

# Card Player THE POKER AUTHORITY

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Vol. 38/No. 20  
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**PLUS**

**HOW A POKER GAME  
HELPED KICKSTART THE  
LEGAL CANNABIS INDUSTRY**  
.....

**JESSE LONIS CONTINUES  
TO SHINE IN ONYX HIGH  
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.....

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**Fall**  
**WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO**  
**POKER**  
**ROUND UP**

**RAKE IN THE WINNINGS**  
**NOVEMBER 6-16**

**\$20,000** ADDED MONEY

Date	Day	Start Time	Event Name	Buy-In	Entry Fee	Added Money	Starting Chips	#Bonus Chips
11/6/25 SS #1	Thursday	6pm	Super Satellite	\$100	\$15	-	7,000	3,000
11/7/25 Event #1	Friday	11am	No Limit Hold'em	\$200	\$20	\$1,000	15,000	5,000
11/8/25 Event #2	Saturday	11am	No Limit Hold'em	*\$400	\$40	\$4,000	25,000	5,000
11/9/25 Event #3	Sunday	11am	No Limit Hold'em	\$200	\$20	\$1,000	15,000	5,000
11/9/25 SS #2	Sunday	6pm	Super Satellite	\$100	\$15	-	7,000	3,000
11/10/25 Event #4	Monday	11am	Limit Omaha Hi/Low 8	\$200	\$20	\$1,000	15,000	5,000
11/10/25 Event #5 - Turbo	Monday	6pm	No Limit Hold'em	\$200	\$20	\$1,000	10,000	5,000
11/11/25 Event #6	Tuesday	11am	HEROS	\$200	\$20	\$1,000	15,000	5,000
11/11/25 SS #3	Tuesday	6pm	Super Satellite	\$100	\$15	-	7,000	3,000
11/12/25 Event #7 - Seniors 50+	Wednesday	11am	No Limit Hold'em	\$200	\$20	\$1,000	15,000	5,000
11/12/25 SS #4	Wednesday	6pm	Super Satellite	\$100	\$15	-	7,000	3,000
11/13/25 Event #8	Thursday	11am	No Limit Hold'em	*\$400	\$40	\$4,000	25,000	5,000
11/13/25 SS #5	Thursday	6pm	Super Satellite	\$100	\$15	-	7,000	3,000
11/14/25 Event #9	Friday	11am	No Limit Hold'em	\$300	\$30	\$1,000	20,000	5,000
11/14/25 SS #6	Friday	6pm	Super Satellite	\$100	\$15	-	7,000	3,000
11/15/25 Event #10 - Day 1	Saturday	11am	No Limit Hold'em	\$500	\$50	\$5,000	25,000	5,000
11/16/25 Event #10 - Day 2	Sunday	11am	No Limit Hold'em	-	-	-	-	-

\*\$400 events will have 40-minute rounds and will be a two-day event. • Final table will restart following day at 1pm. • \$500 event is a two-day event with 60-minute rounds. • Play for day 1 of Event #10 will end after money bubble and restart at 11am on November 16. • All Super Satellites are for the \$500 Main Event only. • One re-entry allowed for all tournaments. • #Bonus chips are \$10 and distributed into dealer tip pool. • 5% of prize pool withheld for dealer and staff gratuity. • All pre-registered stacks will be in play at the start of the event. • Daily single table satellites begin November 7, 2025.

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# CASH GAME KING ANDREW ROBL WINS POKERGO'S CASH OF THE TITANS III

By Steve Schult



Andrew Robl

There are few people more synonymous with high-stakes poker than Andrew Robl. The veteran poker pro has \$5.6 million in tournament cashes, almost all of which is comprised of events with buy-ins of \$10,000 or more. The Michigan native is a fixture of the biggest cash games, and his \$5.8 million in profit on televised and live streamed games is the most all time according to HighRoll Poker tracker.

At least, it was, until Dan 'Jungleman' Cates tore apart the record book at the *Onyx Poker Series* in Cyprus. (pg. 22)

Thus, it should come as no surprise that Robl won nearly \$900,000 and his second *Cash of the Titans* title in August at the PokerGO studio on the Las Vegas Strip.

There have been three *Cash of the Titans* competitions overall, and Robl was in contention for the title all three times. In February 2023, Robl netted nearly \$1.8 million to win the first running. At the end of 2024, Robl played a nearly \$500,000 pot against Kristen Foxen on the final hand which would have given him his second title. He didn't have to wait long for his redemption.

In the most recent iteration of the PokerGO event, Robl used a strong third day to win the competition. He netted \$573,200 worth of profit, which came with an additional \$300,000 payout for the title.

*Cash of the Titans* features a hybrid format that combines a cash game with a tournament. It's technically a cash game where players are playing for real money, but there are escalating blinds.

## The Rules

The competition features a three-day cash game with six, two-hour levels. The blinds start at \$200-\$300 with a \$300 big blind ante and rise gradually to \$500-\$1,000 with a \$1,000 big blind ante in the sixth level.

There is a \$100,000 minimum buy-in, but players have two rebuy chips that can be used at any time. Once a player loses \$300,000 total, they are eliminated from the game.

There are \$525,000 worth of bonuses up for grabs funded by an additional \$75,000 from each player. The day 1 winner gets a \$75,000 bonus, the day 2 leader gets a \$150,000 bonus, and the overall winner after day 3 gets \$300,000.

But ultimately, it's the players that set the rules, and these guys wanted more action. With chips flying into the middle, everyone agreed to up the rebuy cap to seven.

## The Action

During the second level of the opening day, Andrew 'Ace' Pacheco was already all in preflop for \$142,000 from the small blind against Robl on the button.



The Lineup



Alan Keating



Justin Gavri



Shawn Madden

Pachecho tabled 10♥ 10♦ but was in bad shape against Robl's Q♠ Q♥. The board ran out clean for Robl and he scooped the pot to move over \$600,000. Pacheco was only in for two bullets at that point, but he looked around the table at his competition and opted to save his rebuys and bow out from the tournament with a \$200,000 loss.

The big pot meant that Robl was on the brink of winning the day 1 bonus, but Keating won a \$534,600 pot on the penultimate hand of the day to seize the lead.

After several limps, Justin Gavri raised to \$14,000 out of the small blind with Q♣ J♣. All the limpers folded except for Keating, who called on the button with 10♣ 7♥. The flop was Q♠ 10♦ 7♣ and Gavri bet \$15,000 with top pair. Keating raised to \$45,000 with his bottom two pair, and Gavri moved all in for \$253,000. Keating called and held on the 5♥ and 3♣ runoff to overtake Robl's profit margin by just \$5,600.

Robl netted \$219,000, but Keating's stack jumped by \$224,600 to edge out Robl for the bonus.

It was more of the same on day 2. Keating and Robl once again led the way, with two more players in Kirk Brown and Darin Feinstein hitting the rail and calling it quits. Keating did most of the damage, ending the day up \$685,900 to net the \$150,000 bonus, while Robl added another six-figure profit to bring his two-day total

to \$362,200.

Meanwhile, the only two other players left at the table were also in the black, with Gavri and Shawn Madden sitting on profit in the low six-figures.

The title was Keating's for the taking, but a rough start to day 3 saw him lose most of his profits, allowing Madden to enter the race for the overall title. Madden was all in for \$162,000 with A♠ K♠ on a flop of A♦ Q♦ J♣ against Keating's K♦ 4♦. Keating needed a diamond to scoop and a 10 to chop, but the turn and river were bricks, giving Madden a huge double up and a small chance at the overall title. Even Gavri momentarily came from behind, making it a four-player race.

The final 60 minutes of the session belonged to Robl, however. He gradually chipped up, moved over the \$1 million mark and then hammered his opponents with relentless pressure to finish the day with nearly \$1.3 million in front of him, having bought in for a total of \$700,000. It was just enough to make him the overall winner and nab the \$300,000 bonus.

**Final Profit**

- Andrew Robl – \$573,200 + \$300,000 bonus
- Alan Keating – \$335,800 + \$225,000 in bonuses
- Shawn Madden – \$249,200
- Justin Gavri – \$128,700

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## NEWS FROM THE GAMBLING WORLD

## SWEEPSTAKES CASINO PLATFORMS EXIT CERTAIN MARKETS, GAIN TRIBAL ALLY IN CALIFORNIA

By Sean Chaffin

August was a rocky month for sweepstakes casino operators.

One of the largest online gambling markets in the U.S. gave sweepstakes casinos the boot, and one major sweeps company exited Canada entirely. There was one silver lining in California, despite potential legislation to ban sweeps gaming. One sweepstakes casino operator reached a partnership agreement with a California tribe.

New Jersey advocates of the ban marketed the move as a way to protect the state's lucrative online casino industry. Initially, legislators wanted to integrate sweepstakes operators into the overarching legal landscape. However, that changed as opinion shifted more towards a complete ban.

"We will not allow bad actors to exploit legal loopholes at the expense of consumers," Sen. John Burzichelli said. "This bill will ensure that our laws are clear, our penalties are stronger, and that we have the tools necessary to shut down illegal sweepstakes gambling operators before they can cause further harm."

Garden State poker players have plenty of regulated online options in the state. However, they will lose access to Global Poker and ClubWPT Gold.

### VGW Holdings Gets Partner In California, But Leaves Canada

The ownership group of Global Poker, VGW Holdings made a couple of big moves shortly after New Jersey gave it the boot.

First, the company inked a partnership with the Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation of the Cortina Rancheria tribe in Colusa County, California. The tribe will use VGW to operate free-to-play online social games, which includes sweepstakes promotions.

"We are delighted to enter into this partnership with KEDA and look forward to working together to ensure economic opportunities well into the future," VGW founder and CEO Laurence Escalante said. "We've operated in North America for more than a decade, creating not only great games, user experiences and entertainment, but ensuring this is done safely, responsibly and at the highest level of standards- in line with our core values of 'We do what's right.'"

The deal comes as Golden State legislators consider a ban on sweepstakes operators. California's AB 831 would prohibit sweeps operators and suppliers from doing business in the state. Additionally, it prevents celebrities from endorsing these platforms.

But VGW's new partner doesn't support the legislation. The tribe is critical of the bill and its potential effects on tribal groups in the state.

"This bill lacks unanimous support among California tribes, has advanced without meaningful consultation with many of us, and threatens our inherent right to create legitimate revenue streams to support our people," said KEDA CEO Eric Wright in a letter to the California Senate Appropriations Committee.

Tribes are a major stakeholder in the California gambling



landscape. During the recent attempts at California sports betting legalization, the tribes were not happy with the proposals. Consequently, they singlehandedly torpedoed the efforts.

In the Golden State, tribes have exclusivity over casino gaming. As a result, the state's politicians typically take their opinions on the subject very seriously.

"For tribes like ours – far from high-traffic tourism corridors – geography has always limited traditional economic development. Large, well-established gaming tribes already benefit from these geographic advantages and decades of success. It is self-serving for them to advocate for policies that restrict emerging digital commerce opportunities for others, effectively holding smaller and less-advantaged tribes hostage to their location."

A week after nailing down a California partnership, VGW Holdings sent emails to its Canadian customers informing them that its platforms are pulling out of the country.

VGW will completely exit the Canadian market by Oct. 23. In addition to Global Poker, VGW operates several online casino platforms, the most famous of which is Chumba Casino. Players will have until the October date to redeem any sweeps coins in their account.

But unlike VGW's New Jersey exit, leaving Canada wasn't forced. According to a spokesperson for VGW, it was a "strategic, isolated" decision.

"We can confirm that following careful consideration, we've informed players of a decision to phase out our brands that offer products in Canada," the company representative told *CGB*. "We understand this is an adjustment after many years and our valued Canadian players may be disappointed. This decision wasn't taken lightly, and our focus is on ensuring players are fully informed about the changes, and that this transition is as smooth as possible."

The Australian-based company said the Canadian segment of the business is small and it wants to focus on what's left of its U.S.-facing operations. ♠

## PHIL HELLMUTH LAUNCHES SPORTS BETTING SHOW WITH OTHER POKER PROS

By Sean Chaffin

A trio of poker greats is the latest addition to VSiN (Vegas Sports and Information Network) roster.

Phil Hellmuth, along with Mike Matusow and Brandon Cantu, launched a new sports betting podcast dubbed *Fade Us Sports*. Between the three players, they own a combined 23 *World Series of Poker* bracelets and \$50 million in tournament winnings.

David Woodley joins the group as a fourth host. The sports media executive has something of a poker pedigree in his own right, with four *WSOP Circuit* victories.

The show gives the players the opportunity to talk about something besides poker, namely their insights on sports betting. The weekly podcast kicked off at the end of August, and broadcast episodes live from the VSiN studio at Circa Resorts Casino in Downtown Las Vegas.

"Fade Us captures the conversations every bettor has with friends on game day," Hellmuth said. "Partnering with VSiN is a natural fit, pairing our everyman perspective with the sharp insights of the industry's true experts. Our show is built on the same banter and strategy talks that happen in the living rooms and sportsbooks everywhere. VSiN is the perfect home, connecting everyday bettors with the best minds in the game."

Hellmuth, Matusow, and Cantu aren't strangers to sports betting. They regularly publicize their picks on social media



throughout the NFL season.

VSiN said the four hosts will apply their "championship mindset" and "sharp perspectives" to sports betting. That includes NFL breakdowns, sharing strategies for finding an edge, and delivering insider stories from poker's biggest stages.

Additionally, the crew will offer their survivor strategies for the upcoming week. They'll give an inside look at how seasoned pros and insiders approach the popular betting contest.

"This new podcast represents a collection of some of the greatest minds in the history of gambling, and we're thrilled to add this title to our network of premier sports betting podcasts," said VSiN's President and Chief Business Officer Brian Musburger. "While they're poker royalty, Phil, Mike, Brandon, and David may not be as well known for their sports betting prowess, but it's clear that they don't like to lose. Every gambler can learn from these guys." ♠

## PHIL IVEY WINS HIGH-STAKES SHOE FLIP FOR KOBE SNEAKERS

By Sean Chaffin

Poker Hall of Famer Phil Ivey recently made an appearance on the popular *Culture Kicks* YouTube channel to sell a pair of game-worn Kobe Bryant sneakers. In true Ivey fashion, he let Lady Luck dictate the final sale price. Ivey would either give the shoes away for free or sell them for \$40,000.

The channel regularly features host Chase Young flipping a coin for the final sale price. The coin flip determines whether he gets a good or bad deal on the item. However, Young doesn't normally gamble for the stakes Ivey is comfortable with.

The 11-time *World Series of Poker* champion and a friend brought a pair of white, yellow, and purple Nikes to Sneaker Con in Las Vegas, where he went to Young's table. The friend referred to himself as "The Broker."

Young asked the duo if they had proof Bryant wore the sneakers in a game. The broker assured Young there was proof and they could verify it once they agreed to numbers. There's also little reason to doubt Ivey, who has been frequently spotted courtside at Los Angeles Lakers games over the years and was a friend and poker foe of former team owner Jerry Buss.

First the broker said they wanted to flip a coin for either \$0 or \$50,000. In other words, if Young won the flip, he



would get the shoes for free. If Ivey won the flip, Young would pay the five-figure sum.

"Welcome to big boy land," Ivey exclaimed.

"I'm not a poker star like you," Young admitted.

Both parties agreed the sneakers were worth between \$20,000-\$25,000. Young countered with a \$0 or \$40,000 flip. Ivey countered with \$45,000 and they agreed on \$42,500.

"I'm not going to argue with you because I want you to eat if you lose," Ivey said. "Otherwise, I'd still be over here negotiating."

"If you win, I'm going to have to wire you that," Young said. "But if I win, I'm taking it for free."

Young flipped the coin and Ivey called "tails" in the air. A couple of onlookers gathered around the coin as it landed and celebrated as they saw tails come up.

"It's Phil Ivey, what did you expect?" said the broker. ♠

# Planet Hollywood Reschedules December WSOP Circuit Series

By Sean Chaffin

There's one less poker tournament option in Las Vegas this December. After seeing an already packed December schedule, organizers of Planet Hollywood's *World Series of Poker Circuit* stop decided to reschedule the series for a later date.

The Caesars-owned property shuttered its original poker room in the aftermath of the pandemic, but debuted a new 23-table poker room last May. The *WSOP Circuit* stop will be the first major tournament series in the new room.

Planet Hollywood hasn't hosted a *Circuit* event since 2019. Upon opening the new room, management announced it would once again host two *WSOP Circuit* stops with the first coming in December 2025.

But there are already several major series running in December, one just down the Las Vegas Strip. The *World Poker Tour* World Championship is at Wynn Las Vegas and the *WSOP Paradise* is running at the same time in the Bahamas. On the opposite side of the Atlantic, the ever-popular *EPT Prague* is sure to draw significant numbers as well.

Thus, Planet Hollywood will move their series to a less congested part of the poker calendar.



Michael Trivett won the last *WSOP Circuit* main event at Planet Hollywood. In November 2019, he netted \$215,943 for winning the highlight of the 16-event schedule.

It's life-changing money for most, but the payouts pale in comparison to the competition in December. The *WSOP Paradise* boasts a \$60 million guarantee for the \$25,000 "super" main event. The *WPT World Championship* features a \$10,400 main event and an \$1,100 *WPT Prime* Championship which are sure to draw thousands of players.

The *WSOP Paradise* stop runs from Dec. 4-18, while the *WPT World Championship* has cards in the air between Dec. 2-22. The Planet Hollywood series was originally scheduled for Dec. 4-16. New dates will be reported when announced. ♠

# FOXWOODS CASINO UNVEILS NEW POKER ROOM

By Sean Chaffin

New England poker players have a new poker venue in an old spot. Foxwoods Resort Casino opened its new poker room on Sept. 9.

During the Moneymaker boom, the tribal casino in southeastern Connecticut was one of the meccas of U.S. poker. The property was a mainstay on the *World Poker Tour*, hosting the *World Poker Finals* until 2011. It was also home to *World Series of Poker Circuit* events.

In March 2006, the room expanded to 114 tables, making it the third-largest poker room in the world. Only the Bicycle and Commerce Casinos in Los Angeles were larger at the time.

But after the pandemic and the growth of other regional poker markets around New England, management reduced the poker room to 54 tables. Additionally, a dwindling player pool saw the 24/7 action become limited to the hours of 9 a.m. – 1 a.m. Sunday through Thursday and until 4 a.m. on Friday and Saturday.

But now, casino officials believe the new room could be the beginning of a "new era for poker."

"From day one, Foxwoods has been about energy, evolution, and putting our guests first," said Foxwoods president and CEO Jason Guyot. "The new poker room is a statement of pace, comfort, and competition – delivering an unrivaled experience for every player."

The card room is situated within the Fox Tower and



features 33 tables and 37 high-definition televisions. The room has slightly fewer tables than the last iteration of the poker room, but it has features previously unavailable. Every seat has a USB port and dealers use the Deckmate2 shufflers. Furthermore, the staff implemented automated sign-up kiosks, and sportsbook kiosks are nearby.

The property offers players a brighter atmosphere with plenty of room between tables in an enclosed area separate from the casino floor. Poker room officials also noted the new venue offers easy access to more convenient parking.

"The expectation of today's players are high, and Foxwoods delivers with next-level technology, elevated amenities, and every convenience imaginable," said senior vice president of gaming operations Bryan Hayes. "This marks an exciting new chapter for poker on the East Coast."

The room also opens an hour earlier and stays open an hour later than the previous schedule. ♠

# INDIA ON THE BRINK OF AN ONLINE POKER BAN

By Sean Chaffin

Real-money online gambling could be coming to an end in India.

The country's upper house of parliament passed a bill in August to end all online gambling after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration deemed it a public health risk. Government officials targeted online gaming as a threat to both Indian families and finances of many in the country.

"There are addiction and withdrawal symptoms," said Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vashnaw. "Many families have been destroyed."

Vashnaw added that it was the government's role to minimize the damage from gambling addiction.

"It is the duty of the government and the parliament to take strict action against social evils, which keep erupting time and again."

The lower house passed the bill earlier in the month. The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill prohibits poker and other online casino games.

The cricket-crazy country also saw fantasy sports competitions catch on recently. However, those contests would end under the law as well. Punishment for violating the law could include fines and up to three years imprisonment. Repeated offenses could enhance the punishment.



The Prime Minister is expected to sign the bill into law, sending shockwaves through the country's online gaming industry. Venture capital firms like Tiger Global and Peak XV Partners estimated the country's online gaming industry could have been worth \$3.6 billion by 2029.

