1**

Stacks: Ian Johns – 2,260,000 Anthony Zinno – 1,800,000

Limits: 50,000-100,000

Players remaining: 3

Johns raised to 100,000 from the button holding A♥ 6♥. Zinno raised to 150,000 from the small blind, and Johns called.

Ian Johns: There was not much to glean from the preflop action. I've got a standard button open, and I know his three-bet can be lots of stuff from 4-4 through A-A or some suited Broadways, or an ace that dominates me. There was also an outside chance of something friskier like a K-8 suited or 9-8

suited, for instance.

Flop: K♥ 9♥ 3♦

Zinno bets 50,000. Johns raises to 100,000.

Ian Johns: I raised right away. My hand will have strong equity against all of his holdings, and by raising straight away it gives me the best chance to either win a big pot if I hit or move him off a hand like A-J or 5-5 potentially later in the hand.

Zinno three-bets to 150,000. Johns calls.

Ian Johns: I had an easy call with the nut flush draw in this spot. There was no need to bloat this pot anymore by taking further aggression.

Turn: 7♦

Zinno bet 100,000, and Johns called.

Ian Johns: Once again, I had a clear call.

River: 4♣

Zinno bet 100,000.

Craig Tapscott: What can you do in this spot? Do you think the ace high could be good?

Ian Johns: Well, at this point raising is out of the question. Zinno's range consists of mostly value hands like K-Q, 9-9, etc. that won't fold to a raise.

But as I began to think more about it on the river, there are just too many combos of Q-J, Q-10, and J-10, primarily with hearts, that I can beat. I was getting 10 to 1, so...

Johns called. Zinno showed J♠ 10♠, and Johns won the pot of 1,050,000.

Ian Johns: I opted to make the call. If I called and lost, I would have been in a very similar position in the tournament to where I'd be if I had folded. But if I called and won, then things would swing dramatically in my favor from a stack size point of view.

I was fortunate he had one of the bluffs instead of one of the value hands he could have had.

Craig Tapscott: Can you share some limit strategies when it comes to the river? Where do players have the most leaks?

Ian Johns: I think the prevailing wisdom is that in most limit games you're getting such a good price in terms of

POKER STRATEGY

pot odds on the river that calling and showing your hand down is the correct approach if you have showdown value. Honestly, that's perfectly good advice.

But in limit games, you're looking to try to win one or maybe two bets per hour to have a successful win rate in the games you're playing in. So, in that sense, every single bet matters. Blindly calling on the end in spots where you feel like you have no hope of winning the pot is a leak for some players.

Craig Tapscott: How do the best in the game approach river play?

Ian Johns: There's no hard and fast rule or even situational heuristics that are super helpful. So much of it comes from experience. You should always be putting yourself in your opponent's shoes. Why is he playing the hand this way? Are there bluffs he could have? Could he be value betting a worse hand?

Be diligent in your thought process and be honest with yourself. Actively seek out spots where even though you're getting 8 to 1 you think you might be only 5-10% to win by calling, and practice making some folds you might not otherwise.

I should clarify by saying don't take this too far. You're still getting a good price in many of these situations, and the default should be to showdown your hands with reasonable showdown value. But the difference between good and great often lies in the very blurry margins, and river play in limit poker is a great example.

It's tough and you'll never master it, but continuing to give it deep and quality thought each time instead of blindly calling that last bet will improve your understanding of poker.

HAND NO.2

Stacks: Ian Johns – 5,800,000 Viktor Blom – 1,200,000
Limits: 60,000-120,000
Players remaining: 2

Blom limped the button. Johns raised from the big blind to 120,000 holding A♥ 8♥, and Blom called.

Flop: A♦ 9♣ 3♣

Johns bet 60,000, and Blom called.

Craig Tapscott: What range of hands are you putting Blom on after he called your continuation bet?

Ian Johns: At this point I was giving Viktor a nine, a three, a straight draw like 4-5, or something like K-2 or Q-5 that understands I don't have to have an ace and may have some showdown value.

Turn: K♣

Johns bet 120,000, and Blom called.

Ian Johns: Now I was thinking he either has a king, a nine, or perhaps a three, or he's picked up a flush draw of some sort.

With that in mind, as the dealer was pulling in the chips, I distinctly remember thinking, 'Ok, no nine and no club on the river please.'

River: 9♣

Ian Johns: The 9♣ fell. The literal worst card in the deck. I opted to check this time as I think the only hand that's even possibly calling that I can beat is K-x.

Viktor bet 120,000.

Craig Tapscott: Give us a peek into how you were thinking through this spot.

Ian Johns: Going back to the turn, when he called, I'm



Ian Johns Wins First Bracelet - 2006 WSOP

firmly of the belief he had either a king, a nine, a three, or a hand with two clubs in it.

On the river, I didn't think he would be betting a king for value, and I didn't expect him to turn a three into a bluff.

So now we're stuck with a nine, a flush, or what was in my estimation a super unlikely A-x hand. I lose to two of those and chop with the least likely of those.

