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**ART DIRECTOR** Wendy McIntosh

**MANAGING EDITOR** Steve Schult

**TOURNAMENT CONTENT MANAGER** Erik Fast

**DATA COORDINATOR** Morgan Young

**SENIOR STAFF WRITER** Tim Fiorvanti

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS** Sean Chaffin, Ryan Lucchesi, Craig Tapscott, Paul Oresteen, Mo Nuwwarah, Jesse Fullen

## CORPORATE

**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER** Koen Bongers

**VP INTL. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT** Dominik Karelus

**CONTROLLER/ ADVERTISING MANAGER** Mary Hurbi

**CASINO LIAISON OFFICER** Jody Ivener

**NATIONAL SALES MANAGER** Barbara Rogers

## SUBSCRIPTIONS/RENEWALS

1-866-LVPOKER

(1-866-587-6537)

PO Box 434

Congers, NY 10920-0434

cardplayer@cambeywest.com

## CONTACT US

cardplayer@cardplayer.com

editor@cardplayer.com

sales@cardplayer.com

distribution@cardplayer.com

results@cardplayer.com

schedules@cardplayer.com

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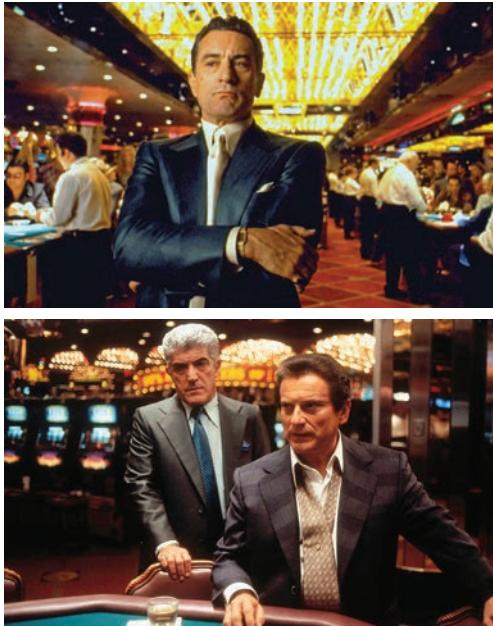
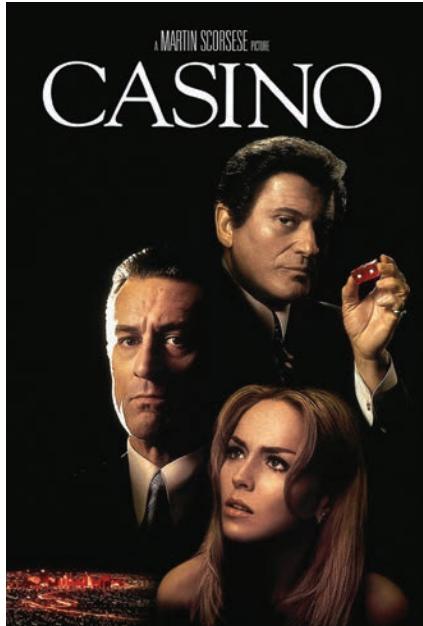
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# NEWS FROM THE GAMBLING WORLD

## ‘CASINO’ CELEBRATES 30-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

By Sean Chaffin



Movie fans got a firsthand look into mob-controlled Las Vegas from the 1960s through the '80s with the release of Martin Scorsese's film *Casino*. Scorsese released the movie 30 years ago with a fictional story inspired by real Sin City events.

The film premiered in New York on Nov. 14, 1995, and went into wider release on Nov. 22. It featured a star-studded cast including Robert De Niro, Joe Pesci, Sharon Stone, and Don Rickles. Regular poker players and actors James Woods and Kevin Pollak also had supporting roles in the film.

The film is based on the 1995 non-fiction book *Casino: Love and Honor in Las Vegas* by Nicholas Pileggi. The book explores the relationship between Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal and Tony "The Ant" Spilotro, and their dynamic amidst the backdrop of Mafia-controlled casinos in 1970s Las Vegas.

Rosenthal ran the Stardust, while Spilotro served as an enforcer. Spilotro later became involved in numerous burglaries and the FBI alleged he was responsible for more than 20 murders.

Scorsese adapted the book along with Pileggi for the screenplay. The film substituted fictional characters for Rosenthal and Spilotro – Sam "Ace" Rothstein (De Niro) and Nicky Santoro (Pesci), and most of their conversations were improvised on set.

At the time, Las Vegas was one of just a handful of jurisdictions with legalized casino gambling, hence the ties to organized crime. Since then, the landscape has changed drastically, with brick-and-mortar casinos in most states, as well as numerous online gambling options.

The fictional Tangiers Casino substituted for the Stardust

and other casinos run by Rosenthal and Spilotro, including the Fremont, Marina, and Hacienda. The real-life Riviera Casino on the Strip was used to film the interior scenes, and the Landmark Hotel served as the entrance of the Tangiers.

Pileggi, who also penned the book *Wiseguy* that inspired the Scorsese film *Goodfellas*, said shooting at a working casino made a major impact on the production.

"The quality you get out of shooting at a real casino is so much better than the feel you get out of the best soundstage," he said before the movie was released in 1995. "There's a quality in the paint and the rugs are worn out in the right way."