Affected companies have predicted major job losses. Consequently, gaming groups are considering challenging the law to the Supreme Court. ♠

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# CoinPoker Launches 'Creator Squad' With Top Poker Influencers

Ryan Depaulo, Frankie C, And Corey Eyring Lead Online Poker Site's Push Into Creator-Driven Content

By Card Player News Team



CoinPoker is taking a bold step into poker entertainment with the launch of its new Creator Squad, a collaboration featuring three of the game's most dynamic influencers: Ryan Depaulo, Frankie C, and Corey Eyring.

With millions of views across YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, the trio has built massive followings by capturing the excitement, unpredictability, and authenticity of modern poker, and bringing it to a new audience of potential players.

Now, under the CoinPoker banner, they're uniting to redefine how the game is experienced online and beyond.

"We're teaming up with top-tier talent to make poker more entertaining and more authentic than ever before," said John Scanlon, COO at CoinPoker. "The Creator Squad marks a major step in building a creator-powered brand that resonates with today's digital audience."

## Meet The Creators

**Ryan Depaulo** – Known as one of poker's most unfiltered personalities, Depaulo initially made headlines by winning a *WSOP* bracelet while playing from his car in a New Jersey Whole Foods parking lot. His mix of self-deprecating humor, street smarts, and penchant for degen gambling has earned him cult-hero status among fans. Depaulo's YouTube channel has become a hub for poker entertainment, with raw vlogs that capture both the glory and grind of the game.

**Frankie C** – A filmmaker at heart, Frankie has carved out a niche as poker's resident storyteller. His vlogs go beyond hand histories, blending creative visuals, sharp editing, and cinematic flair to highlight the personalities, pressure, and joy behind every session. Frankie's content has helped bridge the gap between casual audiences and hardcore poker fans, making the game feel more approachable.

**Corey Eyring** – A rising star who tells it like it is, Eyring has

quickly gained recognition for bringing an unpolished energy to the high-stakes scene. With an emphasis on the human side of poker, focusing on the adrenaline, tilt, and triumph of the game, Eyring's clips and streams resonate with younger audiences who crave honesty over polish. His growing influence has positioned him as one of the next big names in poker media.

## What Fans Can Expect

By partnering with influencers who live and breathe the game, CoinPoker aims to make poker more accessible, especially to younger audiences who consume the game through digital content rather than traditional broadcasts.

Fans can expect Creator Squad updates across YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and X in the coming weeks.

CoinPoker plans to roll out a wide variety of content from the Creator Squad, including:

- Fresh video formats showcasing online poker globally.
- Behind-the-scenes lifestyle coverage of professional and recreational players.
- Entertainment-driven narratives that spotlight the highs and lows of the game.

## About CoinPoker

CoinPoker hosts more than 100,000 registered players and offers generous promotions, including a 150% welcome bonus up to \$2,000, 33% weekly rakeback, and \$12,000 in daily 4-hour cash game leaderboards.

Since its launch in 2017, CoinPoker has positioned itself as a community-driven online poker platform powered by blockchain technology. The company has consistently emphasized security, transparency, and a player-first philosophy.

The site's flagship events, the *Crypto Series of Online Poker (CSOP)* and the *Cash Game World Championship (CGWC)*, have already attracted thousands of players worldwide. ♠

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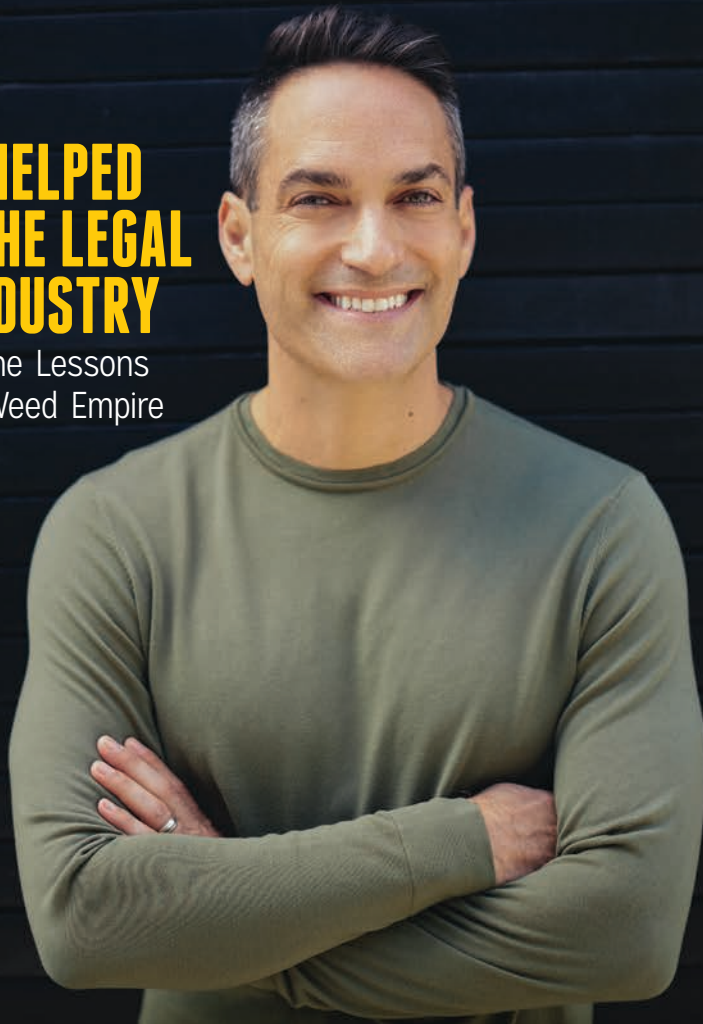
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# HOW POKER HELPED KICKSTART THE LEGAL CANNABIS INDUSTRY

Adam Bierman On The Lessons Learned Building A Weed Empire

By Sean Chaffin



Adam Bierman's new book, *Weed Empire: How I Battled Gangsters, Investment Banks, and the Department of Justice to Build the Cannabis Industry in America*, begins not in the board room, but at the poker table.

Down on his luck, the then-25-year-old's Nissan 350Z had just been repossessed, and he and his girlfriend had just been evicted from their apartment. Bierman decided to head down to the Bicycle Casino, a stop that had become part of his regular routine, hoping some time at the tables could remedy the situation.

"That morning I had extracted every last dollar from my sock drawer, a wad of nearly \$2,500, binding them neatly with a rubber band," Bierman wrote. "I tucked the front pocket and stepped into the unforgiving flow of the fluorescent lights."

"Every bet laid bare my resolve, pocket kings in hand, riding the thin edge between triumph and disaster. A nagging voice taunted me from the back of my mind, wanting me not to go too far, not to lose, not to blow it all. Now heads up, my final adversary pushed all in with a boldness that rattled my confidence. My mind raced – visions of rent payments and empty pockets flickering before my eyes, the fear of returning home a loser. I felt scared, too hesitant to look my pocket kings in the eyes. So, I folded."

The hand seemed to encapsulate Bierman's life up to that point. He'd been called a loser, but had the resolve to shake that mentality and work towards his vision to kickstart the fledgling legal cannabis industry. He just needed the capital to start.

"Poker was always there," he admitted. "I had been playing cards as my main source of income since I officially dropped out of college."

It's a familiar tale in the poker world – university dropout transitioning to full-time rounder. But playing cards proved to be a means to a different end for Bierman. The entrepreneur went on to found MedMen Enterprises with partner Andrew Modlin in 2010, with the company reaching a peak valuation of \$3 billion six years later.

At the height of the business, MedMen operated retail marijuana outlets in California, Nevada, Arizona, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Massachusetts as well as six cultivation facilities. The company went public on the Canadian Stock Exchange in 2018 and was at the forefront of making cannabis a legitimate industry.

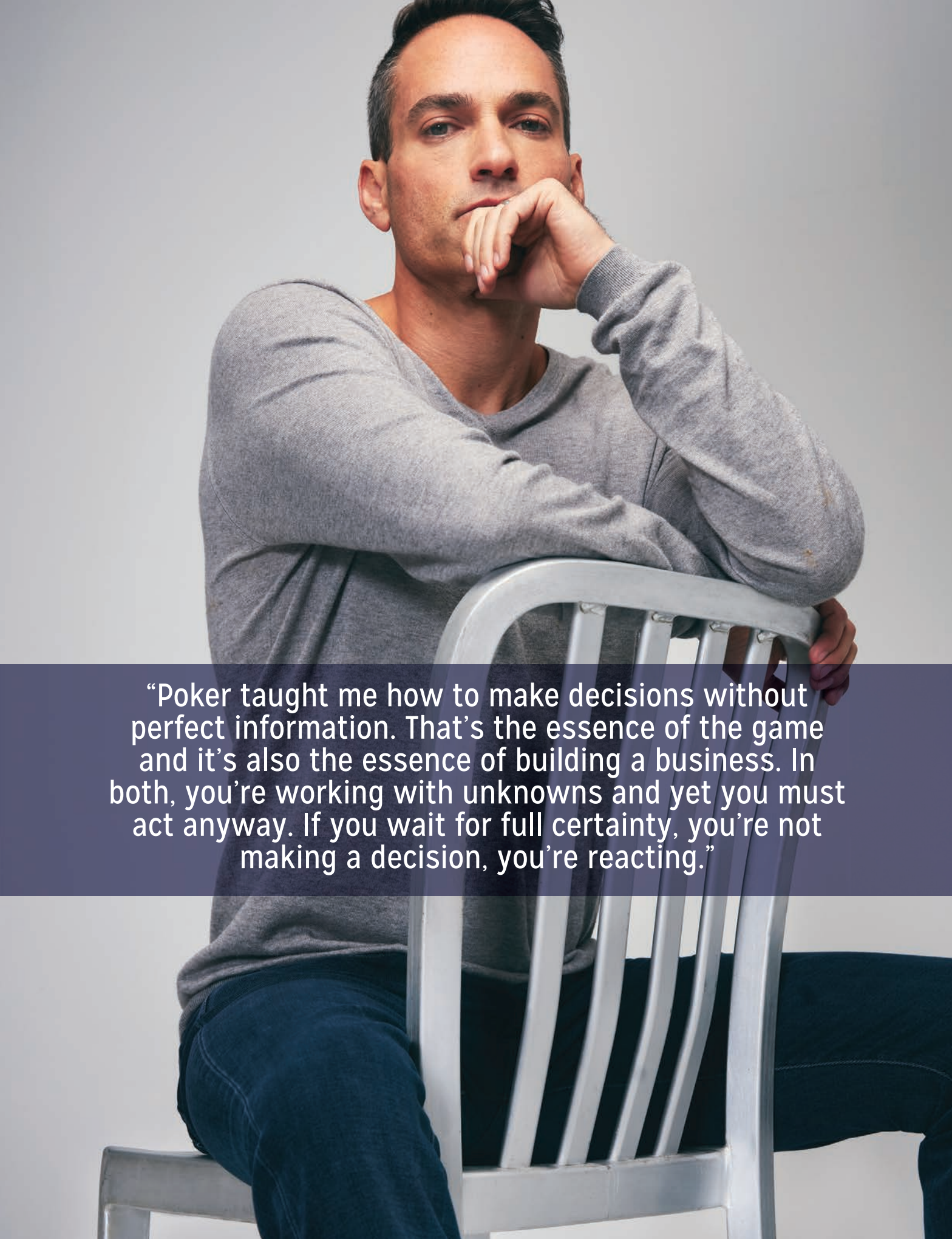
Then everything came crashing down. Bierman left the company in 2020 and MedMen entered bankruptcy proceedings in 2024 before liquidating assets. Despite the downfall of his former company, estimates now peg the size of the U.S. legal cannabis industry at as much as \$44 billion, and Bierman played a major role in that.

Originally from Scottsdale, Arizona, the now 43-year-old is sharing all about growers, dealers, lobbyists, tycoons, and titans of industry. The new book includes stories of safeguarding earnings in shoeboxes, facing off with gangs, and taking on the public markets and justice system. But it all started with a poker game.

**Card Player:** How did you get into poker and how important was the game to funding your startup?

**Adam Bierman:** I was 20 when my dad showed me the game. He had always been a sharp blackjack player, but it was a business opportunity in poker that caught his attention.

He turned on the *Travel Channel* and saw Howard Lederer win a *World Poker Tour* tournament, the first one

A man with short dark hair and a light complexion is sitting on a white wooden chair. He is wearing a grey long-sleeved sweater and dark blue jeans. He has his right hand resting on his chin and cheek, looking directly at the camera with a thoughtful expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. A semi-transparent dark blue banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing white text.

“Poker taught me how to make decisions without perfect information. That’s the essence of the game and it’s also the essence of building a business. In both, you’re working with unknowns and yet you must act anyway. If you wait for full certainty, you’re not making a decision, you’re reacting.”



that used the lipstick camera to reveal players' hole cards. A lightning bolt of inspiration filled my dad in that moment. He just knew there was about to be a "boom."

What started as a business idea quickly became something more. Poker became his business, and then it became something we shared. We started studying the game together — hand histories, strategy discussions, tracking the evolution of the game. I didn't come to poker through gambling. I came to it through curiosity and a sense that something important was unfolding.

**Card Player:** Your father ran a major poker affiliate business during the poker boom of the 2000s.

**Adam Bierman:** Even though he wasn't a poker player at the time, he was indeed a gambler. My dad didn't just see poker. He saw that viewers at home were from then on going to be able to "live" the decisions alongside the players and "feel" like part of the game. He knew this would change everything.

Next thing I know, he's on a plane to Vegas to meet Howard. That meeting sparked everything. They launched a business, Howard became "The Professor of Poker" and my dad became an initial affiliate of Full Tilt. It was a classic moment of spotting opportunity before the crowd.

**Card Player:** What was your poker routine like back in those days before starting your own company?

**Adam Bierman:** Before MedMen became real, I was playing multiple sessions a week — mostly no limit hold'em — at the Bicycle Casino and Commerce. As the business started to grow, the hours I spent grinding decreased, but it never left completely. There were definitely a few moments in the early days when a big session helped cover payroll on a Friday. That's the truth of entrepreneurship sometimes — you do whatever it takes to stay in the game.

**Card Player:** What are some lessons from the poker table that can be applied in business?

**Adam Bierman:** Poker has been my greatest teacher — not just in business, but in life. Poker players commit to the next move, knowing it's based on incomplete information. You act, the next card comes, and you reassess. It's a cycle of decisions, not conclusions.

If you let your commitment on the prior bet/card determine your decision post the next bet/card, you lose. Business

is no different. You can't cling to results, you need to focus on process, execution, and edge. That detachment has been critical in every major decision I've made professionally.

Poker taught me how to make decisions without perfect information. That's the essence of the game and it's also the essence of building a business. In both, you're working with unknowns and yet you must act anyway. If you wait for full certainty, you're not making a decision, you're reacting.

In poker, the right decision doesn't change just because the stakes go up. The pressure increases, sure, but the logic stays the same. That discipline became central to how I operated as I built MedMen — whether we were negotiating licenses, dealing with regulators, or raising capital in an uncertain market. I spent a decade navigating a highly-regulated, constantly shifting space, betting and often semi-bluffing based only on intuition, lived experience, and pattern recognition. Poker certainly hardwired me in preparation for that life.

**Card Player:** You've talked about how the federal crackdown of wide-open international online poker in 2011, known as Black Friday in the industry, had a major impact on your father. What happened and how did that affect your approach with your own company?

**Adam Bierman:** My dad had built a successful business as a Full Tilt Poker affiliate — and made the most of that window. Then Black Friday happened. The industry shut down overnight and everything he had built was suddenly gone.

What struck me wasn't just the loss, but it was how vulnerable the entire ecosystem had been. These companies had scaled massive user bases and revenue streams without securing long-term legitimacy. When the pressure came, they weren't protected.

That experience shaped my approach with MedMen. I knew from the beginning that if cannabis was going to last, it had to be built within the system — by working to change laws, creating real infrastructure, and building a foundation that would hold up under scrutiny. That long-term thinking was directly informed by what I watched happen during Black Friday.

**Card Player:** Are you interested in playing more now that you are no longer running MedMen?

**Adam Bierman:** I'll always love poker. It's part of my wiring. I still think like a poker player every day—even if I'm not sitting at the table. That said, my priorities have shifted. I live in Costa Rica now. My focus is on my family and the new chapters I'm building. High-stakes no-limit hold'em just doesn't fit into that season of life.

But I know myself, and I know I'll eventually find my way back to the felt. It's too fulfilling, too familiar, too much a part of how I process the world to stay away forever.

The last time I played was a \$0.50-\$1 no-limit game with my sons, who are 10 and 12. Watching them think through hands, talk through decisions — that was a special night. Sometimes it's about competition, sometimes it's about connection. But poker will always be there.

**You can find *Weed Empire: How I Battled Gangsters, Investment Banks, and the Department of Justice to Build the Cannabis Industry in America* on Amazon. Follow Bierman on Twitter/X @\_AdamBierman\_.** ♠

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# DAN CATES BAGS LARGEST WIN IN POKER BROADCAST HISTORY

'Jungleman' talks \$14 Million Win In Battle Against Monarch Ossi 'Monarch' Ketola'

By Tim Fiorvanti



Much of poker's most fascinating history happens far from the bright lights of a studio and away from the public eye. Private games for seemingly impossible stakes in far corners of the world have been played to audiences of none. Handshake deals set up games featuring the ultra-wealthy and uber-famous, and can occasionally include some of the best poker players in the world, some you've never heard of and some you have. Stories from the smoky rooms of the past live on only through word of mouth before the line blurs between fact and fable.

There's a reason only a handful of eye-watering seven-figure heads-up matches come to the light of day, even when poker fans are so eager to eat it up. The Corporation against Andy Beal, Doug Polk's match against Daniel Negreanu, and Nik 'Airball' vs. Matt Berkey come to mind. Every once in a while, an enticing detail or two slips out from the shadows, but for some obvious reasons, anonymity in this environment can be currency.

That's why what happened on Aug. 19 in North Cyprus was so tantalizing.

Over the course of more than 12 hours at Onyx Club at Merit Casino, Dan 'jungleman' Cates and Ossi 'Monarch' Ketola played a series of six escalating heads-up matches. Starting at €1 million per player and eventually climbing all the way up to €6 million, Cates and Ketola played the highest stakes poker game ever broadcast.

Cates, long known as a heads-up poker standout, emerged victorious in four of the six matches over Ketola. That included the final three matches with €5 million, €5 million, and €6

million buy-ins, respectively. When Cates' two losses are factored in, as well as the handicaps he offered Ketola along the way, Cates appears to have won about \$14.2 million USD in all.

That makes it the largest confirmed single-day win in poker history. And definitely the largest win and highest stakes of any broadcasted poker match.

Phil Ivey's legendary \$10 million single-day win against Andy Beal was about as close as it comes to Cates' feat for a reported session. As far as the record for biggest televised pot, Cates and Ketola played a handful that eclipsed Tom Dwan's previous record of \$3.1 million from 2023.

## Hungry For Action

Best known as 'Monarch,' Ketola, who hails from Finland, built his fortune in cryptocurrency-focused gambling following a successful esports career. Although relatively unknown in the poker world, Ketola made multiple tournament splashes in *Triton* events in late 2024, with a second-place finish in Monte Carlo that netted him \$2.97 million, and a fifth-place finish in the \$100,000 event at *WSOP Paradise* for another \$1.172 million.

One day prior to this historic Jungleman-Monarch battle, Ketola squared off against high-stakes online regular Kayhan Mokri for \$2 million. After a five-hour battle, Mokri was seven figures richer. Ketola immediately wanted a rematch for \$2.5 million, but Mokri wouldn't accommodate the request, citing an early flight home. Perhaps he really didn't want to lose out on the cost of that flight, or perhaps he was just happy to take his big win and get out of town.

© Onyx Poker - Oleg Novruzov



Ketola was tilted. After losing to Mokri and having any further action stifled, the casino owner fired off a series of social media posts seeking out more high-stakes heads-up action. He threw out challenges to multiple players including Phil Ivey and Paul Phua, and then came an agreement to play Cates on stream the following day.

This was not the first time that Cates and Ketola had squared off. A few weeks prior, in a series of heads-up matches that also included Mokri, and Elias Talvita, Ketola struck the first blow against Cates.

"It came about in Tallinn, [a few weeks prior to Cyprus], when I was in not a great mood and I woke up to a text that said, "Ossi Ketola wants to play you for \$500,000 on a stream."