So that leaves folding as the preferred option for me, even though it's incredibly rare you'd flop top pair of aces or kings etc. and end up folding the river in heads up limit hold'em, but here we are.

Johns folded, and Blom won the pot of 720,000.

Ian Johns: I folded. It turned out on the stream that Viktor did in fact have 9-4. So, I was really happy with that one.

Craig Tapscott: When it came down to heads-up versus Blom, what kind of plan did you have after being able to watch him extensively during the final day or two?

Ian Johns: We were about 4:3 in terms of chips. At that point, I didn't have a plan other than to play tough as nails and not give away an inch. Once I started to make some hands and pull into a lead, my mindset changed some from simply trying to play my very best to trying to grind Viktor out by not playing big pots with him unless it was on my terms.

I only three-bet out of the big blind once, with A-A. I opted to simply call down with top pair one hand after he check-raised me on the flop. I folded some really marginal stuff preflop that could be played in heads-up limit hold'em.

My entire thought process was that I didn't want to give him any chance to gain momentum and start playing with reckless abandon that may be hard for me to combat. So, by keeping pots smaller, it would make any potential comeback he made a long and difficult grind for him. ♠

10 WAYS TO STAY FOCUSED AT THE TABLES

By Alex Fitzgerald

Staying focused at the poker table is one of the most underrated skills that separates winning players from the rest. Distractions, fatigue, and emotional swings can quickly derail your game, but with the right mindset and strategies, you can maintain sharpness and make better decisions throughout your session.

Success Is Not An Accident

The first thing we have to do is make sure we have some kind of system. Most people blame their losing on bad luck and their success on how awesome they are. This isn't helpful.

I've lately been on a hot streak in live cash. I'm perplexed by this, because I don't feel like I'm using any elaborate strategy or doing anything special. When I looked back at my last 10 sessions, however, I found I was applying the following systems.

Play When You Actually Have The Time

I love live tournaments but they're a huge pain in the ass to schedule. They take up multiple days, and you often have to travel for them.

I've been having difficulty scheduling live



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tournaments lately because I've been doing more poker lessons, so I finally just accepted my lot in life. I went back to my roots of playing cash games. They're much easier to schedule.

Unsurprisingly, when your poker play isn't eating into hours you need for other parts of your life, it's much easier to play well. Ask yourself how much time you actually have and what is going to work for you.

Are you a night owl? Do you have other work commitments? Cash games might be better for you.

Is your schedule more flexible? Do you love the thrill of competition? Do you prefer playing during the day? Then tournaments might be a better idea.

Don't Load Up On Food

Look, I don't know your life, and I know you didn't read this to be lectured to. But you also understand there are some basics involved with poker. If you load up on a heavy meal, it's not inconceivable that you'll become sleepy. This doesn't help your focus at the table.

If you can eat a little lighter while you're playing, it will go a long way. Snacks like lightly salted almonds will help you not starve while the hours go on.

Get At Least Seven Hours Of Sleep

This rule has saved my ass from a number of terrible sessions. If something comes up and I only sleep 6.5 hours the night before, I don't let myself play poker. Period.

I've lost count of the number of times I'm wildly tired that same night and I'm thanking God I'm not grinding.

If you're playing cash, quit when you're tired. The

second you get that feeling, stand up. You owe nothing to anyone. Your wallet needs you.

Clear Your Schedule The Next Day

If you're playing a tournament or cash game that might go late into the night, you don't want to be sweating what you have to do the next morning.

If you can play when there's nothing scheduled the next day, it will help you be more relaxed on the felt. It's even better if you can sleep in the next day.

Manage Your Commute

I've lost count of the number of times I've been cutoff by a Colorado driver. I had a guy get into the wrong lane the other day and almost run into me head-on at 50+ MPH. If I hadn't braked at the right time, I wouldn't be writing this article.

Sometimes the commute to a cardroom is so awful or long it can just stress us out before we even have to play a hand. Recently, I started taking a shuttle to my cardroom of choice. When I did the math on how much the car depreciation and gas was costing me for a 100-mile round trip commute, the shuttle was going to cost me exactly \$9 extra. \$4.50 each way. I call.

Now, I listen to audiobooks and rest before my sessions. I'm mowing through books and feeling relaxed before I grind. Managing your commute can give you that.

Bring Headphones

Some days you'll have some horse's ass at the table who will never shut up. They're like prize fighters who run their mouths. They make money when everyone pays to see them get their jaw cracked.

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 World Series of Poker
\$250,000 Super High Roller



Alex Foxen
30,350,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 53%
After Flop: 38%
After Turn: 11%



Seth Davies
12,275,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 45%
After Flop: 51%
After Turn: 89%

PREFLOP

Playing five-handed with the blinds at 200,000-400,000 with a 400,000 big blind ante, Alex Foxen opened to 1,400,000 from the small blind and Seth Davies called from the big blind.



Flopped: Foxen bet 800,000, and Davies called.



Turn: Foxen bet 2,800,000, and Davies called.