Beyond the ins and outs of the mob-run casino business, which included run-ins with the feds, the film also focuses on the turbulent relationship between Rothstein and his wife Ginger (Stone). The showgirl and former prostitute shares a daughter with Rothstein while also dealing with a growing drug problem.

Scorsese famously said that *Casino* has "no plot but a lot of action, a lot of story," explaining that the film's enduring appeal comes from its characters, mood, and "poetic cinema" rather than a traditional narrative.

While Scorsese earned a nomination for best director at the 1996 Golden Globes, Stone's performance won her the award for best actress in a motion picture - drama. Stone was also nominated for the Academy Award for best actress. The film has a 79% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes with critics, but sports a 93% with viewers.

"Martin Scorsese's fascinating new film *Casino* knows a lot about the Mafia's relationship with Las Vegas," critic Roger Ebert noted. "Like *The Godfather*, it makes us feel like eavesdroppers in a secret place. Unlike his other Mafia movies (*Mean Streets* and *Goodfellas*), Scorsese's *Casino* is as concerned with history as with plot and character."

*Casino* went on to make \$116 million worldwide (about \$250 million today) on a budget estimated to be between \$40 and \$50 million. About \$1 million of that budget was spent on costumes alone. De Niro had as many as 70 different outfits, while Stone had 40, and both were allowed to keep them after filming wrapped up. ♠

# WSOP MAIN EVENT RUNNER-UP FALLS SHY OF SQUID GAME TITLE

By Steve Schult

In the 2023 *World Series of Poker* main event, Steven Jones finished runner-up to Daniel Weinman, earning \$6.5 million for his performance.

Three years later, Jones had a chance for the second-largest score of his life.

Jones made it to the finale of *Squid Games: The Challenge*. The Netflix-based competition is based on the South Korean hit series with the same name and awards a whopping \$4.56 million to the winner.

However, unlike the WSOP main event, it's all or nothing. There's no prize for second place.

"Everyone is just on Cloud Nine right now," said Jones in an interview before the final challenges. "But there's nothing to celebrate just yet. If you don't win the money, it's technically the same thing as getting out in 456<sup>th</sup> place."

Unfortunately for Jones, he fell just shy of a title once again, finishing third.

The competition featured games from the series such as the glass bridge, sugar honeycombs, and tug of war. (Except when players are eliminated, they are not executed by guards.) The childhood game Red Light, Green Light was the final game, and was a staple of the hit drama. It even featured the same doll used in the series.

The four finalists had to race to the finish line, but could only move forward while the doll was singing. The first one to the finish line would win the prize. When the doll stopped singing and turned around, they had to remain completely still until it started again. Jones had the lead, but fell down.

California model Perla Figuereo was ultimately the winner, saying she held her breath during the final game to avoid movement. Netflix has already picked up the show for a third season.

Jones follows a long line of poker players jumping into the reality tv



landscape. *Survivor* has been a popular landing spot, with Jean-Robert Bellande, Ronnie Bardah, and Garrett Adelstein competing in the U.S. show, and Ilari Sahamies, Leo Margets, and Jackie Glazier appearing on international versions of the show.

Vanessa Rousso finished third on *Big Brother*, and David Williams made the finals of *MasterChef*. Maria Ho and Tiffany Michelle also made it onto *The Amazing Race*. And of course, poker pariah Annie Duke infamously finished runner-up in Donald Trump's *The Celebrity Apprentice* back in 2009 to the late Joan Rivers. ♠

## Tony G's Literal Horse Wins \$4.5 Million

By Sean Chaffin

After years of high-stakes poker success, Antanas "Tony G" Guoga scored one of his biggest gambling victories yet in an entirely different arena. The businessman and former European Parliament member co-owns a horse that won Australia's prestigious *Melbourne Cup* for an AUD \$4.5 million (\$2.9 million) payout.

The Lithuanian, who grew up in Australia, co-owns *Half Yours*, which took the top spot in one of the country's biggest horse races. It marked the 165th running of the event and Guoga was expectedly thrilled with the result.

"Childhood dream came true," he posted on X/Twitter. "What a race!"

Video of the race, which featured 24 entries, showed a tight pack of horses running down the backstretch. Then, *Half Yours* used the inside track to reach the front of the pack with about 300 meters left to the finish line.

The horse, ridden by Jamie Melham, pulled ahead by three lengths before crossing the finish line. Melham became only the second female jockey to win the race.

"This is what we do it for," she said after the win. "This is why we get up out of bed every morning at 4 a.m. It's tough. It's not all glorious and perfect as everyone can see sometimes."

It was a rainy race day, which Guoga said would improve



the horse's chances. It was a solid prediction as Guoga's stallion paid off for gamblers.

At the poker tables, Guoga has more than \$11 million in recorded tournament earnings. He won two short deck titles at the 2021 *Super High Roller Bowl Europe* for more than \$1.5 million, and returned the next year for another \$1.4 million score.

The former Rubik's Cube champion and basketball manager is also known to regularly jump in high-stakes cash games. More recently, he was involved in a massive cooler in a *Triton* event that cost him a \$1.4 million pot. ♠

# NCAA REVERSES COURSE ON PRO SPORTS BETTING RULE

By Sean Chaffin

In October, the NCAA decided that student-athletes and staff members could wager on pro sports, an activity that was previously banned. The association have now changed their minds.