"I thought to myself that this is probably some online player, some no-limit wizard of some sort, and I just fell asleep. And then someone texted me that I should really play him, so I changed my mood. Eventually, I did play him for €1 million. He played better than I expected, and beat me, which put me in a slump."

A few weeks later, Cates traveled to Cyprus specifically to battle Ketola in a rematch, ignoring all the high-stakes tournament action going on at the same time. (pg. 28)

"The idea was that I was going to get a rematch, which I didn't anticipate," Cates explained. "I had plans already, but I broke them to go play him in Cyprus. It sounded like I was going to get a few matches with him. But the first day I was there, I didn't end up playing him at all." (Ketola instead played with Kayhan Mokri.) "The second day, I did get to play, once again for €1 million."

### The Rematch Begins

With introductions from broadcasters Steve Warburton and Jordan Westmorland, the first match kicked off in the early afternoon. Each player started with €1 million in chips, and blinds of €5,000-€10,000.

The first match lasted just 19 hands, with almost all of the chips in play all-in preflop. Ketola's A♦ K♠ ran into Cates' pocket kings and couldn't catch up, on a board of 8♠ 7♣ 2♣ 10♥ Q♥.

"I actually won that first match straight away, which was just one big cooler. Then we played again, and he won."

Ketola struck back on hand 42 of the second match. His K♥ J♠ won a flip against a short-stacked Cates' pocket deuces by flopping a straight on a Q♦ 10♦ 9♦ 4♦ 3♥ board. After a brief break in the streaming action, it was on to round 3.

"Now that he was up a fair bit, he decided he wanted to play a €3 million match," Cates recalled. "Maybe he was confident. Maybe he felt like gambling. But I was not turning that down. I wanted to make money for myself and my friends. I also like to do things with quite a big impact."

On hand 46 of the third match, fans enjoyed an all-timer of a hand. With blinds of €15,000-€30,000, Ketola opened to

€100,000 from the button with K♠ 6♥, and Cates called with A♦ 10♣. The 6♠ 6♣ 6♦ flop immediately gave Ketola quads. Cates checked, Ketola bet €75,000, and Cates called.

The turn was a disaster for Cates in the 10♦. Cates checked, Ketola bet €150,000, and Cates check-raised to €400,000. Ketola just called, and the A♠ hit the river, further improving Cates' hand. Cates bet all but one €5,000 chip of Ketola's stack, and Ketola decided to pause for a few moments before shoving with quads.

Even after that double-up, the stacks were still even. But Ketola picked up the lead with two-pair over two-pair, and then put Cates away on hand 69. The chips got in on a Q♦ 9♠ 6♠ flop, and Ketola's pocket kings held off Cates' Q♣ J♥, with a 5♥ turn and 10♦ river.

"I played that match, and to my misfortune, I lost again. I was actually feeling very sad, and it seemed he was sympathetic," Cates admitted.

### Raising The Stakes Again

"Guess what? He decided the stakes were still too small and wanted to play for €5 million," Cates said. "My mood was back, because I could win my money back. At this point, the tables were turning in a few different ways. I figured out a few things about his game. I had a few different ideas or theories, and it turned out that exploitatively speaking, things were really turning in my direction. He also hadn't slept, which was a huge disadvantage for him. It makes it very hard to readjust and figure out things if you haven't slept."

Cates pulled off a significant bluff on hand 28 of the match, turning a busted flush draw into a win with three barrels. He raised to €125,000 with 5♦ 3♦ and Ketola three-bet to €450,000 with A♣ 8♣. Cates called and the flop came down A♥ Q♦ 10♦. Ketola checked and Cates bet €400,000. Ketola called and the turn was the 9♣.

Ketola checked again and Cates bet €700,000. Ketola called. The river was the 7♣ and Ketola checked for a final time. Cates put him all in for his last €1,800,000, and Ketola opted to fold, leaving himself short.

It took until hand 51, but Cates put away match 4 when his A♦ Q♠ beat Ketola's A♠ 8♠.

"Break, then maybe a rematch," Ketola said, exiting the stage. There would be a round 5.

At this point, Cates held a relatively small edge in the profit column, and both players decided to run it back at €5 million clip for their fifth match. Within five hands, Cates had opened up a 3-to-2 lead, and it was well over 2-to-1 through just 11 hands. Ketola made it to hand 40 of the match, but never really seemed to have a chance. He shoved 14 big blinds with 9♠ 7♦, and Cates flopped him completely dead with Q♦ J♣ as it ran out Q♠ Q♥ 2♦ 6♣ 7♣.

As opposed to the breaks following previous matches, both players remained at the table. Each wore a look of exhaustion,

but neither was ready to stop. Ketola spent 20 minutes pushing for match six to start, while Cates tried to wrap up some pressing business on his phone with the backers in his corner. Finally, they reached terms. A €6 million match kicked off more than nine hours after the first card of the day went into the air.

“He was steamed and wanted to run it back for another €5 million, and I beat him again, which I definitely didn’t expect. And then he wanted to run it back, one final time, for €6 million. Although that last match started off bad, and got worse at some point, in the end, it ended up a lot better and I won the most ever on a live stream.”

### Making History

Just nine hands into the sixth match, Cates and Ketola went to war. With blinds of €30,000-€60,000, Cates opened to €150,000 with A♥ 8♣ and Ketola three-bet to €600,000 with A♣ J♣. Cates responded with a four-bet to €1.4 million, and Ketola called.

Both players checked the Q♠ 7♠ 5♣ flop, and the turn was the J♠. Ketola checked, Cates bet €1.2 million, and Ketola called. The A♦ landed on the river, and Ketola open-shoved. With his eyelids hanging heavy, Cates put his hand to his forehead. Then a waiter delivered food to the table, offering a moment of levity. After a quick bite, Cates threw away his top pair, and the commentary team was left in stitches.

“This man is facing down a river jam in the biggest pot in televised poker history, and he just snap chomps on a breadstick and then makes the fold.”

Five hands later, Cates made a royal flush in clubs, taking down another pot and signifying to the poker world that nothing was going to stop him from putting Ketola away. The theme of the final match was similar to the previous clashes. When he needed to dig down deep, Cates found some incredible bluffs. And when he was beat, as he was in a straight-over-straight spot midway through match 6, Cates managed to lose less than expected.

Cates eventually managed to whittle Ketola down to crumbs. On hand 82, the final hand of the night, Ketola shoved with Q♥ 3♥ and Cates called with A♦ 8♥. The board ran out A♣ J♥ 8♠ 7♣ 3♠, and Cates secured his historic victory.

After getting the action he was searching for two days, the cards were unkind to Ketola. He was happy to call it a day after six matches, more than 12 hours after kicking everything off.

“Enjoy the donation,” said Ketola. “I go to sleep.”

### A Lot On Cates’ Plate

Cates has a habit of garnering attention in the poker world, whether he seeks it out or not. But for all of the high-stakes poker he’s played over the last two decades, the Maryland native has gotten a lot more selective about where he spends his time, especially when it comes to tournaments. There were the back-to-back *WSOP Poker Players Championship* wins in 2021 and 2022 for \$954,020 and \$1,449,103, respectively, and he’s always down to join in on Phil Hellmuth’s annual over-the-top main event entrance, but the days of Cates grinding an entire series are long gone.

He will still occasionally dip his toe into the high roller waters, if his jet setting lifestyle happens to take him to the area, like when he took third in the 2023 *Triton London* main



event for \$1,940,000. He only has two tournament cashes in 2025, but they were significant. In March, he finished runner up in the *Triton Jeju* main event for a career-best \$3,528,000. Then in May, he added a fourth-place score worth \$875,000 at *Triton Montenegro*.

Unless a big opportunity crosses his path, such as his match with Ketola, the 35-year-old prefers to focus his energy these days on content creation. His YouTube channel, centered around his interview series *Winning the Game of Life*, has become one of his most passionate pursuits. In 2026, Cates will

also publish *POKERWORLD*, a book co-written with Rick Maese, a longtime sportswriter for the *Washington Post*.

Amidst his busy schedule, Cates sat down with *Card Player* to talk about his big win and get a closer look into his increasingly busy life.

**Tim Fiorvanti:** Poker-wise, are there highlights from the match that stick out for you?

**Dan Cates:** The big bluff with the 5♦ 3♦, of course. A fold with a pair of aces for like 60% pot is not an easy fold against that kind of line. There were a couple other times where I just happened to run pretty well against him. There was a time where I raised with top pair and he folded two-pair. That was very lucky. I thought I had the best hand. And if I think I have the best hand I’m going to raise big.

There were also highlights on his end too. He bluffed me with 6-4 offsuit in a really tough spot. What he did was actually close to equilibrium. He ran a couple other bluffs that were successful. A couple key coolers on his end, and some difficult situations. Maybe those hands like pocket kings vs. A♦ K♠ are highlights to some people, too.

**Fiorvanti:** You put out a public message letting people know that you had other investors. Did you feel it was important to be transparent?

**Cates:** It was fairly obvious that other people had a big piece of my action. I guess if I had a net worth of \$50 million-plus, I would do such a thing on my own. It matters a bit. He knew, and so did the other people betting big on the side.

**Fiorvanti:** Do you imagine future heads-up clashes like this, against Monarch or other opponents?

**Cates:** I think there will be a couple more big heads-up matches in the future, against him and other players. I think for the true best in the world, it’s going to be on the smaller end. Looking forward to it and letting others watch the matches. I think poker should be a spectator sport, for a lot of different reasons.

**Fiorvanti:** Speaking of playing big, your last couple tournament results came back in the spring, cashing big in *Triton* events in Montenegro and Jeju. What does it take to motivate you to play tournaments these days?

**Cates:** Some of it is about obligation. I want to be loyal to my brands that I promote. Some of it is about EV (expected value), too. I think in general, people overestimate their EV in these tournaments. I have been a little unimpressed by the competition, to be honest.

Sadly, I don’t find these high rollers to be very much fun. Not only is everyone very serious, which is pointless, but they’re incredibly slow to the point where it’s tedious. Maybe other people’s minds work differently from mine.

But it’s too ridiculous. And then people do these things to





slow down the game even more, like waiting until it's their turn to look at the cards. Are they getting tells from watching people before that? Can they not just look at their cards and look at other people? 18 hands an hour, it's not fun. It would be fun if it was much faster.

**Fiorvanti:** Making things in poker more fun seems to be something you get into, especially with some of the costumes and personas you've adopted over the last few years.

**Cates:** It's a bunch of things. I just think of whatever might be funny for the situation. Ideally, I try to make things that are in contrast, or on a theme, or just bring some props with me that will add some extra flair to the table. But I can also be shy sometimes, too. I don't want to irritate people too much, although perhaps irritating them because they irritate you by being boring and slow is fair game.

**Fiorvanti:** It seems like you're putting a lot of that excitement and energy into your YouTube channel as well.

**Cates:** My incentive for starting my channel and going into more of the content creation route is because I believe in the possibility of influencing others towards social change. It's also quite interesting. I believe that I have views on things that lead to better possibilities of reality.

At some point I realized that my pursuit of money, especially through poker, was reduced essentially to running on a treadmill and waiting for a paycheck. I had to do something else entirely, or quite a bit different anyway, in order to start creating more social impact. You can inspire people. You can put out your views. You can maybe build something scalable, like Mr. Beast, who does an amazing job with some of his crazy ambitious projects.

**Fiorvanti:** It's clear that you put a lot of thought, a lot of effort into your opportunity, your position, your financial standing, and you're trying to give back to sort of shape the poker world moving forward. I'm curious what you think the future of poker looks like.

**Cates:** I can say that I want poker to be like this or that, but if the other people in the audience don't want it to be like that, well, their opinion outweighs mine. For example, when it comes to recording new content, people have tried all kinds of variations on poker. But I've found that just a classic version of poker content, and interviews, are what people want to see. I don't think they want to see people just being boring as they play poker.

I believe in data driven models above anything else. Whatever works, works. So as far as what's good for TV and all that, I think all these poker players are very shortsighted if they do not consider what the audience wants, because this is one of the steps towards sportifying poker.

There are some behaviors in poker that are certainly not sportified, and very predatory, like leaving or only playing whenever VIPs are in the game. I get that people want to

play with VIPs and need that sustenance to some level. But if someone was only bum hunting, that's not a good situation. To be a professional poker player, if it is to be considered a sport, requires people to have a certain competitive dynamic.

So, to answer your question more precisely, I would like to optimize what we all collectively do towards what the audience wants, for our own collective benefit. If poker is more fun to watch, you're going to get more people that want to play it that are better for the game. That expands the horizons.

I also think that it's very useful for players to invent more variations of poker. With cash games, the squid game, for example, was very beneficial towards a lot of people wanting to play it. Although I'm starting to think the squid game isn't as good as I imagined for me, because it's a little bit tougher than I thought.

**Fiorvanti:** In terms of growing the game beyond its current boundaries, you have a book coming out with Rick Maese of the *Washington Post*, who wrote a story about you a couple of years ago. How did that come together?

**Cates:** Back in 2023, I did a mini press tour near my hometown in DC, including traveling to *ABC* studios for an interview for *Good Morning Washington*. I also sat down with Rick for a lengthy interview in the *Washington Post* headquarters.


As it turned out, that article was one of the most read on their site that year. The piece garnered a lot of attention from readers and literary agents. I was already planning to write a book but that just sped up the process.

The book will be an extension of my interview in *The Post* and share how poker opened the door to a big world and big life filled with meaning and purpose.

I believe that if I can show people the ways in which I myself changed, and saw that my ways of thinking were undermined by life experiences, that this will lead people to a lot of higher possibilities in their life. I hope that will expand the brand of poker as well, because I can show a bit of a doorway towards hope for many people in my situation, be it with autism or some other condition.

It's valuable to see things from another person's point of view. Poker is like the training school. There's a lot of different principles, such as the idea that there's emotional buys for things, similar to actual currencies. It's an important lesson that I learned. You want to be the source of where positive feelings come from. It's not that different from attending a party or dealing with people in your everyday life. There are a lot of huge lessons in there, like the value of making a good move, that can be more helpful than waiting to play something perfectly.

**Follow Dan Cates on Twitter/X @junglemandan and check out his YouTube channel @JunglemanDanCates. You can learn more about the Phenom Poker and GTO Wizard ambassador at his website [www.EnterTheJungleverse.com](http://www.EnterTheJungleverse.com).** ♠

A man with dark, curly hair and a light beard is standing on a balcony at night. He is wearing a dark suit jacket with a vibrant floral pattern in shades of red, yellow, and green. He is looking off to the side with a serious expression. In the background, a tall skyscraper is illuminated with bright orange and red lights. The building has a distinctive curved, ribbed structure on its left side. Below the skyscraper, there are signs for 'Raffles City' and '屏启万象·AI共生'. The scene is set against a dark night sky with some distant city lights visible in the distance.

“I think all these poker players are very shortsighted if they do not consider what the audience wants, because this is one of the steps towards sportifying poker. I would like to optimize what we all collectively do towards what the audience wants, for our own collective benefit. If poker is more fun to watch, you’re going to get more people that want to play it that are better for the game.”

# ONYX HIGH ROLLER SERIES DEBUT SMASHES EXPECTATIONS WITH MORE THAN \$37 MILLION IN PRIZE MONEY

Jesse Lonis And Other Top Pros Shine At Merit Poker In Cyprus

By Erik Fast



Jesse Lonis

Poker has been in its high roller era for more than a decade now. While the growth of the nosebleed-stakes tournaments began with a selection of a few such events amid larger series, recent years have seen the proliferation of dedicated festivals and tours catering to high-buy-in specialists.

The *Onyx Super High Roller Series* is the latest addition to the high roller landscape. It ran a short weekend series in June before launching its first full-fledged series in August. Organizers held 11 events from Aug. 9-21 at Merit Poker inside the Crystal Cove Hotel in Northern Cyprus. The 11 tournaments combined for \$19 million in guaranteed prize pools.

That amount was nearly doubled after \$37.4 million was ultimately paid out during the festival, which also played host to a series of high-stakes heads-up cash game matches that captivated the poker world (pg. 22). Let's dive into all the exciting results from the inaugural Onyx series.

### Jesse Lonis Stays Hot

**Jesse Lonis** is dominating the live tournament circuit in 2025. This year, the two-time bracelet winner has accrued seven POY-qualified titles across 21 final table finishes, cashing for more than \$8.8 million in those events alone.

The 29-year-old poker pro from Little Falls, New York, also added to his haul in a significant way on Aug. 18, when he topped a field of 88 entries in the \$100,000 invitational

event at this series, striking a heads-up deal that saw him walk away with \$1,745,625.

This was the third-largest score of Lonis' career, trailing the \$3.4 million he won in a *Triton Poker Montenegro* \$100,000 earlier this year and the \$2.3 million that came with his \$50,000 pot-limit Omaha bracelet at the 2023 *World Series of Poker*. Lonis now boasts more than \$24.7 million in career cashes.

Lonis' incredible run so far in 2025 has made him the clear leader in the POY. This event, which required an invite, did not award points, however.

There was plenty of tough competition for Lonis to contend with down the stretch. The strong turnout resulted in a final prize pool of \$8,536,000. The top 14 finishers made the money, with notables like Jamil Wakil (5th), Rob Yong (4th), and 11-time bracelet winner Phil Ivey (3rd) all cashing.

Ivey's run ended with a \$1,080,000 payday. This was the Poker Hall of Famer's 14th seven-figure tournament cash. The living legend of the game now has more than \$53.2 million in recorded cashes to his name.

Maher Nourira earned \$1,704,375 as the runner-up after agreeing to a deal with Lonis. This was a new high score for the Tunisian pro, topping the \$1.4 million he cashed for with a deep run in a \$200,000 *Triton Invitational* in May.



Fahredin Mustafov

### Fahredin Mustafov Captures Career-Best Score In Main Event

**Fahredin Mustafov** has been around the live tournament circuit for over a decade, but has reached new heights recently. The Bulgarian player has accumulated nearly 200 live cashes on the circuit over the years, with 14 of his 17 scores of six figures or more coming in the last four years.

The very largest payday of Mustafov's tournament career is also his most recent. He defeated a field of 227 entries in the \$25,000 main event at this Onyx stop, earning \$1.3 million as the champion. He now has more than \$9.5 million in lifetime cashes to his name.

The strong turnout for the main event saw the \$5 million guarantee surpassed by more than half a million dollars. The top 34 finishers earned a piece of the prize pool, with notables like event no. 2 champion Gregoire Auzoux (19th), Leonard Maue (15th), Aliaksei Boika (14th), Jesse Lonis (12th), Artur Martirosian (7th), and Matthew Wantman (3rd) all running deep.

Wantman made two final tables at this festival, earning a career-high score of \$530,000 for his performance in this event. With 5,822 POY points secured from 16 final tables this year, the recent bracelet winner is currently ranked sixth in the overall standings.

Mustafov's triumph also came with 1,344 POY points. He went on to make two more final tables, including a fourth-place showing in a \$50,000 pot-limit Omaha event for \$276,000. With 3,299 total points across seven final tables, he is now ranked in the top 50.

#### Kicking Off In Style

The first tournament of the series was the \$5 million guaranteed \$10,400 GGMillion\$, which drew 510 entries across two starting flights. After four days of high-stakes action, Lebanon's **Moussa Ahmad** emerged victorious with

the title and the \$1 million first-place prize. Not much is known about Ahmad, who has no other tournament cashes. During heads-up play with Jamil Wakil, he offered Wakil a chop, which the Canadian pro declined.

Wakil ended up with \$650,000 for his runner-up showing, the first of his big scores in Cyprus. He made three final tables during the series overall, including a fifth-place showing in the \$100,000 invitational, and a third-place finish in the \$50,000 high roller to cash for a total of \$1.9 million. With five final tables on the year, Wakil is now ranked just outside the top 30 in the *Card Player* Player of the Year race sponsored by CoinPoker.

The 'second chance' \$10,400 event featured a \$1 million guarantee. **Gregorie Auzoux** added to his trophy case after overcoming a field of 111 entries. The French pro won the title and \$223,500 after making a heads-up deal with Australia's Warwick Mirzikinian, who claimed an identical \$223,500.

For Auzoux, this was his second major win in his adopted country of Cyprus in three years. A little more than two years ago, he took down a \$40,000 event during the 2023 *Triton Poker Cyprus* stop for over \$1 million.

#### Daniel Rezaei Headlines Hold'em Winners

Three other no-limit hold'em events were also completed before the festival shifted gears and switched the game to pot-limit Omaha. The largest saw **Daniel Rezaei** outlast a field of 100 entries in the \$51,000 buy-in \$5 million guaranteed event to earn \$1,043,530.