River: Foxen checked, and Davies went virtually all in for 7,300,000, leaving a 25,000 chip behind. Foxen folded.

COMMENTARY:

A fortunate runout for Seth Davies allowed him to climb up the leaderboard and eventually gather the momentum he needed to become champion and earn his first-ever WSOP bracelet and a career-high \$4,752,551. Alex Foxen opted to open 10-3 offsuit to 3.5x big blinds from the small blind. As the chip leader, Foxen was incentivized to ramp up the aggression with a wide range in blind-on-blind situations. With Davies facing massive ICM pressure sitting in third place with Chris Brewer and Bryn Kenney not so far behind, Foxen could be even more aggressive than usual, potentially opening any two cards to this size. Davies, of course, would defend virtually any two suited cards. On an A-2 flop, Foxen's aggression continued as he hoped to take it down immediately. On this board texture, Foxen's continuation bet would work a large percentage of the time. He also had double backdoors, just in case. However, with a flush draw and a backdoor straight draw, Davies couldn't go anywhere. Foxen then turned a gutshot, which prompted him to double barrel quite large, knowing that Davies would have to put himself at risk of falling into last place with a call. Davies had picked up a pair to go along with his flush draw and had a rather uncomfortable call going to the river, as Foxen could still apply max pressure on many rivers. All that discomfort went away as a second five appeared on the river, which gave Davies top boat. It was just an awful river for Foxen, who luckily decided it was best to give up. Davies took down a massive 10.4 million-chip pot and vaulted up to well over 40 big blinds.

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Don't let them take your energy. Don't pay them off. Turn your headphones on and block them out.

It's not perfect, but it will work.

Write Down Interesting Hands

If you want to pay better attention at the table, write down the hands that are most interesting to you in your cell phone. They don't even have to be hands you play. They can be huge pots that happened between the biggest characters in your cardroom.

Read the hands back later. Discuss them with your friends. Look for the huge mistakes your opponents are making. Look for the huge mistakes you're making.

Go For Walks On Your Off Days

Have you ever Googled what exercise does for your focus levels? The thing lights up like a Christmas tree with studies.

Exercise helps people focus better by increasing blood flow to the brain and releasing chemicals that improve attention and mood. It also reduces stress, improves sleep, and helps the brain grow stronger, making it easier to stay sharp and concentrate on tasks.

Any kind of exercise is helpful, but if you're looking for something simple to get started with, try walking on your off days.

I have a stack of books on my bedside table which I haven't cracked open in years. I recently started looking them up on Audible Plus and Spotify. I'm mowing through the audiobook versions of the books while I walk during my off hours. My focus has been soaring since I committed to getting out every day and getting some fresh air with the sun.

Watch What You're Drinking

This is another no shit-Sherlock piece of advice, but it's worth repeating, because many people do not work on this.

Obviously, tossing back multiple alcoholic beverages will not help your focus. However, I also found energy drinks suck at helping you pay attention. I haven't had one in years. It seems to be something with the sugar, either artificial or real, that causes burn out. If you switch to tea or coffee without sugar it seems to improve focus greatly.

Conclusion

Staying focused at the poker table isn't just about talent — it's about preparation, discipline, and self-awareness. By incorporating these strategies into your routine, you can optimize your mental sharpness and make better decisions when it matters most. From managing your schedule and diet to prioritizing rest and exercise, these small adjustments can have a big impact on your long-term success.

Poker is a game of skill, but success is no accident. It's built on the foundation of consistent habits and smart choices. Stay focused, stay disciplined, and let your best game shine through. ♠



Alexander Fitzgerald is a professional poker player and bestselling author who lives in Denver, Colorado. He is a WPT and EPT final tablist with numerous online tournament wins. Free training packages of his are available to new newsletter subscribers who sign up for free at

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I AM A CALLING STATION

By Jonathan Little

I recently played a fun hand in a \$5,000 buy-in tournament in the PokerGO studio that illustrates a concept you must master if you want to succeed at tournament poker.

With blinds at 1,000-1,500 with a 1,500 big blind ante, everyone folded to me in the hijack seat and I raised to 3,000 out of my 60,000 effective stack with 9♠ 9♦. The action folded around to a good, aggressive player in the big blind who three-bet to 10,500.

At this point, I could either go all-in or call. Folding would be much too tight. The only time folding would be reasonable is if I was sure my opponent's range was overly strong, perhaps 10-10+ and A-K.

Calling is the GTO play, allowing me to see the flop before I invest too much more money.

If I expect my opponent to fold to an all-in too often either because they are tight when calling all-ins, or I think their three-betting range is overly wide, going all-in becomes the best option. While an all-in will result in me going broke whenever my opponent has an overpair or wins a flip, it will also ensure I do not make a post-flop mistake of folding the best hand, while also forcing many hands with 50% equity (like A-J and K-10) to fold.



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This time I decided to call. The flop came 10♦ 8♣ 3♣ and my opponent bet 7,500 into the 23,500 pot.