In late November, NCAA officials said they were reversing the decision.

The move comes after several coaches and SEC commissioner Greg Sankey criticized the initial change. NCAA officials hoped the move would alleviate the workload on university staff, who had been faced with a growing number of gambling cases, mostly involving professional sports.

The NCAA noted that most of those cases only incurred minor infractions. However, the association released a statement saying the schools voted to reverse course.

"After a procedural 30-day period, two-thirds of Division I member schools have voted to rescind a previously approved rule change that would have allowed student-athletes and athletics department staff members to legally participate in sports betting on professional sports only," the NCAA said in a statement about the move.

"Because sports betting rules are common legislation, the ban on all forms of betting — for sports in which the NCAA sponsors a championship — will remain in place for all three NCAA divisions."

The reversal comes in the face of considerable betting-related scandals in the NCAA and other sports organiza-



tions. The association is currently investigating players from several schools as part of a probe into betting-related violations.

At the professional level, there are a litany of gambling scandals. A handful of NBA players and coaches were arrested on gambling-related crimes. Additionally, two Cleveland Guardians pitchers are accused of altering their performances to help gamblers win sports bets.

Sankey sent a letter to NCAA president Charlie Baker outlining his concerns. The letter alluded to the NBA betting scandal and believes allowing pro sports betting could jeopardize game integrity.

"The integrity of competition is directly threatened when anyone with insider access becomes involved in gambling," Sankey wrote. "Even when the wagers are placed on professional sports, the simple act of participating in gambling normalizes behavior, blurs boundaries, and erodes judgment." ♠

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# Illinois Sports Bets Drop After Tax Increase

By Sean Chaffin

Earlier this year, Illinois lawmakers enacted one of the most unique tax increases on its state's sports betting operators.

They levied a 25-cent tax on every wager placed with a regulated operator for the first 20 million bets. Then, the tax doubles for every wager placed beyond that threshold.

The changes were recently implemented, and now operators are seeing the effects. The Illinois Gaming Board reported that the total number of legal wagers dropped by 5 million in September. However, the total handle (the amount wagered) rose 9% to \$1.4 billion.

The September numbers appear to fall in line with warnings from those in the industry, who said the tax would chase away smaller bettors and leave many heading to offshore, unregulated operators.

"This data is a warning sign for Chicago, Illinois, and other state policymakers that overtaxing legal betting will have profound negative ramifications for the sustainability of the legal market and future tax revenues for state coffers," Sports Betting Alliance of Illinois spokeswoman Maura Possley told the *Chicago Tribune*.

Along with the per-wager levy signed into law this year, the state also hiked taxes on operators in 2024. That plan featured a tiered scale that reached up to 30%.

Several companies, including FanDuel and DraftKings, added the fees to bets, while others increased minimum



wagers.

"It is important to recognize that there is an optimal level for gaming tax rates that enables operators to provide the best experience for customers, maximize market growth, and maximize revenue for states over time," Flutter Entertainment (parent company of FanDuel) CEO Peter Jackson said after the tax increases.

"We are disappointed that the Illinois Transaction Fee will disproportionately impact lower wagering recreational customers while also punishing those operators who have invested the most to grow the online regulated market in the state."

However, more increases could be in the works. The *Tribune* reports that Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson has proposed an additional tax of 10.25% on sports betting revenue. That may be pre-empted by a bill state legislators are considering that would bar cities and other municipalities from taxing the industry. ♠

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 PokerStars NAPT Las Vegas  
\$5,300 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Michael Berk  
2,110,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 64%  
After Flop: 61%  
After Turn: 93%



Gal Yifrach  
2,450,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 26%  
After Flop: 8%  
After Turn: 0%

### PREFLOP

With five players remaining and blinds of 60,000-120,000 with a big blind ante of 120,000, Michael Berk raised to 240,000 from the cutoff. Gal Yifrach called from the big blind.

FLOP



Yifrach checked, and Berk bet 215,000. Yifrach called.

TURN



Both players checked.

RIVER



Yifrach bet 150,000. Berk raised to 535,000, and Yifrach folded.

### COMMENTARY:

The final five players in the *NAPT Las Vegas* \$5,300 main event had all secured \$172,650 for making it through a field of 738. They were playing for more than \$650,000 as the first-place prize, and Thomas Boivin was in prime position for that payout since he had more than 100 big blinds, while everyone else was sitting at 20 or fewer. That meant the other players were under considerable ICM pressure when Michael Berk opened and Gal Yifrach defended his big blind. The flop favored Berk's cutoff opening range, especially when he should be tighter than normal. Accordingly, he used a small size, and Yifrach had a clear call with a good hand, but one that didn't want to play a big pot. Things got interesting for Berk on the turn as he hit a straight, but one that blocked top pair. Since top pair is one of the main hands that calls another bet in this spot, A-10 is the straight combo that benefits most from checking back the turn. Interestingly, the solver likes betting the combos that have the A♣, but overall, A-10 is supposed to check pretty often. Berk found the check, and the river was a brick. Yifrach tried to eke out some value with a tiny river bet, but this was simply too thin on a board with a four-liner to a straight. The in-position player in this scenario should check back a lot of Broadway two pairs on the turn, and they're just going to shrug and call the small river bet with these hands. It's hard to see what sort of hands would pay off the bet, as Berk wouldn't have something like K-4 suited that he might open in the cutoff under conditions where ICM wasn't a factor. Yifrach was forced to dump his top pair after Berk sprung the trap, but at least it didn't cost him too much.