The Austrian poker pro's two largest live tournament scores have now both been recorded this summer. In early July, roughly six weeks before this win in Cyprus, he finished third in the *Wynn Summer Classic* \$10 million guaranteed main event for nearly \$1.2 million.

Wakil finished third in this event to wrap up his impres-

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sive run at this series.

The other two no-limit events both featured \$25,000 buy-ins. The first drew 51 entries to easily beat the \$1 million guarantee. France's **Thomas Santerne** came out on top, earning \$391,750 as the champion.

This was the seventh-largest score of Santerne's tournament career. He now has nearly \$7.5 million in recorded cashes to his name, with several of his biggest paydays coming in 2025, including a runner-up showing in a €25,000

high roller at the *European Poker Tour Monte Carlo* stop for nearly \$810,000.

The single-day turbo \$25,000 buy-in event wound up with 25 entries, resulting in \$606,250 in total prize money. The largest chunk of that sum was captured by Senegal's **Hassan Nashar**, who came away with \$236,750. Nashar's lifetime tournament haul is now approaching \$1 million.

2025 Poker Hall of Fame inductee Nick Schulman finished second for \$166,500. This was Schulman's 15th

final table of the year. He won two of them, including his seventh *WSOP* bracelet. The 210 POY points that came with this runner-up showing grew Schulman's total to 5,042 points, which is currently good for 12th place in the standings.

**PLO Crushers Chop \$100,000 Invitational With Anonymous Player**

The \$100,000 pot-limit Omaha invitational event drew 79 entries, resulting in a prize pool of nearly \$7.7 million. The tournament concluded after a three-way deal, which is a fairly common result. What made this particular agreement noteworthy, outside of the massive stakes and the two top-flight Omaha specialists involved, was that the deal's final terms were expressly not released.

The eventual champion requested anonymity, and went by a nickname during event coverage. Finland's Samuli Sipila finished second, while Spain's Lautaro Guerra placed third. There was more than \$4.2 million still to be awarded when the deal was struck.

Guerra was the shortest stack at the time the deal was made with 18,100,000, while Sipila had 27,400,000 and the anonymous chip leader had 33,900,000.

While their exact payouts in this are unknown, Sipila is likely approaching \$5 million in career earnings after this deep run. He came into this event with more than \$3.8 million in prior cashes, including two *Triton Poker* PLO titles and a pair of *PGT PLO* Series wins.

Guerra has almost assuredly taken the lead on the PLO money list thanks to his performance. He already boasted over \$7.7 million in career cashes in PLO tournaments,

which trailed only Eelis Parssinen and Ben Tollerene with \$7.8 million. All but three of Guerra's 60 live cashes have come in four-card events. His top career payday is the \$2.1 million that came with his win in the 2024 *World Series of Poker Paradise* \$100,000 PLO high roller. His largest non-PLO score is for \$450,000, which he picked up with a 15th-place showing in this year's *WSOP* main event.

**Daniel Dvoress Closes Out Series With Two Wins**

**Marcus Dieleman**, a high-stakes online cash game player from the Netherlands, took down the second-largest PLO event on offer. He overcame a field of 49 entries, topping a stacked final table for the top prize of \$750,000.

Several of the festival's stars, including Artur Martirosian (7th), Jesse Lonis (6th), and Fahredin Mustafov (4th), cashed in this event.

**Daniel Dvoress** finished third for \$380,000. The two-time bracelet winner was particularly impressive during this inaugural *Onyx* series. He made five final tables during the festival, cashing for more than \$872,000 as he went.

The Canadian pro won two of the four pot-limit Omaha titles that were up for grabs, first overcoming 19 entries in the \$10,400 buy-in PLO event to earn \$88,600. The next day, he emerged victorious in the \$25,000 PLO turbo, outlasting 15 entries to walk away with \$230,750.

His strong performance at this festival grew his career earnings to just shy of \$47 million, which is good for second on Canada's all-time money list behind only Daniel Negreanu with \$56.3 million. Dvoress also added 818 POY points. With 3,206 points, he is just outside the top 50 in this year's standings. ♠

**Onyx Super High Roller Series - Merit Royal Casino - Kyrenia, Cyprus**

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,400 NLH Aug. 9-12 \$5,000,000 GTD Entries: 510 Prizepool: \$5,000,000	1 Moussa Ahmad	\$1,000,000 (2,100)
	2 Jamil Wakil	\$650,000 (1,750)
	3 Stefan Kiwisch	\$415,000 (1,400)
	4 Krasimir Yankov	\$292,000 (1,050)
	5 Peng Chen	\$212,000 (875)
	6 Ohad Geiger	\$160,000 (700)
	7 Orhan Ates	\$127,000 (525)
	8 Weiran Pu	\$102,000 (350)
	9 Hao Tian	\$85,000 (175)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,400 NLH Aug. 11-12 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 111 Prizepool: \$1,043,400	1 Gregorie Auzoux	\$223,500 (600)
	2 Warwick Mirzikinian	\$223,500 (500)
	3 Leon Sturm	\$128,400 (400)
	4 Matthew Wantman	\$94,000 (300)
	5 Maksim Paniak	\$69,000 (250)
	6 Niklas Held	\$52,000 (200)
	7 Thomas Mayer	\$41,000 (150)
	8 Daniel Dvoress	\$33,000 (100)
	9 Jorgen Lund	\$27,000 (50)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$25,750 NLH Aug. 12-15 \$5,000,000 GTD Entries: 227 Prizepool: \$5,504,750	1 Fahredin Mustafov	\$1,300,000 (1,344)
	2 Anonymous	NA
	3 Matthew Wantman	\$530,000 (896)
	4 Aren Bezhanyan	\$420,000 (672)
	5 Viacheslav Buldygin	\$315,000 (560)
	6 Rahul Byrraju	\$250,000 (448)
	7 Artur Martirosian	\$200,000 (336)
	8 Vincent Huang	\$155,000 (224)
	9 Roman Stoika	\$121,750 (112)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$25,750 NLH Aug. 14-15 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 51 Prizepool: \$1,236,750	1 Thomas Santerne	\$391,750 (420)
	2 Ren Lin	\$270,000 (350)
	3 Leonard Maue	\$190,000 (280)
	4 Daniel Dvoress	\$140,000 (210)
	5 Tamas Adamszki	\$105,000 (175)
	6 Phil Ivey	\$80,000 (140)
	7 Danny Tang	\$60,000 (105)

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Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$25,750 NLH Aug. 15 Entries: 25 Prizepool: \$606,250	1 Hassan Nashar	\$236,750 (252)
	2 Nick Schulman	\$166,500 (210)
	3 Mehdi Chaoui	\$118,000 (168)
	4 David Chen	\$85,000 (126)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$102,000 Invitational Aug. 16-18 Entries: 88 Prizepool: \$8,536,000	1 Jesse Lonis	\$1,745,625
	2 Maher Noura	\$1,704,375
	3 Phil Ivey	\$1,080,000
	4 Robert Yong	\$856,000
	5 Jamil Wakil	\$670,000
	6 Matthew Moss	\$520,000
	7 Dejan Kaladjurdjevic	\$400,000
	8 Rahul Byrraju	\$310,000
	9 Markkos Ladev	\$250,000

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$51,000 NLH Aug. 17-18 \$5,000,000 GTD Entries: 100 Prizepool: \$4,850,000	1 Daniel Rezaei	\$1,043,530 (1,020)
	2 David Nicholson	\$1,101,570 (850)
	3 Jamil Wakil	\$585,000 (680)
	4 Armin Ghojehvand	\$445,000 (510)
	5 Manuel Fritz	\$360,000 (425)
	6 Aram Oganyan	\$290,000 (340)
	7 Johan Guilbert	\$230,000 (255)



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$102,000 PLO Invitational Aug. 19-21 Entries: 79 Prizepool: \$7,663,000	1 Anonymous	?
	2 Samuli Sipila	?
	3 Lautaro Guerra	?
	4 Cong Pham	\$725,000
	5 Laszlo Bujtas	\$565,000
	6 Martin Dam	\$450,000
	7 Robert Cowen	\$370,000
	8 Ben Lamb	\$305,000
	9 Sergei Nesterenko	\$255,000

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$10,400 PLO Aug. 19-20 Entries: 19 Prizepool: \$178,600	1 Daniel Dvoress	\$88,600
	2 Fahredin Mustafov	\$55,000
	3 Marcus Dieleman	\$35,000

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$51,000 PLO Aug. 20-21 \$2,000,000 GTD Entries: 49 Prizepool: \$2,376,500	1 Marcus Dieleman	\$750,000 (510)
	2 Sergei Nesterenko	\$522,000 (425)
	3 Daniel Dvoress	\$380,000 (340)
	4 Fahredin Mustafov	\$276,000 (255)
	5 Espen Myrmo	\$202,000 (213)
	6 Jesse Lonis	\$146,000 (170)
	7 Artur Martirosian	\$100,500 (128)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
\$25,750 PLO Aug. 21 Entries: 15 Prizepool: \$363,750	1 Daniel Dvoress	\$230,750 (168)
	2 Eelis Parssinen	\$133,000 (140)



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# ¡VAMOS! OVER \$67 MILLION IN PRIZE MONEY AWARDED AT EPT BARCELONA

By Erik Fast



Thomas Eychenne

The *PokerStars European Poker Tour Barcelona* festival hosted 47 events from Aug. 18-31 at Casino Barcelona, with more than \$67 million in total prize money awarded along the way. The series truly had something for everyone, with a vast assortment of games, tournament formats, and buy-ins to choose from, with events ranging from €550 to €100,000.

Here is an in-depth look at all of the biggest storylines to emerge after another exciting series in the capital of Spain's Catalonia region.

## Thomas Eychenne Secures \$1.4 Million Payday In Main Event

The €5,300 no-limit hold'em main event drew 2,045 entries, the third-largest turnout for any championship in *EPT* history. The massive field created a prize pool worth more than \$11.5 million. After two starting flights and six more days of combined-field action, that expansive sea of contenders was narrowed down to a single player in **Thomas Eychenne**.

The 35-year-old French player emerged victorious with his first live tournament title and \$1,424,095 in prize money. This was also his first seven-figure score, topping his previous best payout of \$801,000 that came with a seventh-place finish in the 2023 *PokerStars Players No-Limit Hold'em Championship (PSPC)*. Eychenne now boasts nearly \$4.2 million in career cashes after this latest windfall.

"It feels just amazing," said Eychenne. "It's my first tournament win. I obviously didn't expect to win when entering a 2,000-player field. It's tough to put words on such emotions. It's incredible."

The money bubble burst on day 3, with the top 304 fin-

ishers earning a share of the eight-figure prize pool. Among the many big names to make deep runs inside the money were 2025 *World Series of Poker* main event sixth-place finisher Adam Hendrix (84th), bracelet winner Julien Sitbon (62nd), Brock Wilson (61st), *WSOP* main event fifth-place finisher Luka Bojovic (46th), Ramon Colillas (32nd), and Leo Worthington-Leese (20th).

Eychenne entered heads-up play nearly even with Sebastian Ionita, and the final two paused the clock to hash out a deal and redistribute the remaining prize money. They ultimately agreed to lock up \$1,307,095 each, leaving \$117,000 and the trophy to play for.

After losing the first few pots, Eychenne went on a tear that saw him first level the playing field then seize the lead. Before long, he had created a 2:1 chip lead for himself. He then won a hefty preflop clash, four-bet jamming to extend his advantage to more than 3:1.

In the tournament's final hand, Ionita limped in from the small blind with A♥ 6♣. Eychenne raised out of the big blind holding A♣ K♣. Ionita mulled it over before opting to limp-jam for 24 big blinds. Eychenne quickly called, and the board gave him top pair, top kicker for the win. Ionita headed to the payout desk to collect the seven-figure payday he'd negotiated. Before this score, his top payday had been the \$177,000 he earned for a third-place finish in a \$2,200 event at *Merit Poker's Mediterranean Poker Party*.

## Alexis Nicolai Outlasts 5,036 In PokerStars Open Barcelona

The main event was hardly the only highlight at this massive festival. An early gem was the *PokerStars Open*



Barcelona, which drew a staggering 5,036 entries (at €1,650 apiece) across eight starting flights to create a final prize pool of \$8.5 million.

France's **Alexis Nicolai** emerged victorious with the title, 1,320 POY points, and the top prize of \$903,240. This was his first recorded six-figure score. It helped propel his lifetime earnings past the \$1 million mark.

Nicolai is now the third consecutive French winner of the

kickoff event at the *EPT Barcelona* festival, with Sylvain Berthelot and Lucien Cohen having won the *Estrellas Poker Tour* events in 2024 and 2023, respectively. One change to the event saw the buy-in shift from €1,100 to €1,650. The increase led to the largest prize pool ever for the event, even with a 29.5 percent decrease in turnout year-over-year.

The top 753 finishers earned a share of the massive prize pool. Nicolai defeated Mengshi Tian heads-up to conclude the event. The final hand was a rollercoaster for both players. Tian's 7♠ 7♦ trailed the 9♠ 9♥ of Nicolai preflop, but the first three cards off the deck were 10♣ 7♣ 4♦, giving Tian a set and the lead. The 8♦ turn added some outs for Nicolai in the form of an open-ended straight draw. The J♠ river completed his straight, earning him the title in dramatic fashion. Tian settled for \$564,279.

#### Leon Sturm And Kayhan Mokri Win Headlining High Roller Titles

**Leon Sturm** first broke out on the live high-stakes poker tournament circuit in 2023, taking down a \$50,000 buy-in at the *WSOP* for a bracelet and his first seven-figure score. The 24-year-old German professional player most recently bested 47 entries in the €100,000 super high roller at this festival, earning \$1,696,950 for a new career-high payday.

Sturm's lifetime earnings are now more than \$11.3 million, despite only recording just a handful of live cashes before the pandemic-induced shutdown of 2020.

The prize pool grew to over \$5.3 million, with that hefty sum split amongst the top six finishers. The final table included several high-stakes stars, like Punnat Punsri (6th - \$373,464), Aleksejs Ponakovs (5th - \$480,168), 2022 *WSOP* main event champion Espen Jorstad (4th - \$613,548), and current POY race leader Jesse Lonis (3rd - \$826,956), who was fresh off of his win in the *Onyx Invitational*. (pg. 28)

Lonis was already the clear leader in the 2025 POY race standings, with seven qualified titles and 21 final-table finishes to his name. In addition to this deep run, he also placed third in a €10,200 six-max event at this stop. The 600 total points he earned in Barcelona took his total to 8,449, giving him a 1,934-point lead over second-ranked Artur Martirosian (6,515 points).

David Coleman finished second for \$1,344,043 after a heads-up deal redistributing the remaining prize money. This was a new top score for Coleman, who finished as the runner-up in four high roller events in the span of a single

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Punnat Punsri



Brock Wilson



Jeremy Ausmus



Samuel Mullur



Klemens Roiter



Alexander Ivarsson



Eero Abbey



Henrique Lessa



Roman Stoica



Ioannis Poullos



week at this series. The second-place streak saw him collect nearly \$2.3 million along with 1,560 POY points to move him inside the top 75. His career earnings now sit at nearly \$12.1 million after his performance in Spain.

**Kayhan Mokri**, fresh off a high-profile €2 million heads-up win in North Cyprus (pg. 28), added another \$609,453 to his haul thanks to a win in the €50,000 high roller. It's the third consecutive year in which the Norwegian pro has won a high roller trophy at this stop. In each of the previous two runnings, Mokri took down the €100,000 high roller during the festival.

A total of 35 entrants put up the sizable buy-in, generating a prize pool worth just shy of \$2 million. Hungary's Andras Nemeth finished second, taking home \$522,815 after a heads-up deal. Niklas Astedt, the Swedish online poker superstar who made a big splash in the 2024 *WSOP* main event, notched his second final table appearance of the festival, finishing fourth.

PokerStars ambassador Jason Koon finished sixth for \$138,996. It was one of three final-table showings for the American star who won his second bracelet this summer. He also finished second in a €25,000 pot-limit Omaha event for \$314,028 and ninth in a €25,000 no-limit hold'em tournament for \$53,820. The 528 total POY points he accrued with the trio of scores pushed Koon into 24th place in the overall

standings.

### More Notable EPT Barca Champions

The aforementioned **Punnat Punsri** topped a field of 77 entries in the €10,200 mystery bounty, earning \$111,150 in bounties and an additional \$99,126 from the main prize pool. **Brock Wilson** took down the €12,300 no-limit hold'em cuatro bounty, taking home the \$109,301 first-place prize and \$42,120 in bounties as the champion.

**Jeremy Ausmus** earned his third trophy of 2025, coming out on top in the €20,000 no-limit hold'em event for \$372,869. He outlasted a field of 63, which generated a prize pool of over \$1.4 million. This was his second POY-qualified title and 12th such final table, which puts him in ninth place in the rankings heading into the fall.

The stakes kept rising from there. Austria's **Samuel Muller** bested 52 entries in the first of several €25,000 buy-ins at the series, earning \$382,941 for the win. Next up was a €30,000 buy-in, which ended with 57 entries. **Klemens Roiter** walked away with \$594,108 as the champion. The reigning *WSOP Monster Stack* champion surged into eighth place in the POY race with this, his second title of 2025.

Stepping away from the nosebleeds for a moment, two lower buy-in events with gigantic fields saw players earn hefty six-figure top prizes during this festival. **Alexander Ivarsson** overcame 1,894 entries in a €825 buy-in to earn

## TOURNAMENTS



Shiina Okamoto



Benny Glaser



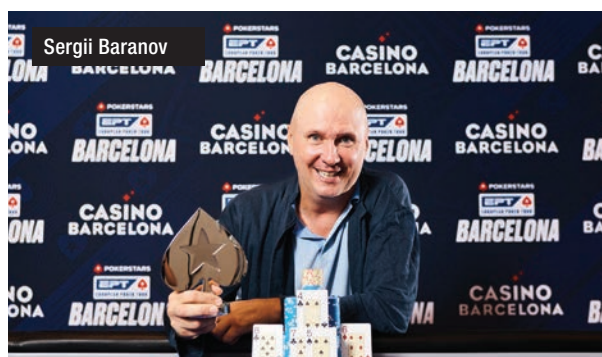
Endrit Geci



Tobias Schwecht



Hirokazu Kobayashi



Sergii Baranov

\$247,666, while **Eero Abbey** scored \$588,098 after striking a short-handed deal in the €2,700 *PokerStars Open High Roller*. Matthew Wantman placed fourth in that event for \$256,230. This was the bracelet winner and *WPT* champion's 16th final table of the year. He moved to sixth place on the POY leaderboard with this performance.

**Henrique Lessa** triumphed in another €2,700 buy-in, navigating a field of 930 entries to win \$471,510. The €3,250 knockout event attracted 1,004 entries, with **Roman Stoica** securing \$431,367 as the champion. Another knockout, priced at €1,650 to enter, wound up with 793 entries. **Ioannis Poullos** cashed for \$210,425 as the champion.

The high-stakes action resumed with pot-limit Omaha. **Espen Myrmo** defeated 52 entries in the €25,000 buy-in PLO to earn \$474,926. A €10,200 buy-in version of the same game drew 145 entries, with **Gergo Nagy** dragging the last pot to lock up the trophy and the top prize of \$409,266.

The game switched back to no-limit hold'em for the next €25,000 buy-in. Belgian bracelet winner **Pieter Aerts** outlasted 66 entries to earn \$556,171. **Bernardo Neves** triumphed over a field of 500 entries in a €10,300 buy-in event, capturing the title and \$988,884.

Two-time bracelet winner **Alexandre Reard** took down another €10,300 event, albeit with a smaller turnout of 82 entries. Reard's reward was \$261,963. **Alexander Ivarsson**

then scored his second win of the series, topping 172 in a €3,150 buy-in six max event to add another \$136,796.