Again, 9-9 is simply too strong to fold. In general, when the preflop three-bettor makes a small flop continuation bet, you can be somewhat sure you are against your opponent's entire range, which includes many strong preflop hands that you crush, such as A-K, as well as all the potential bluffs, like 7-6 suited. You may also be against a hand like 8-7 or





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A-3 that is betting for value and protection.

Knowing this, calling was the best play. The main problem with going all-in is that my opponent will fold most of his worse hands that I crush and will call with all his strong hands that crush me. Clearly that is not a great spot to be in.

I called. The turn was the 3♠ and my opponent bet 21,000 into the 38,500 pot.

What a dicey spot! When the opponent keeps betting, you can be quite certain that he either has top pair or a better made hand, a draw, or a total bluff. When you have a marginal made hand against a polarized range, it makes sense to either call or fold because if you raise, you will only get called when you are crushed.

Situations like this are interesting because some players will bet the turn with only their strong hands, others will bet the turn with all their bluffs but will not continue bluffing on the river, while some will bluff on the turn and river. It is difficult to know what to do! However, if you are aware of your opponent's tendencies, you can get well out of line to exploit them.

I called. The river was the 10♥, and my opponent checked.

Given my opponent either has an overpair that will not fold to a bet or a junky hand, it does not make sense to bet because the hands that beat me will always call and the hands that I beat will always fold. While I should certainly not expect to win every time when showing down 9-9, checking behind is by far the best play, especially since if I lost, I would still retain a manageable 21,000 stack that I might be able to nurse back to health.

I checked and won against my opponent's 7-5 offsuit.

That was not what I was expecting to see! By not pushing all-in preflop or by raising post-flop, I allowed my opponent to continue bluffing with a hand that was drawing dead. Sometimes poker is easy!

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

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Jonathan Little is a WSOP bracelet winner, two-time WPT winner, and PokerGO Cup champion. The best-selling author of 15 educational poker books and 2019 GPI Poker Personality of the Year wants to help you increase your poker skills and learn to crush the games. Check out PokerCoaching.com/CardPlayer.



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TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 World Series of Poker
\$250,000 Super High Roller



Chris Brewer
11,225,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 45%
After Flop: 87%
After Turn: 95%

Alex Foxen
24,600,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 54%
After Flop: 13%
After Turn: 5%

PREFLOP

Playing five-handed with the blinds at 200,000-400,000 with a 400,000 big blind ante, Chris Brewer limped in from the small blind. Alex Foxen raised to 1,600,000, and Brewer called.

FLOP



Brewer checked. Foxen bet 900,000, and Brewer called.

TURN



Brewer checked. Foxen bet 1,800,000, and Brewer called.

RIVER



Brewer checked, and Foxen went all in for 6,925,000 effective. Brewer called. Foxen won 15,925,000 with a full house, nines over threes.

COMMENTARY:

Chris Brewer would be eliminated from the \$250,000 Super High Roller in absolutely brutal fashion, as has been the case several times at the final table in his biggest spots. Brewer started the hand in fourth place while Alex Foxen started in second, just behind Thomas Boivin. Brewer was going to have a pretty wide limping range and, with pocket nines, Foxen had no choice but to raise, though he would be highly motivated to apply pressure to Brewer's stack regardless of his hand. With Q-J offsuit, Brewer had a pretty clear call. After a queen-high flop, Brewer had an easy check-call with top pair, knowing Foxen would continuation bet with his entire range. Brewer shouldn't have any raises whatsoever in this situation, preferring to conceal the strength of his holdings. The turn is where the internet debate raged on whether or not Foxen should have double-barreled. GTO suggests that Foxen would be betting over 65% his range in this spot, including all of his second pairs and better, which also need some protection. This is because Brewer would, in theory, still have to call a number of ace-high hands as well as hands with a five that called the flop and his pocket pairs. Foxen's pocket nines, specifically, would bet at a 92.5% frequency. In classic Brewer fashion, Foxen binked a two-outer full house on the river. Aside from pocket threes (quads), pocket fives, K-Q, and some A-3 and K-3 combos, Brewer was at the very top of his range. Foxen would also have a pretty large number of bluffs in this spot, so Brewer was left with a clear crying call. The chronically unlucky Brewer reacted wildly to Foxen's tabled pocket nines, shouting expletives and asking out loud, "How does this happen every time?!" Brewer ended up collecting \$1,066,731 for his fifth-place finish, unable to defend his title from 2023.

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Punt Of The Day: Trapping With Pocket Kings

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.

Today we're going to look back to a hand that is so old that there is no big blind ante. At the time I had all the confidence of one of the best players in the world, but looking through the footage of this final table all I can see is the mistakes made by me (and others).

Two hands before this, I had shoved pocket eights from under-the-gun in a spot where I'd always raise-fold if I played the hand today. It just goes to show how much the game has evolved in the past nine years, and even if you think you're the best, there's always room to improve.