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

# WSOP PULLS DOCUSERIES AFTER CREATOR ADMITS TO ALTERING QUOTES WITH AI

By Tim Fiorvanti

The *World Series of Poker* opted to remove all six published episodes of the *No Limit* documentary from the company's YouTube channel. The move came after series creator Dustin Iannotti admitted to using artificial intelligence to alter quotes.

"WSOP has recently learned that AI-generated content was used in the *No Limit* docuseries to alter players' words without authorization," the company wrote in a statement. "We have removed the videos and will redo the editing to ensure the final product reflects our standards."

Alan Keating, one of the docuseries' subjects, sounded the alarm on Iannotti's move. The high-stakes cash game regular revealed documentary's editors altered his quotes using AI. In a since-deleted post, Keating accused the filmmakers of "putting words in his mouth."

In a response, Iannotti, who produced *No Limit*, acknowledged the edits but tried to minimize the effects of the alterations.

"Regarding [Keating's] concerns: We used AI technology on two brief sequences during post-production, totaling approximately 10 seconds across the 55 total minutes of episodes 5 and 6. As we've discussed with Alan directly, we should have consulted him on these editorial choices."

After pointing to "an overwhelmingly positive response" for episode 5, Iannotti referred to separate work he and his company have done for Keating's personal YouTube channel.

"Separately, as Alan's YouTube pro-



duction team, we've always had his best interests in mind and remain committed to our creative partnership. We wish this had been handled privately, but we understand emotions can run high with regards to creative work. We stand by our work and the overall integrity of the docuseries."

Keating responded, stating, "This doesn't deserve a reply, and you know why."

Like Keating's initial post, Iannotti deleted his statement and Keating did the same with his response.

Iannotti later claimed that despite the AI alterations, the context of Keating's statements remained the same. He said that he made the alterations in service of "faster scene transitions and narrative pacing." But those posts were deleted as well.

While there was no confirmation of additional AI-related alterations in any of the other four released episodes, or the two remaining, yet-to-be-

released episodes originally scheduled, the issue was deemed serious enough by the WSOP to pull the series indefinitely.

The documentary followed a number of subjects at the 2024 WSOP *Paradise* festival. That group included Keating, Daniel Negreanu, Phil Hellmuth, and Faraz Jaka, among others. While the documentary drew positive feedback after the first episode, many in the poker community criticized subsequent episodes for being too promotional of the WSOP brand.

Actress and WSOP bracelet winner Jennifer Tilly, who was also featured in the documentary, expressed significant concern in line with many others in the industry.

"Wow. Just wow. I don't even like being misquoted," Tilly said. "I can't imagine what it would be like for somebody to use my voice to put words in my mouth in a 'documentary.' This is so egregious on so many levels." ♠

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# LLINUSLLOVE WRECKS RYAN DEPAULO WITH EIGHT-HIGH HERO CALL

Poker Vlogger Stunned In CoinPoker Cash Game World Championship

By Tim Fiorvanti



In the midst of a \$50-\$100 no-limit hold'em session on CoinPoker, poker pro and content creator Ryan Depaulo thought he had accidentally stumbled into a lucrative spot.

Holding 3♦ 2♠, Depaulo called a preflop raise from online crusher Linus 'LLinusLL0ve' Loeliger in position. He flopped a flush draw on a K♥ K♠ 4♦ board, and raised Loeliger's bet on the flop.

On the K♦ turn, Loeliger led out again with a small bet.

"I'm gonna fold," Depaulo said to his audience, as he live streamed the action. But with an audible change of heart, he called anyway.

The K♣ river put quad kings on the board, neutralizing most of the middling pocket pairs Loeliger could be holding.

"I gotta go for it," Depaulo said. "I gotta rep the ace-high flush draw."

With a little more than a pot-sized bet left in his stack, and a river check from Loeliger, Depaulo went for one of the bigger bluffs of his career.

After about 15 seconds, Loeliger made the hero call, and turned over a stunner. His pocket eights, good for just eight-high, gave him an unbelievable win.

"What is this guy, the best in the world? Fuck!" the poker vlogger shouted, exasperatedly, as Loeliger pulled off one of the wilder call-downs in recent memory.

Loeliger is, in fact, considered one of the best players in the world, having spent the better part of the last decade among the most prolific high-stakes cash game players.

He also has over \$12 million in recorded tournament results, including two seven-figure cashes and a Triton title to his name.

The pot was significant for Depaulo, however, who has just shy of \$1 million in career earnings and admitted to playing outside of his comfort zone. The CoinPoker ambassador was staked by the site for half of his \$10,000 buy-in, and he opted to reload after he was felted.

"It's always darkest before the dawn," he would later joke.

It turned out to be a good decision for the popular YouTuber and new father, as he rebounded to cash out for \$37,000.

Depaulo would later explain his thought process on the hand, and pointed out that the table was playing the 7-2 game, which may have steered Loeliger towards the hero call.

The hand garnered even more attention as it took place as part of the site's Cash Game World Championship.