Reigning back-to-back *WSOP* ladies event champion **Shiina Okamoto** overcame a field of 126 entries in the €550 ladies event to earn \$18,147. The score helped push her career earnings to more than \$905,000. This was her second ladies' event win and third overall title of the year, having also come out on top a high roller at the *Taiwan Millions* series in late July. ♠



## European Poker Tour - Casino Barcelona - Barcelona, Spain

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€1,650 NLH Aug. 18-24 Entries: 5,036 Prizepool: \$8,495,531	1 Alexis Nicolai	\$903,240 (1,320)
	2 Mengshi Tian	\$564,279 (1,100)
	3 Ben Zech	\$403,135 (880)
	4 Webster Lim	\$310,284 (660)
	5 Daniele Cuomo	\$238,575 (550)
	6 Jakub Sterba	\$183,491 (440)
	7 Kazuhiko Yotsushika	\$141,114 (330)
	8 David Taieb	\$108,541 (220)
	9 Bernardo Neves	\$83,480 (110)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€10,200 NLH KO Aug. 18-19 Entries: 77 Prizepool: \$873,873	1 Punnat Punsri	\$210,276 (420)
	2 David Coleman	\$199,575 (350)
	3 Geoffrey Mooney	\$63,765 (280)
	4 Masato Yokosawa	\$53,937 (210)
	5 Klemens Roiter	\$129,051 (175)
	6 Juha Helppi	\$46,332 (140)
	7 Justin Zaki	\$20,709 (105)
	8 Nicholas Seward	\$16,497 (70)
	9 Vitalijs Korhs	\$33,696 (35)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€12,300 NLH KO Aug. 19 Entries: 22 Prizepool: \$302,702	1 Brock Wilson	\$151,421 (180)
	2 Simone Andrian	\$79,560 (150)
	3 Morten Klein	\$57,681 (120)
	4 Maria Konnikova	\$14,040 (90)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€20,000 NLH Aug. 20 Entries: 63 Prizepool: \$1,415,822	1 Jeremy Ausmus	\$372,769 (432)
	2 David Coleman	\$342,106 (360)
	3 Gregorie Auzoux	\$205,335 (288)
	4 Ottomar Ladva	\$155,727 (216)
	5 Jean Noel Thorel	\$120,393 (180)
	6 Niklas Astedt	\$92,079 (144)
	7 Kiat Lee	\$70,785 (108)
	8 Klemens Roiter	\$56,628 (72)

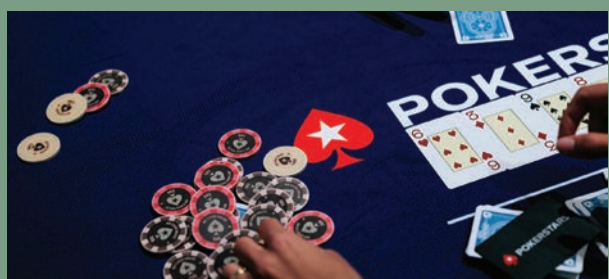
Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 NLH Aug. 21 Entries: 52 Prizepool: \$1,460,768	1 Samuel Mullur	\$382,941 (420)
	2 Punnat Punsri	\$406,013 (350)
	3 Masato Yokosawa	\$211,770 (280)
	4 Enrico Camosci	\$160,641 (210)
	5 Gabel Tavares	\$124,137 (175)
	6 Ottomar Ladva	\$98,631 (140)
	7 Mikael Thuritz	\$76,635 (105)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€30,000 NLH Aug. 22 Entries: 57 Prizepool: \$1,947,681	1 Klemens Roiter	\$594,108 (420)
	2 David Coleman	\$389,493 (350)
	3 Nick Petrangelo	\$282,438 (280)
	4 Danny Tang	\$214,227 (210)
	5 Kelvin Kerber	\$165,555 (175)
	6 Byron Kaverman	\$126,594 (140)
	7 Jeremy Ausmus	\$97,344 (105)
	8 Tobias Schwecht	\$77,922 (70)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€825 NLH Aug. 22-23 Entries: 1,894 Prizepool: \$1,597,551	1 Alexander Ivarsson	\$247,666 (540)
	2 Marius Kikinezhdhi	\$154,791 (450)
	3 Nicolo Di Parma	\$110,565 (360)
	4 Nicholas Drinkwater	\$85,036 (270)
	5 Ali Abdulzahra	\$65,415 (225)
	6 Eyal Eshkar	\$50,333 (180)
	7 Gabriel Haefner	\$38,727 (135)
	8 Thomas Weinmeyer	\$29,788 (90)
	9 Alexandru Lupuleac	\$22,909 (45)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€2,700 NLH Aug. 23-25 Entries: 1,728 Prizepool: \$4,909,054	1 Eero Abbey	\$588,098 (1,620)
	2 Petre Iulian Ionescu	\$516,612 (1,350)
	3 Luuk Gieles	\$443,434 (1,080)
	4 Matthew Wantman	\$256,230 (810)
	5 Aldo Theler	\$197,730 (675)
	6 Thomas Boivin	\$152,919 (540)
	7 Jean Vigna	\$117,702 (405)
	8 Juho Suutari	\$90,558 (270)
	9 Aaron Olechnowicz	\$69,615 (135)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€100,000 NLH Aug. 23-25 Entries: 47 Prizepool: \$5,341,970	1 Leon Sturm	\$1,696,950 (600)
	2 David Coleman	\$1,344,043 (500)
	3 Jesse Lonis	\$826,956 (400)
	4 Espen Jorstad	\$613,548 (300)
	5 Aleksejs Ponakovs	\$480,168 (250)
	6 Punnat Punsri	\$373,464 (200)



# TOURNAMENTS

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€5,300 NLH Aug. 24-31 Entries: 2,045 Prizepool: \$11,589,448	1 Thomas Eychenne	\$1,424,095 (2,160)
	2 Stefan-Sebastian Ionita	\$1,307,095 (1,800)
	3 Umberto Zaffagnini	\$750,204 (1,440)
	4 Tomasz Brzezinski	\$577,103 (1,080)
	5 Julian Pineda	\$443,840 (900)
	6 Anton Suarez	\$341,406 (720)
	7 Marc Foggin	\$262,607 (540)
	8 Cesar Garcia	\$202,059 (360)
	9 Youssef Zereg	\$155,376 (180)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€2,200 PLO Aug. 24-25 Entries: 387 Prizepool: \$869,357	1 Tobias Schwecht	\$149,386 (600)
	2 Basem Hamed	\$132,210 (500)
	3 Vakhtang Javakhishvili	\$77,454 (400)
	4 Nicolas Chronis	\$59,576 (300)
	5 Csaba Fenyvesi	\$45,841 (250)
	6 Frederik Johansen	\$35,264 (200)
	7 Juan Maceiras	\$27,121 (150)
	8 Adam Geyer	\$22,370 (100)
	9 Fabian Bartuschk	\$18,626 (50)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 PLO Aug. 24-25 Entries: 52 Prizepool: \$1,460,768	1 Espen Myrmo	\$474,926 (420)
	2 Jason Koon	\$314,028 (350)
	3 Keith Lehr	\$211,770 (280)
	4 Tue Ullerup Hansen	\$160,641 (210)
	5 Maksim Shuts	\$124,137 (175)
	6 Biao Ding	\$98,631 (140)
	7 Christopher Frank	\$76,635 (105)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€2,700 NLH Aug. 26-27 Entries: 930 Prizepool: \$2,635,254	1 Henrique Lessa	\$471,510 (1,368)
	2 Antoine Labat	\$294,840 (1,140)
	3 Jakub Koleckar	\$210,600 (912)
	4 Masato Yokosawa	\$162,045 (684)
	5 John Perry	\$124,605 (570)
	6 Mikolaj Zawadzki	\$95,823 (456)
	7 Ivo Bartoletti	\$73,710 (342)
	8 Ovidiu Chiriac	\$56,745 (228)
	9 Sergey Bagirov	\$43,700 (114)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€5,200 8-Game Mix Aug. 26 Entries: 32 Prizepool: \$181,586	1 Sergii Baranov	\$62,712
	2 Gregorie Auzoux	\$40,833
	3 Imad Derwiche	\$28,139
	4 Espen Sandvik	\$20,885
	5 Oliver Worth	\$16,322
	6 Christopher Adams	\$12,695

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€50,000 NLH Aug. 26-27 Entries: 35 Prizepool: \$1,986,485	1 Kayhan Mokri	\$609,453 (408)
	2 Andras Nemeth	\$522,815 (340)
	3 Ottomar Ladva	\$307,944 (272)
	4 Niklas Astedt	\$228,501 (204)
	5 Mikael Thuritz	\$178,776 (170)
	6 Jason Koon	\$138,996 (136)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€3,250 NLH KO Aug. 27-29 Entries: 1,004 Prizepool: \$3,413,929	1 Roman Stoica	\$431,367 (1,440)
	2 Aram Zobian	\$320,814 (1,200)
	3 Paul Newey	\$212,238 (960)
	4 Laszlo Molnar	\$133,497 (720)
	5 Cornelis Van Gent	\$101,147 (600)
	6 Patrick Kallas	\$169,884 (480)
	7 Liutauras Armanavicius	\$76,694 (360)
	8 Kemal Aslan	\$61,893 (240)
	9 Marco D'ippolito	\$33,930 (120)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€10,200 PLO Aug. 27-28 Entries: 145 Prizepool: \$1,645,605	1 Gergo Nagy	\$409,266 (720)
	2 Jose Fernandes	\$255,645 (600)
	3 Bernard Vu	\$182,637 (480)
	4 Klemens Roiter	\$140,517 (360)
	5 Jelle Kroon	\$108,108 (300)
	6 Akseli Hosia	\$83,070 (240)
	7 Csaba Fenyvesi	\$63,882 (180)
	8 Shamil Patel	\$53,118 (120)
	9 Amrik Kang	\$44,226 (60)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€25,000 NLH Aug. 28 Entries: 66 Prizepool: \$1,854,052	1 Pieter Aerts	\$556,171 (504)
	2 Ryuta Nakai	\$361,530 (420)
	3 Faraz Jaka	\$256,815 (336)
	4 Ren Lin	\$197,496 (252)
	5 Teun Mulder	\$151,983 (210)
	6 Paulius Plausinaitis	\$116,766 (168)
	7 Espen Jorstad	\$89,973 (126)
	8 Punnat Punsri	\$69,498 (84)
	9 Jason Koon	\$53,820 (42)

# TOURNAMENTS



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€5,200 TORSE Aug. 28 Entries: 42 Prizepool: \$238,329	1 Benny Glaser	\$82,193
	2 Joshua Chudnovsky	\$53,645
	3 Norberto Korn	\$36,914
	4 Pierre Morin	\$27,437
	5 Anatolii Zyrin	\$21,470
	6 Sorawit Suriyakarn	\$16,673

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€1,650 NLH KO Aug. 29-30 Entries: 793 Prizepool: \$1,339,331	1 Ioannis Poulos	\$210,425 (912)
	2 Leonardo Carlessi	\$138,867 (760)
	3 Robert Bull	\$97,765 (608)
	4 Jan Svec	\$57,751 (456)
	5 Michael Allen	\$119,831 (380)
	6 Cagdas Ersoy	\$35,112 (304)
	7 Eugenio Peralta	\$29,309 (228)
	8 Javier Zarco	\$53,329 (152)
	9 Serafim Kovalevskiy	\$25,448 (76)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€10,300 NLH Aug. 29-31 Entries: 500 Prizepool: \$5,667,212	1 Bernardo Neves	\$988,884 (2,100)
	2 Vldas Tamasauskas	\$832,338 (1,750)
	3 Paolo Boi	\$500,292 (1,440)
	4 Nicholas Seward	\$384,930 (1,050)
	5 Davide Marchi	\$296,127 (875)
	6 Marcello Miniucchi	\$227,799 (700)
	7 Jesse Yaginuma	\$175,266 (525)
	8 Biao Ding	\$134,784 (350)
	9 Ankit Ahuja	\$104,949 (175)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€550 NLH Ladies Aug. 29 Entries: 126 Prizepool: \$73,710	1 Shiina Okamoto	\$18,147
	2 Marina Mendy	\$11,349
	3 Scarlett Hostein	\$8,108
	4 Sylwia Studniarz	\$6,236
	5 Linda Kinhult	\$4,797
	6 Oleksandra Khamidova	\$3,686
	7 Cecile Ticherfatine	\$2,913
	8 Migle Kriksciunaite	\$2,434
	9 Iryna Tsikhanskaya	\$2,024

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€2,200 NLH Aug. 30-31 Entries: 343 Prizepool: \$770,515	1 Endrit Geci	\$130,876 (480)
	2 Campbell Ashton	\$117,000 (400)
	3 Alexandru Cinca	\$68,059 (320)
	4 Spencer Champlin	\$52,369 (240)
	5 Hugues Girard	\$40,260 (200)
	6 Cristian David	\$30,993 (160)
	7 Erik Bauer	\$24,851 (120)
	8 Jose Tarazona Triana	\$20,709 (80)
	9 Petre Bogdan Ionescu	\$17,234 (40)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€10,200 NLH Aug. 30-31 Entries: 82 Prizepool: \$930,618	1 Alexandre Reard	\$261,963 (480)
	2 Geoffrey Mooney	\$169,065 (400)
	3 Stoyan Madanzhiev	\$120,744 (320)
	4 Andre Akkari	\$92,898 (240)
	5 Alejandro Lococo	\$71,487 (200)
	6 Rafael Moraes	\$56,862 (160)
	7 Joris Ruijs	\$45,513 (120)
	8 Mitchell Hynam	\$36,387 (80)
	9 Justin Zaki	\$29,133 (40)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€3,150 NLH 6-Max Aug. 31 Entries: 172 Prizepool: \$585,608	1 Alexander Ivarsson	\$136,796 (468)
	2 Kelvin Kerber	\$85,644 (390)
	3 Parker Talbot	\$61,133 (312)
	4 Casimir Seire	\$47,034 (234)
	5 Ewen Trevidy	\$36,212 (195)
	6 Eric Sfez	\$27,846 (156)

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
€10,200 NLH 6-Max Aug. 31 Entries: 41 Prizepool: \$465,309	1 Hirokazu Kobayashi	\$160,641 (300)
	2 Klemens Roiter	\$104,715 (250)
	3 Jesse Lonis	\$72,072 (200)
	4 Jeremy Ausmus	\$53,469 (150)
	5 Nikita Kuznetcov	\$41,886 (125)
	6 Kazuhiko Yotsushika	\$32,526 (100)



## HYUNDONG LEE WINS WPT PRIME TAIWAN

By Erik Fast

Hyundong Lee defeated a field of 1,470 total entries in the *WPT Prime Taiwan Championship*, earning his first recorded title, \$212,005, and 960 *Card Player* Player of the Year points.

This event ran from Aug. 14-19 at the Asia Poker Arena in Taipei City. The strong turnout for the \$35,000 TWD buy-in event (~\$1,200 USD) resulted in a prize pool worth more than \$1.5 million when rendered in American currency. The top 183 finishers cashed, with six-figure scores for the final three.

The final day began with just six remaining and Lee atop the chip counts. Ci Hong Ho's pocket nines outraced the A-J of Man Woo Park (4th – \$79,814). Lee then won a big clash during three-handed action, picking off a bluff shove from Ting Wei Li to take a commanding lead. Li was left on fumes and soon headed to the rail in third place (\$106,418).

Heads-up began with nearly a 4:1 advantage for Lee over Ho. The lead changed hands briefly when Ho doubled up with a flopped flush, but Lee was able to quickly battle back out in front ahead of the final hand of the tournament.

Lee raised on the button with K♠ 10♠ and Ho called from the big blind with J♦ 5♦. The flop came down 6♥ 4♠ 3♠ and Ho bet with his open-ended straight draw. Lee raised with his flush draw, and Ho moved all-in. Lee called and the A♠ turn gave him the nuts to leave Ho drawing dead. The 9♦ river was a mere formality, making Ho's runner-up finish for \$143,499 official. ♠



Player	Payout (POY)
1 Hyundong Lee	\$212,005 (960)
2 Ci Hong Ho	\$143,499 (800)
3 Ting Wei Li	\$106,418 (640)
4 Man Park	\$79,814 (480)
5 Justin Chan	\$60,525 (400)
6 Youngjong Lee	\$45,893 (320)
7 Wangkei Lau	\$35,417 (240)
8 Seungmin Yu	\$27,436 (160)
9 Robert Nemeskeri-Kiss	\$21,616 (80)

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## ILIA KITSBABASHVILI WINS THREE TITLES IN CYPRUS

By Tim Fiorvanti

Prior to this August, Ilia Kitsbabashvili had never had a live tournament cash as high as \$8,000. Then he rattled off wins in a pair of \$1,100 prelim events at the *WPT Cyprus* festival for well over \$50,000 in total earnings. But the best was yet to come for the Georgian. After battling through four days of poker, Kitsbabashvili became the newest member of the *World Poker Tour* Champions Club.

Kitsbabashvili bested a field of 775 entrants, taking home a prize of \$401,100. He'll also have a permanent spot on the *WPT* Mike Sexton Champions Cup. The \$3,500 buy-in tournament beat its \$2 million guarantee, with the prize pool eclipsing \$2.4 million.

"It's a huge amount of money and it will change my life," said Kitsbabashvili. "I was calm and very prepared, and I knew that I was going to win."

Kitsbabashvili was the second-shortest stack when the final seven took their seats. He survived to the final three and then began to battle his way up the counts. He then cracked Rafal Chmura's pocket aces, getting all-in with an open-ended straight draw and hitting running hearts to make a flush. Chmura earned \$190,000 as the third-place finisher.

Kitsbabashvili started heads-up play with the chip lead and never relinquished it. On the final hand, Mahone had 5♦ 5♣ and Kitsbabashvili tabled A♠ 7♠. The J♦ 7♣ 6♣ flop paired Kitsbabashvili's seven, and neither the 2♥ turn nor the Q♦ river could save Mahone, who earned \$255,000 as the runner-up.



Kitsbabashvili is the fifth player to win a *WPT* main tour title in Cyprus, joining Marvin Rettenmaier, Thomas Bichon, Alexander Lakhov, and Alexey Rybin. ♠

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Ilia Kitsbabashvili	\$401,100 (1,368)
2 James Mahone	\$255,000 (1,140)
3 Rafal Chmura	\$190,000 (912)
4 Elena Litvinyuk	\$142,000 (684)
5 Nikolay Zhadanov	\$107,000 (570)
6 Uladzimir Zhyharau	\$82,000 (456)
7 Ignacio Sole	\$63,000 (342)
8 Tobias Garp	\$49,000 (228)
9 Koray Korkmaz	\$38,500 (114)

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## ZACHARY FISCHER TRIUMPHS AT WSOP CIRCUIT CHEROKEE

By Ryan Lucchesi

Zachary Fischer has had a lot going on lately. The New Yorker recently got married and is about to become a father. With all that excitement on the home front, Fischer also found time for an exciting run at the poker tables.

Fischer took down the August *World Series of Poker Circuit* main event at Harrah's Cherokee, earning his first major tournament title and \$324,135 in prize money. This was his largest score yet, growing his career haul to nearly \$1.3 million.

This win also came with 960 POY points. It was Fischer's 11th final-table finish and second title of the year. He now sits in 50th place in the overall standings presented by CoinPoker with 3,233 total points.

This \$1,700 no-limit hold'em event had two starting flights. The field of 1,437 contenders resulted in a \$2,177,055 prize pool, well over the \$1.5 million guarantee. The top 146 players all cashed for at least \$4,132.

Fischer had the second-largest stack when the final table began, and navigated his way to the podium places. J.B. Wells then sent Warren Sheaves packing in third place to set up the final showdown for the title. Fischer held a slight lead when the cards got back in the air.

The two battled back and forth for quite a while, but Fischer managed to regain the lead in time for the tournament's final hand. Fischer moved all in with  $Q♥10♥$  from the button, and Wells called all in holding  $J♥5♥$ . The board bricked out and Wells was eliminated in second place. He took home \$216,089 for his efforts. ♠



Player	Payout (POY)
1 Zachary Fischer	\$324,135 (960)
2 J.B. Wells	\$216,089 (800)
3 Warren Sheaves	\$153,035 (640)
4 Shane Lea	\$109,942 (480)
5 Andrew Smith	\$80,140 (400)
6 Matthew Yankowski	\$59,284 (320)
7 Leo Taffe	\$44,516 (240)
8 Marc Lacroix	\$33,939 (160)
9 Eduardo Paz	\$26,277 (80)

## BRANDON MITCHELL WINS ARIZONA STATE POKER CHAMPIONSHIP

By Erik Fast

The *Arizona State Poker Championship* at Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale attracted a massive turnout of 3,546 entries at \$1,100 apiece. As a result, the prize pool swelled to the point that the top prize sat at \$525,700. That sum was ultimately awarded to Brandon Mitchell, who was captured on social media video enthusiastically celebrating his big win.