Event: 2016 EPT Monte Carlo Event €100k Super High Roller The Hand

We are eight-handed at the final table. The blinds are 25,000-50,000 with a 5,000 ante, and the bubble has just burst, putting us all in the money. The average stack is 1,900,000, and I have 895,000.

Everyone folds to me in the small blind and I look down at K♥ K♦. I complete, and the action is on Mustapha Kanit in the big blind with 2,100,000 behind.

Mustapha raises to 125,000, and I call.

Flop: 8♥ 6♥ 5♣

I check, and Mustapha checks behind.

Turn: 2♣

I check, and Mustapha checks behind.

River: 7♣

I check, and Mustapha bets 225,000. I call, and lose to 9♦ 2♥ for a rivered straight.

What Was I Thinking?

This hand took place nine years ago, so I will not be as tapped into my thought process as I am about hands that took place last month, but I'll try my best.

It folded to me in the small blind, and I limped kings because at the time I played shove or limp from the small blind off 15 big blinds. I thought if I raised non all-in with my strong hands, my limping range would be too weak and could get punished by aggressive players in the big blind.

Mustapha raised to 2.5 big blinds. I didn't want to shove a hand as strong as kings, and I didn't think I could three-bet/fold such a large portion of my stack, so I didn't think it was a credible play to have in my range. Mustapha will rarely raise small with ace-high hands, so I was not that worried about playing post-flop if an ace hit the board.

I decided to keep trapping. The flop was dynamic, but I didn't consider leading. At the time, under ICM pressure, I played very defensively and would rather have too strong a checking range than risk having a weak checking range and getting bluffed too often.

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 World Series of Poker
\$250,000 Super High Roller



Seth Davies
12,150,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 68%
After Flop: 80%
After Turn: 89%



Thomas Boivin
39,700,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 32%
After Flop: 20%
After Turn: 11%

PREFLOP

Playing four-handed with the blinds at 250,000-500,000 with a 500,000 big blind ante, Seth Davies opened to 1,250,000 from the cutoff and Thomas Boivin called from the small blind.



Boivin led out for 1,100,000, and Davies raised to 3,100,000. Boivin called.



Boivin checked, and Davies bet 3,000,000. Boivin called.



Boivin checked and Davis bet 4,775,000, leaving a 25,000 chip behind. Boivin called.

COMMENTARY:

For the second time at the final table, Davies rivered a full house after a precarious turn. This time, he would secure a very crucial double-up. Davies had a clear open, while Boivin could have mixed in calls and small three-bets with his A-7 suited in the small blind. He opted to flat and went to the flop. On this particular seven-high flop, equities are rather shared between the two ranges, so it made sense for Boivin to have some leads. With a small lead size, Boivin should lead over 60% of the time, and A-7 is a clear majority lead. Interestingly enough, in a GTO setting, Davies shouldn't have many raises in this situation, often deciding to raise with his most vulnerable overpairs like pocket eights and pocket nines. However, the solver doesn't mind a raise with pocket queens, even more so with the backdoor flush draw, which Davies possessed. On the 4♠ turn, which paired the board, Davies had a natural continue with his overpair. Boivin could have used this time to go all in. In fact, the solver actually prefers to jam with A-7 suited (without clubs) 100% of the time. After Boivin called the turn, he was essentially committed to calling the river for only about 30% pot, especially on non-clubs. Unfortunately, he was absolutely crushed by Davies and his full house and gave his opponent a full double-up.

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On the turn, the board was so connected that I wanted to end the hand right away, but I didn't want to risk seeing a river out of position, so I checked with the plan of check-shoving. He didn't cooperate, however, and checked behind.

On the river, I thought my hand was too weak to value bet, but too strong to fold. I gave Mustapha credit for bluffing any no-pair hand, so I check-called.

What Did I Get Wrong?

So many things. Where to start?

As a short stack at a final table, when you play tight from the small blind, you can raise first in. It's better to play aggressively and put money in the pot with good hands, than it is to get a lot of pressure put on you in limp-check nodes with a large stack-to-pot ratio.

Once I limp and Mustapha raises to 2.5x, I can easily three-bet non-all-in. I started the hand with 15 big blinds and he made it 2.5 big blinds. Making it 5.5 big blinds and folding is fine vs a polar raising range. If I bluff three-bet K-6 offsuit and he has 9-2 offsuit, it's very hard for him to do anything about it.

Additionally, so little money has gone in preflop that while I am trapping his bluffs, I'm failing to get value from a ton of his value range. What if he has A-K and the flop comes 8-6-5 with a flush draw? What if he has pocket nines

and I don't stack them on an A-K-Q flop?

On the flop, I could lead all-in with my hand and range, but I think K-K is a little too strong to do this with. If he is bluffing preflop with hands like Q-2 offsuit, I want to give him rope to keep bluffing.

On the turn, my logic was sound. I could bet, but checking with the plan to check-raise all-in is a common



Mustapha Kanit

© PokerStars / Danny Maxwell

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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substack

samgreenwoodpoker.substack.com

play in the sim I ran and accomplishes what I wanted to accomplish in 2016.