The competition, centered around \$50-\$100 cash games, ran through Dec. 7 and awarded additional prizes including a share of a \$100,000 prize pool and a \$35,000 Land-Dweller Rolex. The rake-free cash games require players to battle for at least 20,000 hands to be eligible for the top prizes. ♠



# CARD PLAYERS VS. YOUTUBE: INSIDE THE WAR ON POKER VLOGGERS

By Sean Chaffin



Poker vlogging has grown in popularity over the last few years, bringing in a new audience of potential players via YouTube. The medium has allowed some poker pros to carve out entirely new careers, making their living from documenting their play around the world.

While old school pros like Daniel Negreanu are still a big draw, newer content creators like Brad Owen and Alexander "Wolfgang Poker" Seibt have been able to build up their own massive followings with their platforms reaching millions of viewers.

This niche in the poker community has been facing some headwinds, however, which Owen experienced first-hand in late September when his YouTube channel was suspended. An email to the California native noted that the action came from violating the "circumvention policy" and warned that once his channel was terminated he would be "prohibited from using, possessing, or creating any other YouTube channels."

After dealing with the shock, and doing some research, Owen believes YouTube mistakenly terminated one of his

editor's accounts. Since the editor was an authorized user on Owen's account, he was flagged as well. The editor eventually won his appeal, and Owen was able to get his channel back online.

Despite that, the issue highlights the tenuous nature of content creators being locked into a single platform. Owen's suspension came as Google announced a crackdown in March on gambling-related content, and that has led to some major frustrations for many.

Owen, who has almost 800,000 subscribers, has spent thousands of hours producing his channel. The exposure led to a *WPT* sponsorship, and a co-ownership stake in The Lodge Card Club in Texas. But all of it is built upon the house of cards that is YouTube, and the suspension was certainly a wake-up call.

"I've been making YouTube videos for almost nine years now," Owen said. "To be at the mercy of YouTube's AI policy enforcer is always unsettling. The fact that it regularly makes errors that put my whole career and livelihood at risk is terrifying."



**“When they age restrict a video, something we are more than happy to flag as 18-plus, it dwarfs the reach of viewership to adults who want to watch. They aren’t seeing it in their feed even if they subscribe.”**

*Card Player* spoke with several poker and gambling vloggers about the issue. While some have not yet been affected, the YouTube guillotine has many concerned that their channels are in jeopardy of running afoul of the platform’s content police.

#### **Poker Content Under The Microscope**

YouTube should be the perfect platform for content creators. Those with the ability to create engaging videos can build an audience while also seeing a real return on investment. However, the vagaries and randomness of the site’s rules have some poker vloggers puzzled.

In March, the platform announced changes meant to curb gambling-related videos away from minors.

“As part of YouTube’s ongoing efforts to protect viewers from potentially harmful content, we are strengthening our existing policies related to online gambling content,” the site noted in a policy update.

All poker vloggers must click, “No, it’s not made for kids,” when uploading a video. This means that 99% of Owen’s audience is over the age of 18. Those that aren’t age restricted can receive a strike. However, this added age restriction drastically limits a video’s visibility.

“When YouTube ‘age restricts’ videos, this adds an extra unnecessary layer of censorship causing the views to completely flat line,” Owen explained. “It basically no longer gets promoted to anyone regardless of age. When a video gets age restricted right after release, viewership could be cut by 75% or more. But if it gets age restricted several months later, which occasionally happens, overall viewership isn’t affected nearly as much.”

Seven-time World Series of Poker bracelet winner Daniel

Negreanu expressed his own frustration with this age-restriction feature. Along with producing his popular tournament vlogs each summer in Las Vegas, he also streams his online play. This year, the Poker Hall of Famer has faced obstacles that have limited his view count. Like Owen, he’s not interested in minor viewers, but is perplexed at how viewing is now restricted even among adults.

This year, all of Negreanu’s streams were age restricted within 10-15 minutes, which caused the algorithm to reduce viewership. The streams lost an average of 75% compared to last year.

“When they age restrict a video, something we are more than happy to flag as 18-plus, it dwarfs the reach of viewership to adults who want to watch,” Negreanu said. “They aren’t seeing it in their feed even if they subscribe. It appears that [YouTube is treating poker differently from other gambling.] The algorithm needs work because it’s pretty random what videos get flagged, and the worst part is that you often have no idea what caused it. You ask, and they can’t tell you.”

*Hustler Casino Live (HCL)* remains one of the most popular live-streamed cash game shows with more than 400,000 subscribers. The channel’s videos and live action bring in hundreds of thousands of views. But in September 2024, the channel was suspended for a week, and that was just a small part of what the show has experienced.

*HCL* founder, producer, and owner Ryan Feldman says he’s had to deal with random videos getting age restricted, leading to lower numbers. A video was also taken down entirely. As usual, the reasoning behind these moves was murky, and regaining some traction takes time.

Brad Owen



© WPT

Daniel Negreanu



© PokerGO/Antonio Abrego

"None of these were for any reason that differentiates one show from another," Feldman said. "It's just random, whatever the algorithm flags. We definitely lost viewership after we were suspended. It takes time to build the viewership back up after you lose the consistency."

As far as advice for other players posting content on the platform, Feldman says it's always important to understand YouTube policies as much as possible to avoid getting flagged. He recommends finding a contact at YouTube who will actually find some solutions.