Mitchell is no stranger to taking down large-field events at this price point. A couple of years before this win, he topped 3,737 entries in an event at the *Wynn Summer Classic* to earn \$327,817. Thanks largely to these two victories, Mitchell now boasts nearly \$1.5 million in career tournament earnings.

The huge turnout for this event saw the top six finishers walk away with six-figure payouts. Among the finalists

was Hayley Hanna, the wife of 2016 POY award winner David Peters. Hanna earned \$157,900 as the fourth-place finisher.

This was her largest recorded score yet, blowing away the \$37,708 that came with a runner-up showing in an online *WSOP Circuit* event last spring. Her run ended when her combo draw failed to improve against the pair and gutshot of Mitchell.

Runner-up David Levy was the chip leader heading into short-handed play, but lost a big pot against the trips of Mitchell to give up the advantage. The final hand saw Mitchell's  $K♣5♣$  hold against the  $K♦2♣$  of Levy. The board gave Mitchell trips to lock up the title. Levy walked away with \$310,000 for his strong showing. ♠

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Brandon Mitchell	\$525,700 (1,320)
2 David Levy	\$310,000 (1,100)
3 Nicholas Rogers	\$210,500 (880)
4 Hayley Hanna	\$157,900 (660)
5 Zachary Powers	\$131,600 (550)
6 Christopher Collins	\$105,300 (440)
7 Senh Cong	\$78,900 (330)
8 James Pausch	\$65,800 (220)
9 Mark Evangelista	\$52,600 (110)

# MAURICE HAWKINS WINS RECORD 20TH AND 21ST WSOPC RINGS AT NEW ORLEANS STOP

By Erik Fast

Maurice Hawkins once again stands alone atop the *WSOP Circuit* titles leaderboard. The longtime tournament grinder defeated a field of 106 entries in the \$600 pot-limit Omaha tournament at the New Orleans stop, earning \$14,548 and his record-setting 20th gold ring.

Just a couple of days later, the 45-year-old poker pro beat out a field of 159 entries in the \$400 no-limit hold'em event at the same festival, earning \$12,996 while extending his lead in the tour's title race even further.

With 21 total *WSOPC* titles, Hawkins now boasts a two-ring advantage over second-ranked Ari Engel. Hawkins won his first ring back in 2008, and has captured multiple rings in a single calendar year in 2009, 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2025. Six of Hawkins' 21 wins on the tour have come in *WSOPC* main events.

"I mean no disrespect to anybody else that is in the race with me, but my name is supposed to be at the top. Point blank, this is my circuit," Hawkins told *Poker.Org*. "I respect Ari, as a matter of fact, I have been respecting him his whole career. I used to look up to him a little, and Dan is a great player, but I am supposed to be at the top."

The 'Dan' that Hawkins mentioned is 18-time ring winner Dan Lowery, who joined him at the final table in the PLO event, finishing eighth for \$1,647.

Hawkins also extended his advantage as the highest earner in *WSOPC* history with these latest victories, with more than \$3.2 million in total cashes in gold ring events. Lowery sits in second with more than \$1.9 million in cashes.

While Hawkins has had a strong year at the tables, the controversial figure has also received plenty of negative press, including being publicly called out by several former backers for failing to live up to their agreements. ♠



### \$600 PLO

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Maurice Hawkins	\$14,548 (120)
2 Thai Cao	\$9,431 (100)
3 Daniel Pearlman	\$6,350 (80)
4 Greg Headrick	\$4,448 (60)
5 James Calloway	\$3,246 (50)
6 Hariharan Rangarajan	\$2,474 (40)

### \$400 NLH

Player	Payout (POY)
1 Maurice Hawkins	\$12,996 (115)
2 Shane Bissinger	\$8,359 (96)
3 Rex Clinkscapes	\$5,566 (77)
4 Bo Xu	\$3,842 (58)
5 Pankaji Kumar Behera	\$2,753 (48)
6 Birol Lermi	\$2,050 (38)

© WSOP / PokerOrg

# VENOM MYSTERY BOUNTY TOURNAMENTS AWARD OVER \$10 MILLION ON ACR POKER

By Erik Fast

ACR Poker hosted another pair of massive mystery bounty tournaments in August, with more than \$10 million in prize money awarded in the popular *Venom* events. The \$8 million guaranteed no-limit hold'em *Venom* attracted 3,392 entries at \$2,650 across the six starting flights, resulting in a prize pool of \$8,480,000.

Southern California's David 'IamYorFather' Gonzalez secured the final knockout for the title, earning \$665,163 and another \$45,000 in bounty payouts. The 54-year-old defeated 'ArkaduktusFrRM' heads-up for the win.

"I'm still trying to process what just happened. Even days later, it all seems so surreal. I was especially thrilled to be able to overcome being the short stack at the final table," Gonzalez shared. "The money was a blessing because I have quite a few family members in need, and this allows me to support them fully."

The runner-up was one of the top bounty earners with \$210,000. The \$500,000 top bounty payout was drawn by 'sorka1975.'



Four-card poker fans also had their time in the spotlight. The \$2 Million pot-limit Omaha *Venom* drew 830 entries, tying ACR Poker's biggest Omaha tournament turnout. The prize pool swelled to \$2,075,000 in the end, with 'FutureTrunks' closing out the win for \$208,217, plus \$146,250 in bounty payouts.

Hundreds of players earned their way into these marquee events via promotions like *Venom Fever* and *Venom Vault*. A user known as 'xGetxRektx' was a standout success story, with their \$0.80 *Venom Vault Key* resulting in a \$15,000 bounty payday and \$6,500 in earnings from the prize pool. ♠

© ACR Poker

# POKERGO TOUR ALL-TIME POINTS



Rank	Player	PGT Points	PGT Cashes	PGT Winnings
1st	Stephen Chidwick	9,796	93	\$16,097,364
2nd	Alex Foxen	9,528	98	\$18,261,963
3rd	Sam Soverel	8,706	92	\$11,834,966
4th	Daniel Negreanu	8,652	97	\$14,081,255
5th	Jeremy Ausmus	8,453	92	\$13,765,091
6th	Sean Winter	8,046	91	\$12,522,185
7th	Chris Brewer	7,167	78	\$14,593,779
8th	Seth Davies	7,038	45	\$18,924,695
9th	Nick Schulman	6,489	85	\$9,001,426
10th	Jason Koon	6,434	40	\$14,953,882

The *PokerGO Tour* was first established in 2021. It has since become a cornerstone of the high-takes tournament scene, with a consistent presence throughout the year. There have already been 86 events that have awarded *PGT* points so far this year, with the second half of the season just about to get underway.

Stephen Chidwick is the tour's all-time points leader. The 36-year-old British poker pro is just 204 points away from crossing the 10,000-point mark. He also won the *PGT* Player of the Year race in 2022. His 93 cashes total nearly \$16.1 million in earnings, which amounts to nearly a quarter of his \$68.9 in total recorded cashes on the circuit.

The only other player to surpass 9,000 points is **Alex Foxen**, who has cashed for nearly \$18.3 million across 98 qualified scores. The 34-year-old former college football player and perennial POY contender has 9,528 points, which puts him

822 points ahead of third-ranked Sam Soverel. The 35-year-old Florida native has 8,706 points thanks to his 92 cashes in *PGT* tournaments. He has accrued more than \$11.8 million across those cashes.

Poker Hall of Famer Daniel Negreanu sits fourth on this leaderboard with 8,652 points. The 51-year-old seven-time bracelet winner has found plenty of success in the *PokerGO* studio. Canada's all-time money leader with \$56.3 million in overall tournament cashes has captured \$14 million of that haul via his cashes in *PGT* events.

Rounding out the top five is reigning *PGT* Player of the Year Jeremy Ausmus, with 8,453 points. Roughly half of the 45-year-old poker pro's \$28 million in lifetime earnings have come from *PGT* cashes, including the \$500,000 he banked in January's *PGT Championship*. ♠

# CIRCUIT RESULTS



Tianyi Ma

© Parkwest Bicycle Casino

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Legends of Poker  Parkwest Bicycle Bell Gardens, CA  \$200/\$4000 NLH Aug. 10-19 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 3,091 Prizepool: \$1,297,790	1 Tianyi Ma	\$150,000
	2 David Phillips	\$141,000
	3 Richard Hasnip	\$120,410
	4 Jack Kashishian	\$57,235
	5 Benjamin Nguyen	\$44,150
	6 Fausto Valdez	\$34,125
	7 George Adjamoglian	\$26,175
	8 Andrew Wisdom	\$20,185
	9 Andre Cullins	\$15,140



William Shiraev

© Parkwest Bicycle Casino

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
Legends of Poker  Parkwest Bicycle Bell Gardens, CA  \$300 NLH Aug. 19-23 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 823 Prizepool: \$302,280	1 William Shiraev	\$61,775
	2 George Adjamoglian	\$38,110
	3 Corey Brass	\$23,125
	4 James Sileo	\$18,730
	5 Antonio Gomez	\$14,265
	6 Marc Leblanc	\$11,345
	7 Nissar Quraishi	\$9,160
	8 Naor Cohen	\$6,940
	9 Jin Woo Kim	\$4,995

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
High Stakes Week  Bombay Club Tallinn, Estonia  €10,000 NLH July 31 Entries: 22 Prizepool: \$244,530	1 Ottomar Ladva	\$105,183
	2 Ville Wahlbeck	\$65,988
	3 Morten Klein	\$43,992
	4 Markkos Ladev	\$29,367

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
High Stakes Week  Bombay Club Tallinn, Estonia  €25,000 NLH Aug. 1-2 Entries: 41 Prizepool: \$1,151,280	1 Kaspar Kaisal	\$397,215 (420)
	2 Marat Kasparov	\$259,038 (350)
	3 Ville Wahlbeck	\$178,425 (280)
	4 Kayhan Mokri	\$132,444 (210)
	5 Aleksejs Ponakovs	\$103,545 (175)
	6 Erik Bauer	\$80,613 (140)

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
High Stakes Week  Bombay Club Tallinn, Estonia  €50,000 NLH Aug. 3 Entries: 7 Prizepool: \$397,215	1 Kayhan Mokri	\$258,219
	2 Ottomar Ladva	\$138,996

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
High Stakes Week  Bombay Club Tallinn, Estonia  €10,000 NLH KO Aug. 4 Entries: 16 Prizepool: \$87,984	1 Robert Heidorn	\$43,992
	2 Teun Mulder	\$26,325
	3 Juan Duenas	\$17,667

Event	Player	Payout (POV)
High Stakes Week  Bombay Club Tallinn, Estonia  €10,000 NLH Invitational Aug. 5 Entries: 97 Prizepool: \$1,170,000	1 Mounir Tajiou	\$312,039
	2 Tuen Mulder	\$201,357
	3 David Chen	\$143,793
	4 Robert Heidorn	\$110,565
	5 Kevin Paque	\$88,452
	6 Morten Klein	\$70,785
	7 George Ana	\$56,628
	8 Joni Jouhkimainen	\$45,279
	9 Ilya Nikiforov	\$36,270

All payouts in USD.

# TOURNAMENTS



© MSPT

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Indiana Championship	1 John Kurfman	\$90,324 (840)
	2 Jason Mendoza	\$84,000 (700)
Ameristar East Chicago, IN	3 Pawel Kotara	\$48,087 (560)
	4 Paul Choi	\$36,368 (420)
	5 Benjamin Stuart	\$27,276 (350)
\$1,110 NLH Aug. 14-17 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 534 Prizepool: \$516,480	6 Michael Holm	\$20,710 (280)
	7 Ariel Pressman	\$16,164 (210)
	8 Varkey James	\$12,628 (140)
	9 Lee Rzentkowski	\$9,597 (70)



© FireKeepers

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Sizzlin' Summer Series	1 Ilyas Muradi	\$67,132 (360)
FireKeepers Battle Creek, MI	2 Michael Bowersock	\$45,000 (300)
	3 Chad Burlison	\$30,285 (240)
	4 Miles Reinhard	\$22,904 (180)
\$750 NLH Aug. 14-17 Entries: 484 Prizepool: \$318,120	5 Bryan Gwin	\$17,178 (150)
	6 Dustin Morris	\$13,046 (120)
	7 Jeffrey Hill	\$10,179 (90)
	8 Stephen Bartlett	\$7,953 (60)
	9 Jeffery Nurenberg	\$6,044 (30)



© PokerStars / Manuel Kovsca

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Women's Summer Festival	1 Jennifer Shahade	\$29,748
	2 Claire Taylor	\$18,760
The Clermont London, United Kingdom	3 Lynne Beaumont	\$13,400
	4 Tanya Masters	\$10,251
	5 Akiko Ota	\$7,906
£400 NLH Aug. 14-17 £100,000 GTD Entries: 193 Prizepool: \$134,000	6 Morgane Fevrier	\$6,070
	7 Miri Balen	\$5,052
	8 Valerie Morris	\$4,221
	9 Saara Benlamine	\$3,484



© WPT

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WPT Prime	1 Yohwan Lim	\$90,026 (324)
Asia Poker Arena Taipei City, Taiwan	2 Anonymous	NA
	3 Niko Koop	\$41,408 (216)
	4 Ching Wei Chen	\$29,504 (162)
NT\$120,000 NLH Aug. 17-18 Entries: 99 Prizepool: \$338,026	5 Giboum Kim	\$21,696 (135)
	6 Daniel Yang	\$16,512 (108)
	7 Hon Cheong Lee	\$13,024 (81)
	8 Chih Lin	\$10,624 (54)
	9 Patrik Demus	\$9,024 (27)

# TOURNAMENTS

Mark Darner



© PokerOrg / WSOP

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit	1 Mark Darner	\$63,362 (264)
	2 Donovan Dean	\$42,096 (220)
Harrah's Cherokee, NC	3 Ari Engel	\$28,835 (176)
	4 Steven Snyder	\$20,383 (132)
	5 Jordan Meltzer	\$14,884 (110)
\$2,200 NLH Aug. 17 \$150,000 GTD Entries: 125 Prizepool: \$250,000	6 Jeremy Joseph	\$11,240 (88)
	7 Christopher Moon	\$8,788 (66)
	8 Sebastian Crema	\$7,122 (44)
	9 Juan Tejada	\$5,992 (22)

Derek Sudell



© Parx

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Big Stax	1 Derek Sudell	\$57,960 (252)
	2 Joseph Palma	\$33,120 (210)
Parx Bensalem, PA	3 Dillon Ott	\$20,286 (168)
	4 James Hundt	\$14,490 (126)
\$2,500 NLH 8-Max Aug. 17-19 Entries: 72 Prizepool: \$165,600	5 Angel Lopez	\$11,178 (105)
	6 Ryan Eriquezzo	\$8,694 (84)
	7 Samuel Rosen	\$7,452 (63)
	8 Michael Wolff	\$6,624 (42)

Brian Luo



© Parx

Event	Player	Payout
Big Stax	1 Brian Luo	\$115,409 (600)
	2 Rafael Ben-Yaish	\$73,176 (500)
Parx Bensalem, PA	3 Jacob Millstein	\$47,710 (400)
	4 David Meschel	\$34,875 (300)
	5 Joseph Ritchie	\$26,130 (250)
\$1,500 NLH Aug. 15-17 Entries: 376 Prizepool: \$511,360	6 Grant Wang	\$19,687 (200)
	7 Bradley Siegel	\$15,136 (150)
	8 Daniel Buzgon	\$11,659 (100)
	9 Ziad Yagham	\$9,358 (50)

Yves Perras



© Playground

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit	1 Yves Perras	\$72,000 (432)
	2 Scott Carragher	\$47,880 (360)
Playground Poker Kahnawake, Canada	3 Jacob Parent	\$34,560 (288)
	4 Sebastien Proulx	\$25,200 (216)
C\$400 NLH Aug. 18-24 C\$500,000 GTD Entries: 2,289 Prizepool: \$547,568	5 Joseph Machaalani	\$18,720 (180)
	6 Julian Altieri Roman	\$13,824 (144)
	7 Jikai Zhang	\$11,016 (108)
	8 Howard Leung	\$8,064 (72)
	9 Steven Sousa	\$6,246 (36)

© Playground



Event	Player	Payout
WSOP Circuit	1 Chun Kwan	\$144,000 (1080)
	2 Sebastien Proulx	\$95,040 (900)
Playground Poker Kahnawake, Canada	3 Kevin Javier	\$67,320 (720)
	4 Alex Bylicki	\$48,240 (540)
C\$1,000 NLH Aug. 24-28 C\$800,000 GTD Entries: 1,549 Prizepool: \$988,126	5 Senthuran Vijayaratnam	\$35,280 (450)
	6 Kevin Bergeron	\$25,920 (360)
	7 Tommy Dion	\$19,440 (270)
	8 Manish Ralh	\$14,904 (180)
	9 Dylan Federman	\$11,524 (90)



© MSPT

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
MSPT	1 Robert Noce	\$131,258 (840)
	2 Jared Mohesky	\$80,775 (700)
Hollywood Casino Maryland Heights, MO	3 Jeff Kenny	\$59,136 (560)
	4 Jacob Long	\$43,989 (420)
	5 Umut Ozturk	\$33,563 (350)
\$1,110 NLH Aug. 21-24 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 676 Prizepool: \$655,720	6 Dino Galic	\$25,694 (280)
	7 Gerald Cunniff	\$19,793 (210)
	8 Brian Craig	\$15,203 (140)
	9 Ethan Jaggie	\$11,924 (70)

© PokerOrg / WSOP



Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit	1 Bohdan Slyvinskyi	\$177,562 (840)
	2 Demetrius Campbell	\$118,368 (700)
Harrah's Atlantic City, NJ	3 Chang Feng Fan	\$81,525 (560)
	4 Michael Marder	\$57,226 (420)
\$1,700 NLH Aug. 21-25 Entries: 635 Prizepool: \$962,025	5 Johnny Bromberg	\$40,955 (350)
	6 Andreas Kershaw	\$29,895 (280)
	7 Daniel McGinnis	\$22,266 (210)
	8 Rafael Ben-Yaish	\$16,929 (140)
	9 Jordan Schmeible	\$13,144 (70)



© PokerOrg / WSOP

Event	Player	Payout
WSOP Circuit	1 Vera Dong	\$51,158 (180)
	2 Andreas Kniep	\$32,304 (150)
Graton Rohnert Park, CA	3 Songtao Bao	\$21,542 (120)
	4 Noah Curhan	\$15,219 (90)
\$3,300 NLH Aug. 21-22 Entries: 52 Prizepool: \$156,000	5 Daniel Lee	\$11,431 (75)
	6 Bin Duan	\$9,165 (60)
	7 Adam Tschinkel	\$7,879 (45)
	8 Simon Hong	\$7,302 (30)

# TOURNAMENTS

Stefan Clemens



© PokerOrg / WSOP

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
WSOP Circuit Graton	1 Stefan Clemens	\$151,543 (840)
	2 Jonathan Warta	\$103,315 (700)
Rohnert Park, CA \$1,700 NLH	3 Norman Yeung	\$71,351 (560)
	4 Noel Rodriguez	\$50,198 (420)
	5 Vishnu Chada	\$35,990 (350)
Aug. 22-25 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 520 Prizepool: \$787,800	6 Rineeth Raghu	\$26,305 (280)
	7 Timothy Boerum	\$19,607 (210)
	8 Michael McQuaid	\$14,911 (140)
	9 Abhishek Paliwal	\$11,573 (70)



Nika Futterman

© Wynn

Event	Player	Payout
Signature Series	1 Nika Futterman	\$65,993 (456)
	2 Long Ma	\$55,000 (380)
Wynn Las Vegas, NV	3 Bandar Alireza	\$36,449 (304)
	4 Anonymous	NA
	5 Tyler Fowles	\$22,161 (190)
\$600 NLH Aug. 28-31 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 784 Prizepool: \$399,840	6 Darren Rabinowitz	\$16,868 (152)
	7 Daniel Yu	\$12,586 (114)
	8 Bobby Poe	\$9,340 (76)
	9 Peter Hengsakul	\$6,687 (38)

Amritraj Singh



© Wynn

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Signature Series	1 Amritraj Singh	\$54,750 (420)
	2 George Diab	\$46,613 (350)
Wynn Las Vegas, NV	3 Craig Mason	\$31,030 (280)
	4 Jeremy Becker	\$24,373 (210)
	5 Daniel Jones	\$18,939 (175)
\$600 NLH Aug. 21-24 \$250,000 GTD Entries: 650 Prizepool: \$331,500	6 Rahul Deevra	\$14,414 (140)
	7 Khang Pham	\$10,804 (105)
	8 Raj Ramakrishnan	\$7,923 (70)
	9 Aramis Hayrapetyan	\$5,586 (35)

Robert Anderson



© PokerOrg

Event	Player	Payout (POY)
Potomac Poker Open	1 Robert Anderson	\$211,915 (900)
	2 Lucas Vergara	\$148,400 (750)
MGM National Harbor Oxon Hill, MD	3 Brett Bassock	\$94,410 (600)
	4 Samuel Rosen	\$62,855 (450)
	5 Frank Zhang	\$48,400 (375)
\$3,000 NLH Aug. 22-25 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 377 Prizepool: \$1,017,000	6 Nicholas Verderamo	\$40,085 (300)
	7 Anthony Ibrahim	\$33,590 (225)
	8 Chu-Ming Wu	\$27,370 (150)
	9 Jason Raber	\$21,195 (75)

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# Final Table Takedown: Nick Rigby Wins RunGood Grand Prix

By Craig Tapscott



Nick Rigby is from South Park, Pennsylvania, located just outside Pittsburgh. He is a regular PLO cash player and sports betting enthusiast, but he has gained notoriety in recent years for his hold'em play, specifically for his deep run in the 2021 *World Series of Poker* main event. Rigby turned heads with his 52nd-place finish, using big bluffs and aggressive play to entertain viewers and keep his opponents on their toes. It was during this run that he popularized the hand nickname for 2-3 offsuit, calling it the 'Dirty Diaper' as he used it to bluff one player off of pocket kings.