I didn't even consider a blocker bet on the river, but I should have. He should have a lot of one-pair hands that I can get value from, and he could call ace high, which beats all my bluffs. From a tournament perspective, when I block the river, especially without a flush blocker, I set my price. And while I make it more likely I get bluffed off the best hand, I also lose less money when I have the worst hand. Not blocking the river isn't a giant mistake, but not considering a block is.

Once I checked the river and Mustapha bet, as you can hear in the live coverage, I said, "I played this hand really stupidly." I was not wrong, but I was not done making mistakes.

While calling the river here is fine, king-high should be a very common bluff for Mustapha, and without the K♣ in my range, I don't block any of his value bets. If I wanted to call with one pair on the river, I'd much rather call a pair on board.

Types Of Errors I Made

Bad Range Strategy

Bluff Catching With The Wrong Cards

Grade

At a big final table, I made two horrible decisions pre-flop that could have won me the pot and two bad decisions on the river that cost me a third of my stack. However, the worst part of this hand is that at the time, I thought I played it well and Mustapha played it poorly.

In 2016, almost no one knew how to play chip-EV solver poker, and no one knew how to play ICM solver poker.

My thought process was simply something like, "Fucking Musta, what an idiot raising with 9-2 offsuit! I trapped him and he got there."

With nine years of hindsight, I can say, outside of sizing a little too small preflop, Mustapha played this hand perfectly. Preflop was a high-frequency, if not pure raise. The flop mixes bet or check, but it's probably a pure check against a small blind who was never leading the flop. The turn was a pure check, the river was a pure value bet, and his sizing was good.

Learning to be process-oriented instead of results-oriented is an important skill for any gambler, but sometimes negative results are caused by negative processes. In this hand, I was blinded by the negative results, and it took me years to realize that in this hand my process stunk.

The goal of poker is to win, not to ace a poker exam. In this hand, I was confident that while I lost, I had at least aced the exam and played the hand well. In reality, I lost the hand and failed the exam. There is only one appropriate letter grade for today's hand.

This hand is a clear F. ♠



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.

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CONTRACTS AND POKER: ACCIDENTALLY MUCKING YOUR HAND

By Scott J. Burnham

I was playing in a tournament at Maryland Live! when a player asked the floor about a rule. He said that he had been playing in a tournament the previous day.

When he was in the big blind, a player in middle position went all in. He looked down at his cards, and before he could say anything, the all-in player, thinking there were no callers, threw his cards into the muck. He happened to have aces, so obviously he would have called. He said the floor ruled that he would not be awarded all of the all-in player's chips, but he was awarded the blinds and the amount of the big blind from the all-in player.

The floor who heard about this secondhand was understandably reluctant to give an opinion, because he could not verify that the facts were as the player had related to him. However, he acknowledged that if the facts were as related, he thought there was no rule on point, and he agreed that a player should not lose all his chips on a misunderstanding, so he would likely have ruled the same.

Is there no rule on point? Of course there is a rule. For starters, the general statement of Player Responsibilities in Tournament Directors Association (TDA) Rule 2 states in part:

"Players should ... protect their hands [and] follow the action."

More specifically, TDA Rule 65A concerns hands killed by the dealer:

"Players must protect their hands at all times, including at showdown while waiting for hands to be read. If the dealer kills a hand by mistake or if in TDs judgement a hand is fouled and cannot be identified to 100% certainty, the player has no redress and is not entitled to a refund of called bets. If the player initiated a bet or raise and hasn't been called, the uncalled amount will be returned."

It seems odd that if a dealer kills a hand, the player has no redress, but if they muck their own hand, they have redress. That upends the clear rule that "Players must protect

their hands at all times." Doesn't that mean they must protect it from themselves as well as from others?

The *WSOP* rule is similar to the TDA Rule. Rule 91 states:

"All chips put into the pot in turn stay in the pot. If a Participant has raised and his or her hand is killed before the raise is called, the Participant may be entitled to the raise back, but will forfeit the amount of the call."

This rule has some unclear phrasing. It refers in the passive to a hand being killed, but does not say who is doing the killing – does it refer only to a dealer's action or can a player kill his own hand? It also uses the discretionary "may," indicating that it is up to the floor to determine whether they get their raise back.

WSOP Rule 108 further elaborates the rule. It states:

"Protect Your Hand: Participants must always protect their own hands. A protected hand is defined as a hand sitting on the table surface with a card cap (see Rule 112) placed on top of the cards. If a dealer or Participant kills or fouls an unprotected hand, the Participant will have no redress and will not be entitled to his or her chips back that were wagered in the hand. If the Participant initiated a bet or raise and hasn't been called, the uncalled bet or raise will be returned to the Participant."

Unlike Rule 91, this rule makes clear that a player can kill their own hand. But after initially seeming to indicate that a player who kills their own hand loses the wagered chips, the next sentence carves out an exception for an uncalled bet.