"Without a real human with an ability to help, it's an uphill battle," Feldman said.

### Slots Of Issues

Other gambling-related channels have experienced similar issues. Stephen Matt Morrow's *Vegas Matt* platform has more than 1.3 million subscribers and regularly features the gambler heading to Las Vegas casinos, documenting big wins and losses along the way. When the site reached a million subscribers, he even gambled \$1 million.

Like poker vloggers, the table games and slots gambler also had problems with YouTube and his channel's content.

"It happens from time to time," Morrow said. "I think it's an automation glitch. It gets resolved most of the time."

Slot streamers bring in millions of views on YouTube.



Viewers watch streamers guide them through new games and special features without having to spend any of their own cash.

Brian Christopher is one of the top slot influencers, and was even featured in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2023. Originally from Toronto, Canada, and currently living in Palm Springs, California, Christopher has more than 750,000 YouTube subscribers and tens of thousands of subscribers on other channels dedicated to online casino partners. Additionally, he has 800,000 Facebook followers and significant numbers on Instagram, TikTok, and Kick.

Christopher is an example of just how big some of these gambling-related multimedia operations can get. Beyond revenue from YouTube, he has numerous other company partnerships, including with an online sportsbook and two cruise lines. Christopher also had his own dedicated slot section at the Plaza casino in downtown Las Vegas, and his own Pop'N Pays MORE slot that can be found on casino floors. Fans enjoy his "group pulls" at various casinos throughout the year and he hosts cruises for slot players as well.

The 44-year-old employs a small army to keep everything going, but that all seemed in jeopardy in 2018. His channel was completely removed for what YouTube described as "violent or dangerous acts that have an inherent risk of serious physical harm or death." That certainly seemed dramatic as Christopher simply walks through casinos playing slots in most of his videos.

"It was a horrible experience, as all I had at the time was my YouTube channel," Christopher recalled. "Without it, I was done. It also happened a day prior to my East Coast tour,

where I was self-funding a trip to numerous casinos with little-to-no compensation. Without a channel, those deals were off. It took a lot of effort, and a lot of back and forth with YouTube to finally get it back."

More issues have happened through the years, he says, that have included losing monetization, views dramatically dropping, or broken analytics tools. Like poker, his channels have been victimized by a wide YouTube net that has intermingled legal and illegal gambling.

"The new changes have wreaked havoc for all three of our channels, some more than ever," Christopher said. "It is supposed to only include online slots that are not legal, or are not Google-approved. Everything we touch is Google-approved, so it's quite annoying when they hit a land-based casino video with this age restriction. When they do that, our views are cut by around 75%, as YouTube no longer promotes the video, and if they do, people must click to accept watching this possibly harmful video. Our last three videos were hit with this, and we appealed and won. But you don't always win, and there's no second appeal."

Christopher holds out hope that the issue will be resolved at some point. While there may be problems along the way, he says the platform can still be great for creators looking to build an audience and monetize their work. Through the years, he has worked to help other creators to get out of YouTube purgatory.

"You have to ride the algorithm wave and hope it comes back around to you," he said.

#### A Maddening Process

New Jersey's Anthony Cicali is part of the *Slot Squad* streaming crew and discovered that YouTube even goes after



old videos that were perfectly compliant when they were uploaded. *Slot Squad* has always labeled the channel's videos "not for kids." Rather than ask the videos be removed or updated, the company simply issued strikes against the channel.

"YouTube has made things even stricter recently," Cicali said. "It feels like our content is being suppressed — even for adult viewers who choose to subscribe and watch casino or poker content."

Cicali's *HoagieCasino* poker channel has faced similar interruptions. He also hosts the *Nerdthusiast Poker Podcast* on the platform, which has so far been unaffected. Like some poker vloggers have realized, discussion of gambling seems to get a pass, while hands-on play and gambling can be flagged.

"Honestly, this doesn't surprise me," Cicali said. "We've seen Google and YouTube suppress certain ideas or content types before, so it's just another version of that. The bigger takeaway is that creators will find other platforms — that's why you're seeing so much casino and poker content moving to X and Instagram. I fully support keeping content away from minors — that's not the issue. The issue is when adults who want to watch poker or casino content can't even see it because the algorithm decides for them. That's not fair to the creators or the viewers."

#### **At The Mercy Of The Algorithm**

Andrew Selepak is an associate professor at the University of Florida and specializes in social media and its effects on culture. He says that while YouTube has enabled many poker creators to find success, there's not too much they can do when the rules are changed.

"YouTube can create and enforce its own terms of service and make determinations about what content is and is not allowed on its platform," Selepak said. "YouTube can decide if it wants to let creators discuss gambling in any form or restrict it to certain topics. Social media companies have the right to determine what content is and is not allowed on their platform, as well as what content the algorithm will promote and what content the algorithm will throttle down. YouTube can also decide what content or creators can be monetized. That is simply the nature of the beast when dealing with YouTube."

Selepak also points to some ethical



© WPT

**“To be at the mercy of YouTube’s AI policy enforcer is always unsettling. The fact that it regularly makes errors that put my whole career and livelihood at risk is terrifying.”**

concerns regarding the types of gambling content YouTube actually allows to be viewed. Google only allows users to promote an online gambling site if its “domain is certified by Google Ads.”