He made a second deep run in 2023. He caught the attention of the poker world once again, but this time it was for sitting out two orbits to receive a massage. He eventually settled for a 131st-place finish. Rigby has also found wins at the Hard Rock in South Florida, and last year earned his first *WSOP Circuit* ring in a *Crazy 8's* online event.

The *RunGood Poker Series* ambassador has already found success on the regional tour, with runner-up finish in Cleveland and a win and another second-place showing in Tunica. Most recently, he took down the *RGPS Grand Prix* main event in Elizabeth, Indiana, earning \$52,323 and another ring.

*Card Player* caught up with Rigby to break down a couple key hands from his most recent win.

**Event:** RunGood Poker Series Grand Prix  
**Buy-In:** \$800  
**Entrants:** 358  
**Prize Pool:** \$250,600  
**First-Place Prize:** \$52,323

**Craig Tapscott:** Please set up the table dynamics for us, Nick.

**Nick Rigby:** Coming into the final table, I had 2,680,000 in chips, roughly 25% of the 10,700,000 total chips in play.

Although my loose-aggressive image preceded me, and all the other players recognized me, I sat down at the table to apply pressure and do it often. The pay jumps and ICM implications were in my favor.

**CT:** Did you have a good read on your opponents?

**NR:** Well, the second-largest stack at the table had roughly 17% of the chips in play and was indulging in alcoholic beverages. But he was quick to punt his stack away against the player who became the villain in these two detailed hands.

**CT:** You were six-handed at this point. What was the plan?

**NR:** Most players at this juncture of the tournament would veer on the side of caution in terms of opening hands against a villain who is second in chips and has direct position to my left. But I had only seen this player play one hand, A-K, and it was to receive the previously-mentioned punt. So, I continued to apply maximum pressure, six-handed, once I had chipped up to 3,500,000 in chips (roughly 33% of the chips in play).

**CT:** You never slow down, from what I've witnessed.

**NR:** Well, as in most cases, while I'm on the felt, I'm playing for first place.



**HAND NO. 1**

**Stacks:** Nick Rigby – 3,500,000 (70 BB)  
 Villain – 2,800,000 (56 BB)  
**Blinds:** 25,000-50,000 with a 50,000 big blind ante  
**Players remaining:** 6

**NR:** Action kicks off with me on the button holding K-10. A very nice starting hand in position. I'm applying a high amount of pressure, opening anywhere from 2.5 to 4x in particular spots.

**Rigby raised from the button to 150,000 holding K♦ 10♠, and the villain called from the small blind. The big blind folded.**

**CT:** What was running through your mind when he called?

**NR:** Other than waking up with A-K, he had played pretty passively and, in my opinion, was quite content just being second in chips.

I didn't think this player would get too out of line, especially since he was in the small blind. He's going to protect his premium hands with large raises against my current strategy, which is opening nearly any two cards in position.

**CT:** Did you pick up anything else?

**NR:** He initially looked to be cutting out chips for a potential raise, but had some slight hesitancy and then just flattened.

My thinking was that the villain more than likely had a low to mid pair, whereas I see him raising pocket nines or better and A-K or A-Q.

**Flop:** J♦ 4♥ 4♦

**Villain checked. Rigby bet 300,000.**

**NR:** I continuation bet a near pot-sized bet. This isn't an awful flop for my hand as I have an over with the king, it also being diamonds, as well as a backdoor straight draw.

**CT:** What are you expecting from the villain?

If the villain has the aforementioned mid-pair, I could see him calling one street. There are many turns where I can apply maximum pressure. But in this case the villain elected to check-raise.

**Villain check-raised to 700,000.**

**NR:** I found this raise very interesting. My opponent's body language didn't ooze strength. It felt as if he was

uncomfortable in this spot, given my stack size.

**CT:** Could he ever be holding a four?

**NR:** I don't see many fours in the villain's range, A-J is a possibility, but also could be lumped in with his pre-flop raising range.

Even if he holds a jack, I think he would go for a larger raise to discourage me from peeling with two overs, diamond draw, etc. I stuck with my initial read that he was holding a hand like 5-5 through 8-8.

I elected to "click it back," as the kids say.

**Rigby reraised to 1,100,000.**

**CT:** What were you rep-

ping?

**NR:** I was representing an overpair to the board, A-J, or even a four. In my eyes, with this opponent, any mid-pair is folding, and honestly, a handful of weaker jacks, as it appears that my hand is quite strong.

My thought was that the villain understood his tighter image and was aware that I was cognizant of it as well. And with us being first and second respectively in chips, he'd let this one go.

**Villain folded. Rigby won the pot of 1,400,000.**

**CT:** Did you show?

**NR:** As if we needed to increase our LAG image, we windmilled over the K-10 offsuit. "That's some gangster shit!" said Carl "Uncle Johnny" Masters, who was also one of the six remaining players.

The villain took a brief walk away from the table, visibly irritated. A few hands later, he was heard telling his neighbor he had pocket threes.

This pot propelled me up to 4,600,000 in chips (roughly 43% of chips in play). A few orbits later, we were still six-handed when the next key hand came up.

**HAND NO. 2**

**Stacks:** Nick Rigby – 4,400,000 (73 BB)  
 Villain – 2,300,000 (38 BB)  
**Blinds:** 30,000-60,000 with a 60,000 big blind ante  
**Players remaining:** 6

**NR:** The action kicked off with me in the cutoff. I had an ace, and the first two players had folded. Both stacks in the blinds were very short, so we would be opening large again.

**Rigby opens to 200,000 from the cutoff holding A♦ 4♠. Villain raised from the button to 425,000.**

**NR:** This was our second encounter with this villain. I believe he was irritated by the way he played his alleged pocket threes.

**CT:** What did you make of his bet sizing?

**NR:** His three-bet sizing to me was interesting, as it is small. Three-bets had been a rare occurrence at this final table in general and had come from the blinds shoving seven or eight big blinds after I opened. I was definitely



**NR:** BINGO! We flopped top and bottom. He would be continuing all J-J, Q-Q, K-K hands, and the obvious A-K/A-Q. I expected him to potentially over-jam the flop with A-K/A-Q and the two hearts aboard.

**Rigby checked. Villain bet 450,000, and Rigby called.**

**NR:** We elected to just flat the ace high, heart draw board, anticipating a shove from our opponent on any turn.

**Turn: 6♠**

**Rigby checked. Villain moved all-in, and Rigby called. Villain revealed 10♥ 10♠.**

**RIVER: 7♦**

**Rigby won the pot of 6,850,000.**

**NR:** I then had 6,700,000 (roughly 63% of chips in play) and would continue to pressure

skeptical, as I didn't believe he thought I was going to fold.

I was putting him on a pair or A-K/A-Q. A lot of times, I'll fold the A-4 offsuit out of position, as it should only get you in trouble. However, my opponent made it enticing to call by three-betting to 425,000. Our prior history also played a role here. I was confident I'd get paid and stack him if I made a hand.

**Rigby called.**

**Flop: A♥ 8♠ 4♥**

the short stacks, each battling for pay jumps.

I both won and lost some flips, ultimately winning a large flip with pocket tens against A-K three-handed. I then won heads-up on just the second hand, where my opponent limp-called from the button for 15 big blinds with K-J offsuit after I jammed with A♥ 4♥.

He instantly called and found a king on the flop, but an ace on the turn secured the ring for me.

Follow Rigby on Twitter/X @GTO\_Diaper. ♠

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# GETTING OUT OF THE WAY

By Jonathan Little

When someone raises and then another player three-bets before the action gets to you, you must understand how tight you should play based on your opponents' ranges.

In the most extreme situation, when a tight player raises from first position and another tight player three-bets from second position, you should fold every hand besides A-A and K-K. This may seem extremely conservative, but take a look at how pocket jacks fares versus even two reasonably tight ranges.

J-J – 33.15%  
6-6+, A-10 suited+, K-J suited+, Q-J suited, J-10 suited, 10-9 suited, 8-7 suited, A-J offsuit+, K-Q offsuit+ – 24.56%  
10-10+, A-Q suited+, A-K offsuit – 42.29%

The second line is the initial preflop raiser's range and the third line is the tight three-bettors range. If you four-bet with J-J and get all-in, you will be against only premium hands.

J-J – 36.56%  
J-J+, A-K suited, A-K offsuit – 63.44%

Playing for all the money with 36% equity is not how you win at poker. Sure, you will make your opponents fold some amount of the time, but when the money goes in, you will be crushed. Do not fall into the detrimental habit of thinking that you "must" go broke every time you have a traditionally strong hand.

The factor that determines your hand's value is the

ranges you are up against. If you are against only premium hands, you need an incredibly strong hand to enter the pot. In the previous situation, you should simply fold your jacks.

In the real world against normal players, with 80-big blind effective stacks, when faced with an early position raise to three big blinds and a three-bet from another early position player to nine big blinds, you should four-bet to 23 big blinds with A-A, K-K, Q-Q, and A-K, and be willing to get all-in with all of them. You should fold everything else, including J-J and A-Q.

Calling the preflop three-bet is also not a great option because you will have a difficult time playing your hand after the flop.

Imagine you called instead of folded from middle position with A-Q. The flop comes Q-7-5. If your opponent bets and you call, if you face any additional aggression on the turn or river, it is safe to assume you are against at least top pair, top kicker or a better made hand. This should lead you to fold, but if you are folding this hand, you are folding almost every hand in your range, making you easy to run over.

This also applies to when you call with pocket jacks and the flop comes with three undercards. Instead of getting involved in this situation where you have huge reverse implied odds (meaning you will either win a small pot or lose a large pot), you can simply fold.

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 Onyx Super High Roller Series  
\$100,000 Invitational



**Markkos Ladev**  
7,400,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 27%  
After Flop: 15%  
After Turn: 7%



**Dejan Kaladjurdjevic**  
9,100,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 72%  
After Flop: 83%  
After Turn: 93%

### PREFLOP

With 10 players remaining and blinds of 100,000-200,000 with a big blind ante of 200,000, Markkos Ladev raised to 400,000 from under the gun. Dejan Kaladjurdjevic called from the button.

FLOP



Ladev checked, and Kaladjurdjevic bet 325,000. Ladev called.

TURN



Ladev checked. Kaladjurdjevic bet 1,200,000, and Ladev called.

RIVER



Ladev checked, and Kaladjurdjevic moved all-in. Ladev folded.

### COMMENTARY:

The *Onyx Super High Roller Series* \$100,000 Invitational was a unique event that combined initially separated fields of top pros and invited VIPs, drawing 88 entries for a total prize pool of \$8,536,000. When this hand occurred, 10 players remained, the bubble having burst a few spots prior. The remaining players were in the money for \$200,000, with a pay jump at ninth place to \$250,000. Preflop, Markkos Ladev opted to open a borderline hand. Dejan Kaladjurdjevic called, and both players flopped top pair. Neither player had a range advantage on the J-9-6 flop, which meant the out-of-position player should check pretty frequently. That's what Ladev did, and he had an easy check-call facing a small bet from Kaladjurdjevic. Nothing much changed on the turn, so Ladev continued with his plan, another check-call. The ace on the river was an interesting card, as Kaladjurdjevic improved to two pair and the board got much less friendly to Ladev's holding. Kaladjurdjevic's hand was easily worth an all-in shove. However, he could have also gone for a smaller bet to try to get value from some weaker hands, since it becomes hard to get paid off when blocking the two highest cards on the board. The shove didn't work, as Ladev found the fold, though he used some time banks before reluctantly giving it up.

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# “Do not fall into the detrimental habit of thinking that you ‘must’ go broke every time you have a traditionally strong hand.”

You may be thinking that if you are only four-betting with the nuts that your opponents can exploit you by folding every time. While that is true, remember you are laying them excellent pot odds to call before the flop by four-betting to 23 big blinds. If your opponents fold hands like 10-10 and J-10 suited, they are folding hands that are getting roughly the right pot odds to call.

If you are wondering why I advocate four-betting A-K and getting all-in with it, it's because A-K actually does not fare so well against a premium all-in range.

A-K suited – 45.68%  
10-10+, A-Q suited+, A-K offsuit – 54.32%

The problem with folding once you put in 23 out of your 75-big blind stack is that you only need to win 34% of the time to break even. Against an extremely strong range of only J-J+ and A-K, your A-K offsuit will win 40% of the time. When you only need to win 34% of the time and you will win 40% of the time, you cannot justify folding unless you are on the bubble of a tournament. The only other time you should consider folding A-K offsuit is when you are against the super-tight range of Q-Q+ and A-K suited.

This same logic of playing tightly against a raise and a three-bettor also applies when the action comes from

players in later positions. Even when facing a cutoff raise and a button three-bet, you should play somewhat snugly from the blinds. In general, when you have to risk a ton of chips before the flop, you should only play your best hands because you do not need to stick around often at all to take advantage of your opponents' large bets.

This also holds true when playing in cash games where a player normally plays tightly but when he raises before the flop, he makes it 10 big blinds. Just sit back and wait for the nuts. While it is exciting to ram and jam all-in with a wide range, unless you are against two overly loose, aggressive opponents, you should bide your time and wait until your opponents have weaker ranges.

If you want to improve your preflop game, I put together a Five-Day Preflop Challenge. This challenge is completely free inside *Card Player* Poker School! ♠



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](http://PokerCoaching.com/CardPlayer).

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 Onyx Super High Roller Series  
\$100,000 Invitational



Jamil Wakil  
13,850,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 53%  
After Flop: 16%  
After Turn: 80%



Jesse Lonis  
17,125,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 46%  
After Flop: 84%  
After Turn: 20%

### PREFLOP

With eight players remaining and blinds of 125,000-250,000 with a big blind ante of 250,000, Jamil Wakil limped in from the small blind. Jesse Lonis raised to 1,100,000 from the big blind, and Wakil called.



Wakil checked, and Lonis bet 425,000. Wakil check-raised to 1,100,000. Lonis called.



Wakil checked. Lonis bet 3,200,000, and Wakil folded.

### COMMENTARY:

Both players were pretty deep blind vs. blind this hand, and there were final table pay jumps to consider, which incentivizes a limp-heavy strategy from a covered player in the small blind. Jamil Wakil went that route and faced a raise from Jesse Lonis, who had a hand that was good to raise for chips but one that the solver prefers to check more often under ICM pressure. In any case, Lonis' bottom pair fit into either a checking or small betting strategy on the flop. Checking could control the pot and navigate to showdown, while betting small could gain some value from weaker pairs, nines with worse kickers, and protect his hand from a queen or jack hitting on the turn for free. He opted for the small bet, and Wakil went for an unusual raise with just backdoor equity and queen high. Perhaps he expected Lonis to be out of line in that spot and didn't feel confident about getting to showdown even when his queen-high was best. Once Lonis called and Wakil picked up some showdown value on the turn with third pair, checking made sense. Lonis then had a decision between trying to get to showdown or turning his hand into a bluff. Lonis shouldn't arrive at the turn with many hands worse than 10-9 after calling a flop check-raise, so despite having a pair, he was actually near the bottom of his range. Turning the hand into a bluff worked out perfectly as he got a hand he was targeting, a higher pair that wasn't top pair, to fold.

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# 7 Essential Adjustments To Crush Small Buy-in Events

By Alexander Fitzgerald

Small buy-in tournaments may have modest stakes, but they're packed with opportunity — if you know how to adjust. In this article, we'll cover seven key strategic shifts that can give you a major edge over the average field.

## Don't Bluff Without A Good Reason

I play primarily cash games these days, despite the fact tournaments have treated me well in the past. The reason for that is because bluffs don't work as well as they used to.

In the past, many novice players were playing tournaments in the hopes of hitting a big score. You would realize their range was capped at one pair and then you'd triple barrel them. They would have no idea what to do, and they would fold. You could do this repeatedly until you got a stack. This made tournaments a lot of fun even if you didn't pick up some cards.

Now, you can still bluff people, especially if they traveled for a special tournament or if they paid more for the buy-in than they're comfortable with. But if you're playing a local \$200 or \$500 tournament, many people sit down knowing they have to be willing to re-enter if someone takes the fight to them.

That doesn't mean these tournaments aren't still valuable.

Most people call down too much. However, your results are going to be more streaky in these events. If you only can play one of these events every couple of weeks, you can easily go months and months without a cash. That's what happens when you can't manufacture pots like you used to be able to.

The way you can exploit the fact that no one wants to fold now is by value betting more thinly versus those players. You can easily get three streets off of second pair second kicker now.

You can also still selectively use the best bluffing lines versus people who are clearly trying to take the game seriously and are generally playing solid. However, don't go overboard with the bluffs without a damn good reason. Save those for the times you're playing for a bracelet or major title.

## Decide If You're Playing For The Win

Before you sit down, you need to know what you're playing for. You constantly see people deep in a local tournament having no idea what they're trying to do. They're facing a thin ICM spot, and THAT'S when they choose to talk to themselves about playing for the win.

You are not going to be unprepared. You are going to go

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in with a clear attitude.

Would a final table be meaningful to you? Would an eighth-place finish change your life? How about fourth place?

If the answer is “no” to all of these questions, then go ahead and play for the win. Get some valuable live short-handed experience and learn how to close tournaments. That kind of experience will be extremely helpful down the line if you ever get to a major final table. You don’t want to be live heads-up your first time in a major tournament.

### Be Ready To Re-Enter

If you need to re-enter, there’s no shame in that. It’s essentially just another tournament buy-in. It’s no different than late regging for a tournament down the street by driving there. The money from the previous buy-in doesn’t matter anymore. It’s like the day just started again.

One of the advantages of playing tournaments these days is getting multiple shots at a prize pool. That doesn’t mean you have to go bananas and do anything you normally wouldn’t do. But if a flip and a bluff doesn’t work out, it’s not the end. Re-enter if you’re comfortable with the stack you’re about to receive.

### Call More As Opposed To Three-Betting

There was a time when you could three-bet just about any open in a tournament and the initial opener had no idea what to do. I wrote a book that talked about how good this play was.

Unfortunately, those days are gone. You now have people who will flat your three-bet and try to outplay you post-flop. A three-bet won’t scare the players behind you as much anymore, so they’re more likely to call. If you’re just spamming

three-bets in there constantly it’s likely you’ll be in some inflated pots with goofy hands, sometimes out of position. Not good.

You can still three-bet versus mediocre players who open too much, but try to be more selective about what you do it with. The big cards work well post-flop, because solid top pairs tend to work heads-up. Suited-gappers work well too as bluffs because they give you significant equity on a number of boards.

The hands that work better as cold calls are suited aces, suited connectors, suited Broadways, and pocket pairs. These hands make two pair, sets, straights, and flushes, which usually can take down a large pot multi-way.

You also want to call more in local tournaments with these hands because it allows recreational players behind you to flat more and get involved with mediocre hands.

### Value Bet Extremely Thinly

Your opponents are cold calling and raising with hands that are extremely weak. That means if you flop a decent top pair you have to start thinking about three streets of value. You don’t have to bet huge on every street, but you have to get something.