A situation similar to the one at Live! took place at the *WSOP* main event in 2012. On the fifth day, Gaelle Baumann min-raised with pocket kings. Andras Koroknai went all-in, and then mucked his hand before Baumann had a chance to act (she obviously would have called). The floorman was called over and – just like the Live! TD – ruled that Koroknai could keep his chips, except for matching Baumann's bet.

He then called *WSOP* head tournament director Jack Effel, who confirmed the decision. The vague explanation was that it was for "the integrity of the tournament." It then seemed inevitable that when they met at the final table on day 7, Koroknai eliminated Baumann in tenth place, the highest finish by a woman in the post-Moneymaker era.

These *WSOP* rules seem to have been followed in Maryland, as well. As per Rule 108, the player got his chips back because the bet had not been called at the time he mucked his hand.

I might note that this rule could lead to angle-shooting – a player who made a bet expecting that it would not be called could "accidentally" muck their hand when they see they are about to be called and thereby get their chips back.

I think there should be no exception and the player who mucks his or her hand should forfeit the pot. Is that fair and in the best interests of the game? I think so. It seems to me any other decision is unfair to the player who did nothing wrong. And it is in the best interests of the game that players face the consequences of their mistakes.

When I told the tournament director in Maryland that I disagreed with the decision, he asked me if I would think it fair if I was eliminated from a tournament if I did that. Absolutely, I responded. I would learn an important lesson, which is why violating the rules has consequences. On the other hand, I don't think I would ever be in a position for that to happen to me. One of the first things my daddy taught me was to wait until the chips were pushed toward me before mucking my hand. If everyone did that, this situation would never arise. ♠



Scott J. Burnham is Professor Emeritus at Gonzaga University School of Law in Spokane, Washington. He can be reached at

profburnham@yahoo.com.

SCHEDULES

FOR COMPLETE TOURNAMENT RESULTS AND LISTINGS, VISIT CARDPLAYER.COM

MAY	May 19-July 31	DeepStack Championship Poker Series	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
JULY	July 16-28	WSOP Circuit - Choctaw	Choctaw Casino & Resort ■ Durant, OK
	July 28-Aug. 3	Summer Series	The Reserve Poker Club ■ Toledo, OH
	July 29-Aug. 12	Seminole Hard Rock Poker Open	Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino ■ Hollywood, FL
AUGUST	Aug. 1-Sept. 1	DeepStack Showdown	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Aug. 7-18	WSOP Circuit - North Carolina	Harrah's Casino & Resort ■ Cherokee, NC
	Aug. 8-10	Empire State Championship	Turning Stone Casino & Resort ■ Verona, NY
	Aug. 14-25	WSOP Circuit - Bay Area	Graton Resort & Casino ■ Rohnert Park, CA
	Aug. 14-25	WSOP Circuit - Atlantic City	Harrah's Casino & Resort ■ Atlantic City, NJ
	Aug. 14-Sept. 1	Summer Swing Series	bestbet ■ Orange Park, St. Augustine & Jacksonville, FL
	Aug. 20-24	Summer Poker Round Up	Wildhorse Resort Casino ■ Pendleton, OR
	Aug. 21-Sept. 1	WSOP Circuit - New Orleans	Caesars Hotel & Casino ■ New Orleans, LA
SEPTEMBER	Sept. 2-14	7 Clans Poker Cup Series	Coushatta Casino & Resort ■ Kinder, LA
	Sept. 4-15	WSOP Circuit - Omaha/Iowa	Horseshoe Casino & Hotel ■ Council Bluffs, IA
	Sept. 11-22	WSOP Circuit - Chicago	Horseshoe Casino ■ Hammond, IN
	Sept. 17-Oct. 8	World Series of Poker Europe	Kings Casino ■ Rozvadov, Czech Republic
	Sept. 18-28	Card Player Poker Tour	The Reserve Poker Club ■ Toledo, OH
	Sept. 18-29	WSOP Circuit - Southern Indiana	Caesars Southern Indiana ■ Elizabeth, IN
	Sept. 25-Oct. 6	WSOP Circuit - Thunder Valley	Thunder Valley Casino & Resort ■ Lincoln, CA
	Sept. 25-Oct. 14	Trailblazer Poker Tour	Texas Card House ■ Dallas & Las Colinas, TX

AO-Add On **B**-Bonus **BIG O**-5 Card PLO 8/OB **CP**-Crazy Pineapple **H.O.R.S.E.**-Hold'em, Omaha Eight-or-Better, Razz, Seven-Card Stud, Seven-Card Stud Eight-or-Better **R.O.S.E.**-Razz, Omaha Eight-or-Better, Seven-Card Stud, Seven-Card Stud Eight-or-Better
KO-Knock Out or Bounty **LH**-Limit Hold'em **MIX**-Mixed Games **MP**-Mexican Poker **NLH**-No-Limit Hold'em
O H/L-Omaha Eight-or-Better **PLO**-Pot-Limit Omaha **RB**-Rebuy **SH/L**-Seven-Card Stud Eight-or-Better **SLH**-Spread-Limit Hold'em