“But does this mean that Google only allows creators to discuss gambling sites and applications that advertise on YouTube, or pay Google using Google Ads or Search Ads?” Selepak noted. “If a gambling site or application is not already paying Google money, does it make the list? In a pay-to-play scenario, Google is effectively picking winners and losers based on who is willing to give Google money.”

As for the age restrictions issues, that is a difficult needle to thread. As states require more stringent controls for minors accessing adult material, more websites are left trying to comply. Selepak notes that YouTube is the most popular social media channel among teens, with around 90% saying they use the site. Poker creators may not want to cater to minors, but that may mean lower viewing numbers among adults as well. This creates some interesting dichotomies when it comes to gambling content.

“While gambling may be illegal for anyone under 18, ESPN, newspapers, and a variety of media often discuss point spreads or even betting odds on things like elections,” Selepak said. “So, teens can learn about point spreads used for gambling by watching ESPN or playing fantasy football, but would be limited from the same information on YouTube, and all adults would be limited from such content unless Google approves the site or application used to make bets on those ESPN point spreads.”

#### **Three Strikes You’re Out**

Being tied to a platform that doesn’t seem to want you

can be a tenuous existence. While other options exist, nothing offers the same large base of users available on YouTube. Branching out may be a necessity, but isn’t a foolproof plan for an end-run around the YouTube content crackdown.

With almost 1.7 million YouTube subscribers, Alexander “Wolfgang” Seibt is the biggest poker vlogger in the industry, but he has not been immune to problems with the platform. He has until now remained mostly quiet about the frustrations in having YouTube issue “strikes” against him. A first strike brings a one-week suspension, and the second brings two weeks. A third strike and you’re out -- a channel is permanently deleted.

Seibt generally tries to work some “connections” he’s made to help resolve problems, but the entire ordeal can be frustrating. Editing and producing videos can be a full-time job at this level and battling obscure corporate rules only adds to the workload.

“I’ve been on two strikes and never posted about it, but that was the most stressful thing I’ve had to deal with,” Seibt revealed. “What’s crazy is that you get strikes randomly for stuff their algorithm deems is a violation, and they can even go back to old content and review. So, it’s not like you can just stop posting new videos and wait for the strikes to fall off after 90 days, you literally sit there and any YouTube notification could mean the end of your channel.”

#### **Other Options?**

Like others, Seibt has significant revenue on the line. He not only earns his living via the revenue share, but also through sponsorships and deals with casinos. Losing YouTube would be catastrophic, which is why he’s worked to build up an audience on other platforms, including 800,000

Alexander Seibt



Ryan Feldman



followers on Instagram. But that platform doesn't bring in revenue, it simply helps expand his virtual footprint.

An effort to build an audience on TikTok also came with obstacles. Seibt's first channel had about 200,000 followers, but was deleted for a violation of terms and services. He grew a second channel to 50,000 followers and that was axed as well. He's now given up on that platform and is simply focusing on Instagram and YouTube.

"YouTube is the best site for the long form content with storytelling I love producing, so if things get worse I'd have to figure something out," Seibt admitted.

Other vloggers are branching out with varying levels of success. After his recent obstacles, Owen has been at the forefront of recommending other platforms. He recently started a channel on Rumble. Negreanu streams on X/Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitch simultaneously. When *Hustler Casino Live* was suspended, the show began streaming on Kick.

"It was tough to get anywhere near the same viewership," Feldman said. "We will always stay on YouTube primarily because of how much easier it is to draw a large audience there, more than any other platform. Despite the issues, we can't really consider alternatives much."

Selepak says Rumble could be a nice option for some

and doesn't have the same age and gambling restrictions as YouTube. However, he stresses that content creators should focus on building a brand that can resonate across multiple vehicles of distribution.

"Rumble doesn't have the same number of people using the platform as YouTube, but the platform is growing and may offer more of a free speech option for creators," Selpak said. "But most importantly, content creators should not limit themselves to one platform. Users are everywhere, and good content will resonate with users anywhere they are. Creators need to build a brand and not be platform-specific, but go where they have an audience."

For Seibt and his *Wolfgang Poker* brand, sticking with YouTube offers the best path for success at the moment, despite the headaches. There's no magic bullet in assuring that a poker channel won't run afoul of censorious algorithms, and no competing platforms that offer a complete lifeline.

"At the end of the day, what I post grows the game tremendously," Seibt said. "I don't promote bad websites. I don't even swear in my videos. I try to be good for poker. I love the game and will continue to post my home games, tournaments, and cool experiences with celebrities and athletes until the day comes when I can't anymore." ♠



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# TONY DUNST: “I NEVER REALLY WANTED A JOB”

World Poker Tour Commentator Shares Origin Story With Table 1 Podcast

By Art Parmann and Justin Young



Tony Dunst has made a name for himself not only at the poker tables, but also as one of the voices of the *World Poker Tour*. The native of Madison, Wisconsin, mans the mic each event for poker fans around the world.

With \$5.7 million in live tournament winnings, as well as a natural comfort in front of the camera, Dunst is the rare combination of poker talent and charisma that makes him a natural fit for calling the action, and the logical choice to replace the legendary Mike Sexton.

On the media side, he started as the host of the *WPT's Raw Deal* segment in 2010. Dunst would offer analysis on various hands from the show, before graduating to the commentary booth alongside Vince Van Patten.