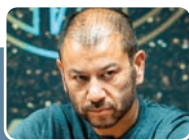
When draws come in, they have those combinations much less of the time now. They’re far more likely to have some mediocre pair. You have to value bet thinly even on those scare cards, especially when you consider how few of them can raise-bluff you on later streets with a blocker.

### Raise In Preparation Of Multi-Way Pots

When you raise in earlier position now you have to anticipate the pot is going to include four or five people. That means offsuit big cards are going to go down in value.

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 Onyx Super High Roller Series  
\$100,000 Invitational



**Rob Yong**  
21,050,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 55%  
After Flop: 92%  
After Turn: 95%



**Dejan Kaladjurdjevic**  
10,075,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 44%  
After Flop: 8%  
After Turn: 5%

### PREFLOP

With eight players remaining and blinds of 125,000-250,000 with a big blind ante of 250,000, Rob Yong limped in from the small blind. Dejan Kaladjurdjevic checked from the big blind.



Both players checked.



Both players checked.



Yong bet 1,500,000, and Kaladjurdjevic called.

### COMMENTARY:

Offsuit hands that include one high card and one low card are some of the best combinations to raise as bluffs pre-flop. That’s because these hands have a good blocker to strong hands, they have some high-pair value if they do see the flop, but they can’t really stand much heat if they limp in and face aggression. K-4 falls into this category and should have been mostly raised in Rob Yong’s seat, but he called instead. Dejan Kaladjurdjevic had a hand that could have been raised for chips, but was better off checking under ICM pressure, so that’s what he did. After the flop, the worst hands with a king in them should fall into the checking range for Yong most of the time, and he did play it slow. Kaladjurdjevic had no reason to bet since queen-high could occasionally win at showdown. On the turn, he had a kicker that didn’t play, so he checked again since his opponent wouldn’t call with many worse hands and could have still been trapping. The river put trips on board, giving both players full houses, and it was Yong’s last chance to get some value. Recognizing that, he bombed for twice the size of the pot. Kaladjurdjevic would have gotten to the river with so many bad hands with the checkdown line, and he would have often bet hands stronger than his on a prior street. He wrestled with the decision for quite a while, but he did pay Yong off. In the end he simply had to strong of a hand to fold.

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Why? Those hands make pairs, and if a multi-way pot gets large, typically one pair isn't worth anything anymore.

You want to play the suited connectors more now if you're going to raise from earlier position. You also want to play those aforementioned suited aces, pocket pairs, and suited Broadways.

**Shove Light, Call Tight**

Deep in the tournament, people start getting attached to their chips. They worked four hours to cultivate them after all. That means they don't call with enough hands when you move all-in on them. That means you should be shoving on them constantly when they likely have too many hands they're raising with. They're going to fold and forfeit the chips to you again and again.

However, if they suddenly wake up and move all their chips in on you, you can't be calling them wide. They likely finally woke up with a hand, otherwise they wouldn't be risking all their hours of work and re-entries on the hand. Fold more when they finally do take a stand.

**Conclusion**

Winning consistently in small buy-in events isn't about fancy moves — it's about smart, targeted adjustments. Master these seven, and you'll turn soft fields into serious profit. ♠



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

# PUNT OF THE DAY: THREE OF A KIND IN A THREE-WAY POT, WILL I THREE BULLET?

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.*

If you've played enough poker, you know not just what it's like to tilt, but all the different flavors of tilt. There's the classic "I just got bad beat" tilt, and "this guy next me won't shut up" tilt, or "a short stack just doubled again" tilt, etc.

Occasionally an experienced player will recognize they're feeling of one type of tilt, overcorrect, and find a whole other different type of tilt.

During *EPT Monte Carlo* in 2022, I busted the main event and then late-registered a \$25,000 single day high roller. I almost immediately busted two bullets and hit the cage again to register for a third time.

Back in my seat, Adrian Mateos raised the cutoff and I looked down at K-Q offsuit in the big blind, sitting on 25 big blinds. Registration closed in 10 minutes.

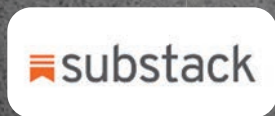
Every fiber of my being was telling me to just call, as I really did not want to three-bet. But I recognized these scared emotions were the product of tilt and asked myself what the best

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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[samgreenwoodpoker.substack.com](http://samgreenwoodpoker.substack.com)



play was. I decided to shove, got called by a pocket pair, lost a flip, and was left with reality of entering the tournament for a fourth time.

Shoving K-Q offsuit may have been a solver-approved play, but it's chosen less frequently than calling. I was scared, recognized that fear, overcorrected, and put too much money in the pot.

In this edition of *POTD*, we return to Cyprus for the *EPT* series to look at a hand from 2023. I had busted the \$50,000 super high roller in level 1 in a cooler. I took some time to cool off as I prepared for bullet no. 2, and told myself I was going to play my best poker.

Then I flopped a set and a scary turn rolled off. As I was in the hand, I convinced myself I was playing how I'd normally play. I wasn't going to let busting one bullet change my strategy. Or was I?

Every poker player knows the feeling of seeing monsters under the bed when they're running bad. If you're feeling that way it's important to correct it, but calibration is important. Looking back on this hand, I can see that I was not playing my best.

Deep down, I was afraid of three-bulleting the tournament, but that concern made it much more likely I'd have to walk to the registration desk.

**Event:** 2023 *EPT* Cyprus \$50,000 Super High Roller

### The Hand

With blinds of 1,000-2,500 with a 2,500 big blind ante, Juan Pardo raised to 6,000 from the hijack. I called with 5♥5♠ in the small blind, and Joao Vieira called from the big blind.

**Flop:** J♠ 5♣ 3♠

Everyone checked around.

**Turn:** 4♥

I bet 6,000, and Joao raised to 21,000. Pardo folded, and I raised to 51,000. Joao raised to 120,000, and I moved all in for 250,000 total. Joao called with 7♥6♦.

**River:** 6♣

I failed to fill up on the river, and Joao won the pot with a turned straight.

### What Was I Thinking?

I considered leading on the flop, but I thought I only got leads on boards where hands in my range flopped open-enders or two pair. On a flop of J-5-3, that's not the case. I thought I needed a board like J-5-4.

The turn brought the 5-4-3 combo. I knew this was a good board for the big blind so I couldn't bet big, but I thought I could split off a blocking-bet range, and sets would have to be included in my blocking range.

Joao raised me and I was worried about straights, but I thought by reraising I was pushing a lot of equity against draws, lower sets, and two pair.

Once Joao four-bet less than all in, I thought most of his bluffs would be high-equity bluffs, and getting them to call or fold would be better than calling and playing half-pot effective stacks on the river.

### What I Got Wrong

I do get leads on the flop, and 5-5 is one of my highest frequency leads, but checking is fine. In *POTD* 21 (check out the Substack!), I wrote about a hand I played in November 2024 regarding turn strategy in a button vs. small blind vs. big blind three-way pot on a 7-6-6-10 board with a flush draw:

"In a heads-up pot, people understand you should play cautiously as the preflop raiser vs. the big blind on a board like 7-6-6. Well, on the turn, we're out of position vs. a big blind range that is basically the same as their preflop defense range



on a board that has 7-6-6 on it. You still must tread cautiously."

Want to know what hand in my past drilled this mechanic into me? Today's *POTD*. 7-6-6-10 flush draw and J-5-4-3 don't have that much in common, but they're both boards where the big blind has a lot of really good hands and the small blind and preflop raiser do not. Betting is fine and doesn't lose EV, but my overall range strategy is heavy on checking.

Facing a raise, I still have a very good hand with a lot of equity. The problem is we are deep. Each subsequent bet put into the pot will be larger, and as more money goes into the pot, my equity will decrease. I have 75% equity facing a turn raise, but only 49% equity facing a turn four-bet. There's a lot of value to be had putting in eight big blinds with 75% equity; there is no value putting in 100 big blinds with less than 50%.

Another minor note here is, against a 2.4x raise, Joao is mostly supposed to fold A-2 offsuit preflop. If he defends A-2 offsuit, that's 12 more straight combos he could have, which makes reraising the turn even worse.

When I just call his initial turn raise, I can get away from my hand on scary rivers, or induce bluffs, or just lose less money vs. turned straights. Once I three-bet, I think just calling the four-bet would have been best, but shoving was okay. However, I could have intuited that having the 5♣ makes me less inclined to go all-in. Some of the four-bet bluffs Joao needs to reluctantly call off could be 5-x with a flush draw.

By just calling the turn, I'd allow myself to potentially check-fold some scary rivers. Such as, to pick an example at random, the 6♣!

### Types Of Errors Made

Too Much Money

Misunderstanding Multi-Way Mechanics

### Grade

In this punt, instead of being present and playing the hand to the best of my abilities, I was thinking, "What would someone who hadn't busted their first bullet already do?" It's a bad mindset to be in and caused me to play the hand poorly.

That being said, the hand is loosely solver-approved, and getting in a bunch of money with a set when your opponent never has a higher set can never be too bad a play. B- ♠



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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# SCHEDULES

FOR COMPLETE TOURNAMENT RESULTS AND LISTINGS, VISIT [CARDPLAYER.COM](http://CARDPLAYER.COM)

SEPTEMBER	Sept. 2-Oct. 5	DeepStack Extravaganza III	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Sept. 17-Oct. 8	World Series of Poker Europe	Kings Casino ■ Rozvadov, Czech Republic
	Sept. 19-Oct. 2	Poker Masters	ARIA PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	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
	Sept. 27-Oct. 13	WPT Prime Lodge Championship	The Lodge Card Club ■ Round Rock, TX
OCTOBER	Oct. 1-12	European Poker Tour	Casino Malta ■ St. George's Bay, Malta
	Oct. 2-13	WSOP Circuit - Maryland	Horseshoe Casino ■ Baltimore, MD
	Oct. 2-Nov. 2	Fall Classic	Wynn ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Oct. 4	Haig's Birthday Bash Tournament	Ocean's 11 Casino ■ Oceanside, CA
	Oct. 6-Nov. 23	DeepStack Showdown	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Oct. 9-20	WSOP Circuit - Florida	Harrah's Casino & Resort ■ Pompano Beach, FL
	Oct. 10-12	October Poker Weekend	Turning Stone Casino & Resort ■ Verona, NY
	Oct. 14-25	PGT PLO Series II	ARIA PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Oct. 17-Nov. 2	WPT Bay 101 Shooting Star	Bay 101 ■ San Jose, CA

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 Onyx Super High Roller Series  
\$100,000 Invitational



**Jamil Wakil**  
14,350,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 62%  
After Flop: 68%  
After Turn: 68%



**Jesse Lonis**  
22,225,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 37%  
After Flop: 32%  
After Turn: 32%

### PREFLOP

With five players remaining and blinds of 250,000-500,000 with a big blind ante of 500,000, Jamil Wakil limped in from the small blind. Jesse Lonis checked from the big blind.



Wakil checked, and Lonis bet 750,000. Wakil called.



Wakil checked. Lonis bet 1,800,000, and Wakil called.



Wakil checked, and Lonis moved all-in. Wakil called for 11,300,000.

### COMMENTARY:

Sitting on 30 big blinds, Jamil Wakil was supposed to play mostly raises from the small blind with A-K. He decided to limp instead, which can be used as part of a mixed strategy. He could also have simply been trying to catch Jesse Lonis raising more often than he was supposed to from the big blind. Regardless, Lonis opted to see the flop for the minimum with his suited hand. After flopping a decent draw with no showdown value, Lonis decided to start bluffing. Since the stack-to-pot ratio (SPR) was so deep, he needed to size up if he wanted to put pressure on Wakil, and that's what he did by betting half the pot. Wakil had a good hand, but one that was too weak to raise under ICM pressure, so he made a standard call. On the turn, Lonis' draw improved, but he still had a hand that could never win at showdown, giving him a clear spot to bluff. He used another large size to further pressure Wakil, who had a hand that was much too strong to fold. That meant they saw the river with more than pot to play for, and the board got even scarier for Wakil's one-pair hand. Facing an all-in bet, Wakil's hand was indifferent according to the solver. Holding the A♥ had mixed bluff-catching value, as that card would be present in both bluffs and value. However, not having a spade was quite good, since Lonis would sometimes bluff with missed spades on that board. Wakil made the hero call after a long tank and saw the bad news, settling for fifth place and \$670,000.

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

	Oct. 23-Nov. 3	WSOP Circuit - Lake Tahoe	Caesars Republic Lake Tahoe ■ Lake Tahoe, NV
	Oct. 27-29	Super High Roller Bowl	ARIA PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Oct. 29-Nov. 9	WSOP Circuit - Choctaw	Choctaw Casino Resort ■ Durant, OK
	Oct. 30-Nov. 18	WPT bestbet Scramble	bestbet ■ Jacksonville, FL
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	Nov. 3-12	NAPT Las Vegas	Resorts World ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Nov. 6-17	WSOP Circuit - Chicago	Grand Victoria Casino ■ Elgin, IL
	Nov. 6-16	Fall Poker Round Up	Wildhorse Resort & Casino ■ Pendleton, OR
	Nov. 10-23	Trailblazer Poker Tour	Texas Card House ■ Spring, TX
	Nov. 12-25	WSOP Circuit - Los Angeles	Commerce Casino ■ Commerce, CA
	Nov. 14-24	Texas PLO Roundup	Champions Club Texas ■ Houston, TX
	Nov. 19-Dec. 2	WPT Rock 'n' Roll Poker Open	Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino ■ Hollywood, FL
	Nov. 27-Dec. 8	WSOP Circuit - North Carolina	Harrah's ■ Cherokee, NC
<b>DECEMBER</b>	Dec. 2-22	WPT World Championship Festival	Wynn ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Dec. 3-14	European Poker Tour	Hilton Hotel ■ Prague, Czech Republic
	Dec. 4-18	World Series of Poker Paradies	Atlantis Resort & Casino ■ Paradise Island, Bahamas
	Dec. 26-Jan. 6	Trailblazer Poker Tour	Texas Card House - Rio Grande Valley ■ Edinburg, TX

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**TOPHER GOGGIN  
ALEXANDER FITZGERALD**

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The authors, Topher Goggin and leading coach Alexander Fitzgerald, understand these needs and have crafted a book that is perfect for such players. There are no complex hand range charts to master, solvers are conspicuous only from their absence, and the advice is given in terms that are easy to understand. This practical guide is everything you need to succeed now, without everything else you don't.





**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.

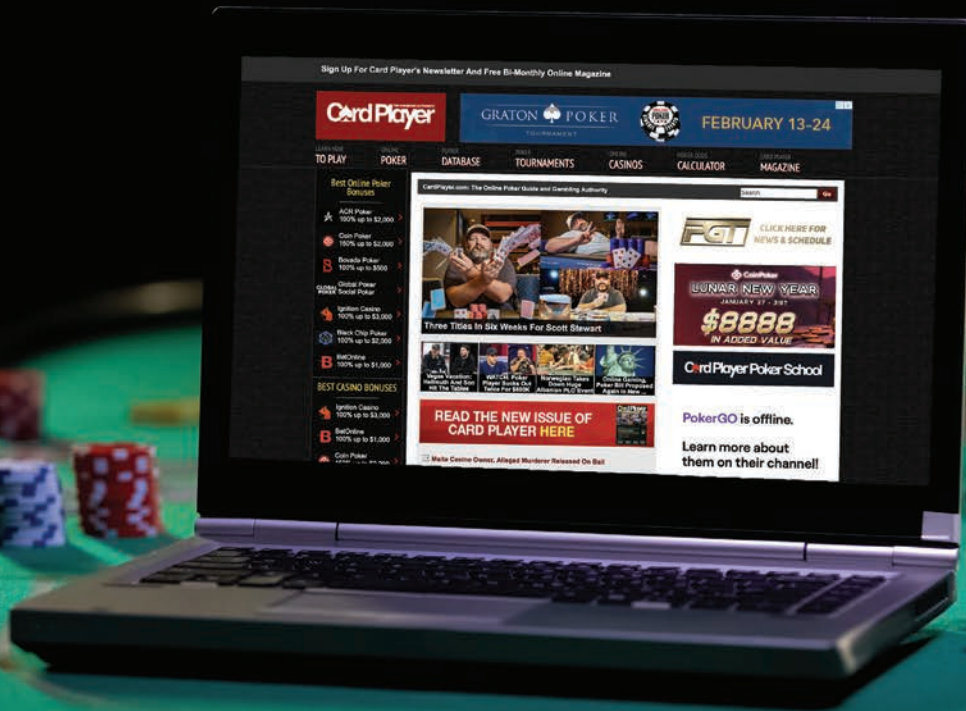
**Wheel** - A five-high straight.



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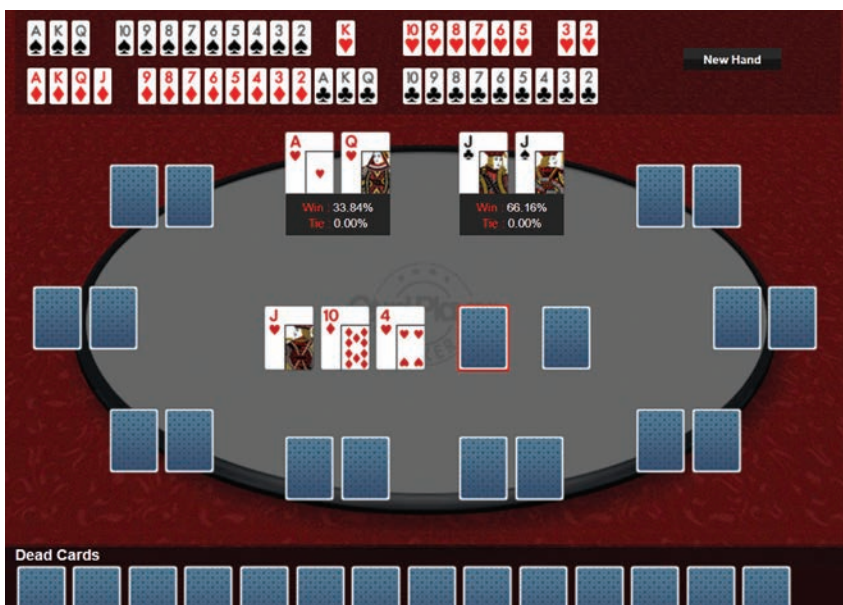
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## CALCULATING ODDS

Outs	Situation	After The Flop	After The Turn
21	Straight And Flush Draw, With Two Overcards	70%	45%
20		68%	43%
19		65%	41%
18	Straight And Flush Draw, With One Overcard	62%	39%
17		60%	37%
16		57%	35%
15	Straight And Flush Draw	54%	33%
14		51%	30%
13	Flush Draw With Gutshot	48%	28%
12	Flush Draw With One Overcard	45%	26%
11	Straight Draw With One Overcard	42%	24%
10	Flush Draw With One Overcard, Or With Gutshot	38%	22%
9		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%

# Card Player

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825,000

Villain (UTG)  
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BE THE SHARK  
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J♦ 9♠ 5♦

1,500-3,000

You are six-handed in a \$5,000 buy-in live tournament at blinds of 10,000-20,000. The under-the-gun player, a maniac, raises to 45,000 out of his 955,000 stack. Everyone folds to you in the big blind with **A♠ 7♠**.

**Question 1:** Should you fold, call, reraise to 140,000, or reraise to 180,000?

**Answer:** Most of your suited hands prefer to call preflop raises from the big blind. Especially against a maniac who may be inclined to four-bet and force you to fold your equity, you would much prefer to call and see a cheap flop.

You call and the flop comes **J♦ 9♠ 5♦**. You check and your opponent bets 35,000.

**Question 2:** Should you fold, call, raise to 80,000, or raise to 120,000?

**Answer:** Even though you only have ace-high, you have a backdoor straight draw and a backdoor flush draw. If your opponent had bet larger, folding would become the best play, but against a small bet, your pot odds are too good to fold. Due to your excellent pot odds and your opponent's loose range, you need to continue a lot of the time, including with most of your backdoor draws.

You call, and the turn is the **5♣**. You check, and your opponent bets 60,000.

**Question 3:** Should you fold, call, raise to 150,000, or raise to 250,000?

**Answer:** When your opponent bets small again on the turn, you are in a difficult spot because your ace high beats most bluffs. If you expect your opponent to check behind on the river with lots of busted draws (meaning you will get to realize your equity at the showdown), calling would be best. However, since your opponent is a maniac, you can expect them to frequently bet on the river, forcing you to fold on almost all cards. Even though you certainly could be ahead at the moment, the best play is to fold.

You fold and concede the pot. ♠



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