CALIFORNIA

GRATON - ROHNERT PARK

MONDAY

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

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

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

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

WEDNESDAY

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

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TUESDAY

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WEDNESDAY

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

THURSDAY

10:00 a.m. NLH, \$155 KO \$25

FRIDAY

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

SATURDAY

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

SUNDAY

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

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WEDNESDAY
12:00 p.m. NLH, \$100
FRIDAY
12:00 p.m. NLH, \$200
SUNDAY
12:00 p.m. NLH, \$200

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

OHIO

RESERVE POKER ROOM- TOLEDO

MONDAY
6:00 p.m. NLH, \$85 AO \$20
TUESDAY
6:00 p.m. NLH, \$55 AO \$20
WEDNESDAY
6:00 p.m. NLH, \$65 AO \$30 (\$5K Guarantee)
FRIDAY
6:00 p.m. NLH, \$0 AO \$20 (\$4K Gurantee)
SATURDAY
3:00 p.m. NLH, \$130 RB \$100 AO \$40 (\$10K Guarantee)
SUNDAY
1:00 p.m. NLH, \$100 AO \$20

OREGON

WILDHORSE - PENDLETON

TUESDAY
6:30 p.m. NLH, \$70
THURSDAY
6:30 p.m. NLH, \$70
FRIDAY
6:30 p.m. NLH, \$125
SATURDAY
1:00 p.m. NLH, \$125
SUNDAY
1:00 p.m. NLH, \$70



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

Air - A bad hand with little to no value.

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

Backdoor - A draw needing two streets to complete.

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

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

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

Blocker - Holding one of your opponent's outs.

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

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

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

Broadway - A straight to the ace.

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

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

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

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

Chop - A split of the pot.

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

Collusion - Working with another player to cheat.

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

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

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

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

Drawing Dead - When your hand can no longer win.

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

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

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

Equity - The mathematical expected value of your hand.

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

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

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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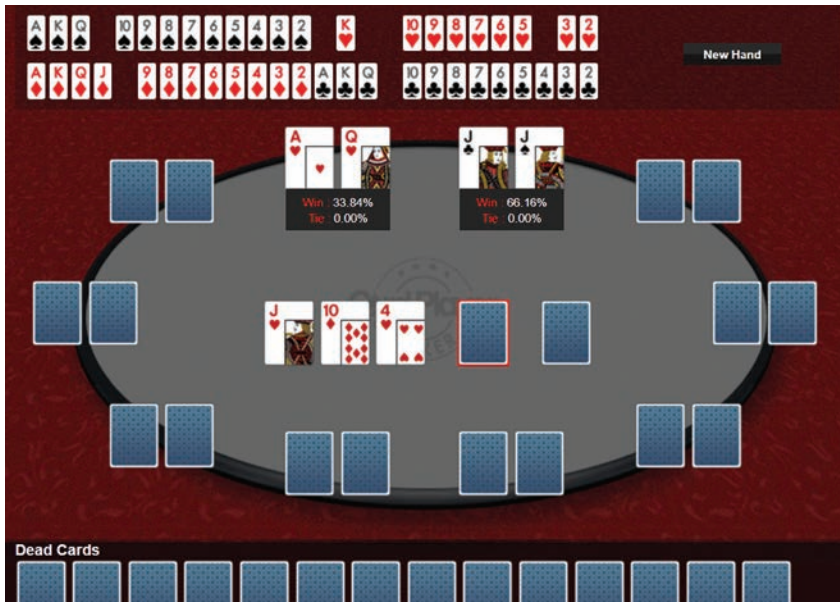
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CALCULATING OUTS

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

HAND MATCHUPS

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



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You are eight-handed in a \$1,000 tournament, sitting with 87,000 at blinds of 1,500-3,000. The lojack raises to 6,000 and the cutoff calls. Everyone else folds to you in the big blind with 10♠ 8♣.

Question 1: Should you fold, call, raise to 24,000, or go all-in?

Answer: While 10-8 offsuit is not amazing, it is still good enough to call due to your excellent pot odds, even multi-way.

The flop comes K♦ 7♣ 5♦. Everyone checks, and the turn is 6♦.

Question 2: Should you check, bet 10,000, bet 20,000, or bet 30,000?

Answer: Since your opponents checked on the flop, it is somewhat safe to assume that neither of them have top pair or a flush. Since you would check with your entire range on the flop, you are not capped due to having many potential flushes and straights in your range.

Additionally, your hand has a draw and no showdown value, allowing you to bet small and fold if you get raised. Be prepared for your opponents to call with lots of marginal made hands and draws, which you will be able to bluff out on various rivers.

Only the cutoff calls, and the river is the J♠.

Question 3: Should you check, bet 20,000, bet 40,000, or go all-in?

Answer: The cutoff will usually not have many strong hands in this spot unless they spiked a set on the turn or river. They could have a straight, but your eight blocker makes that less likely. To give you the best chance of making a jack or potentially a king fold, you need to bet large, so go all-in.

You go all-in and your opponent quickly folds, awarding you a nice pot. ♠



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