Three years later, Dunst would

become a champion himself on the tour, taking down the *WPT Caribbean* event for \$145,000. He narrowly missed out on a second tour title in 2014, earning third place in the *WPT World Championship* for \$452,729. There was another close call in 2019 when he finished runner-up in the *WPT Tournament of Champions* for \$250,265.

Dunst's biggest score came at the 2016 *Aussie Millions* when he finished runner-up for \$700,000. That same year, he also grabbed his first *WSOP* bracelet in a \$1,000 no limit hold'em event for \$339,254. In 2020, Dunst added a second bracelet in a \$777 online event for \$168,342.

Dunst was a recent guest on the *Table 1* podcast and explained how he got his start selling video game items on

eBay, and why he moved to Australia before getting banned from the country entirely. He also spoke about his *WPT* commentary journey.

Highlights from the interview appear below. You can also watch or





listen to the entire episode on YouTube, Spotify, Apple, or any podcast app.

*Dunst spoke about how video games gave him the start as far as parlaying game skills into winnings, eventually branching out into poker. He would even book bets in high school.*

**Tony Dunst:** I loved playing video games. You may remember a game called *EverQuest*. It was a fantasy role-playing game that was big before *World of Warcraft*. I was very good at trading the money and the items within the game to become more wealthy, and then I would take those items and sell them on eBay for real money. In 2025, selling virtual items for real money is like, ‘Yeah, that’s what you do.’ In 2000-2001, it was absurd.

When I told my parents I was going to sell stuff on eBay that only exists in a virtual space, they thought I was getting scammed. They thought somebody was going to take my money somehow. So even at 14 or 15, I was combining my hobbies to try and generate income through playing these games. So, when online poker came along a couple years later, it was a match made in heaven.

**Justin Young:** So, you weren’t into poker necessarily, but strategy stuff was right up your alley?

**Tony Dunst:** Yeah, I think a lot of really amazing poker players, especially from that generation, were chess play-

ers, and you just saw their mind graduating to poker strategy. I didn’t have that kind of talent or intelligence. I was more into social games and sports.

Even in high school, I was a very small-time bookie, offering people \$5 and \$10 bets and a sheet with the lines. This was the early 2000s before [sports betting] culture was everywhere. I got called into the principal once and they were like, ‘We hear you’re running a book in class.’

I was like, ‘Whoa, I don’t know anything about that. Me and my friends make a few bets. I’m not handing a sheet out with all the lines on it,’ as I crumple it in my pocket.

I always just loved gambling culture. I was playing online poker before Moneymaker won the WSOP main event. I was watching televised poker as early as 2002 when Robert Varkonyi won. The famous Varkonyi effect. (laughing)

**Justin Young:** That’s what got me into thinking I could become a professional poker player. I liked poker before that. I played home games and a little bit online. I’m watching the final table and I’m like, ‘I feel like everyone kind of sucks here. Maybe I can do this for a living.’

**Tony Dunst:** The money grew on trees for a little while. You did not have to be very good. If you were willing to make

any effort to read some poker strategy, develop just a little bit of a framework, you could make money. That’s what I was doing in my late teens and early 20s with the poker boom.

**Justin Young:** Did your parents know that you had an online poker account playing for real money? How did you get money online?

**Tony Dunst:** I had a friend who was a bit older than me and he made an account for me. When I was 18, I started playing on my own account.

When my parents found out, they were concerned. My mom was very upset. She had an uncle who had a gambling problem. I think it’s very fair in my parents’ generation to have this strictly negative perception of gambling because back then there really wasn’t such a thing as a professional poker player or gambler. I understand why they reacted that way.

I tried to say things like, ‘No, I’m making money, EV, et cetera,’ and it fell on deaf ears. But once I went to college and could just play on my own computer in my dorm room, and was playing in home games all across the university, there was no stopping me.

The game was exploding in popularity at that time. Even as early as high school, though, I thought this is what I want to do. I saw stuff like the World Poker Tour and the World Series



“I wanted to be a poker player. I never had a job, so there was no pressure if I failed the audition. There was also such a well-defined path specifically for my

of Poker, and I thought that lifestyle – traveling around, playing a game, seeing the world, rubbing elbows with these weird characters – that all sounded so interesting to me and I wanted to be a part of it.

**Art Parmann:** So growing up in Madison, how did you end up in Australia?

**Tony Dunst:** When I was a sophomore in college at Milwaukee, I won a package to the *Aussie Millions* playing online. My entire bankroll was about \$2,800 and I won this \$13,000 package to go to this far away land. When you're 20 years old, it was the most exciting thing. I had a really awesome 12-day trip, just being out in the world by myself as an adult for the first time... and I had a good score.

Basically, the package came with two tournament entries and in one of them I made the final table bubble. It

was this weird format where with 36 players left, they broke into six tables of six and you played a sit-n- go to make the final table. I got heads up with Mikael Thuritz, a great Swedish player. He offered a 15% swap when we were heads up, even though he had me out chipped and was the way better player.

He knocked me out in the second hand and went on to win the tournament. So, I cashed for about \$15K. When you have that trip and your entire bankroll is like \$2,800 and it's this world-changing, transformative experience, then you win all this money. I was just sold on it so completely.

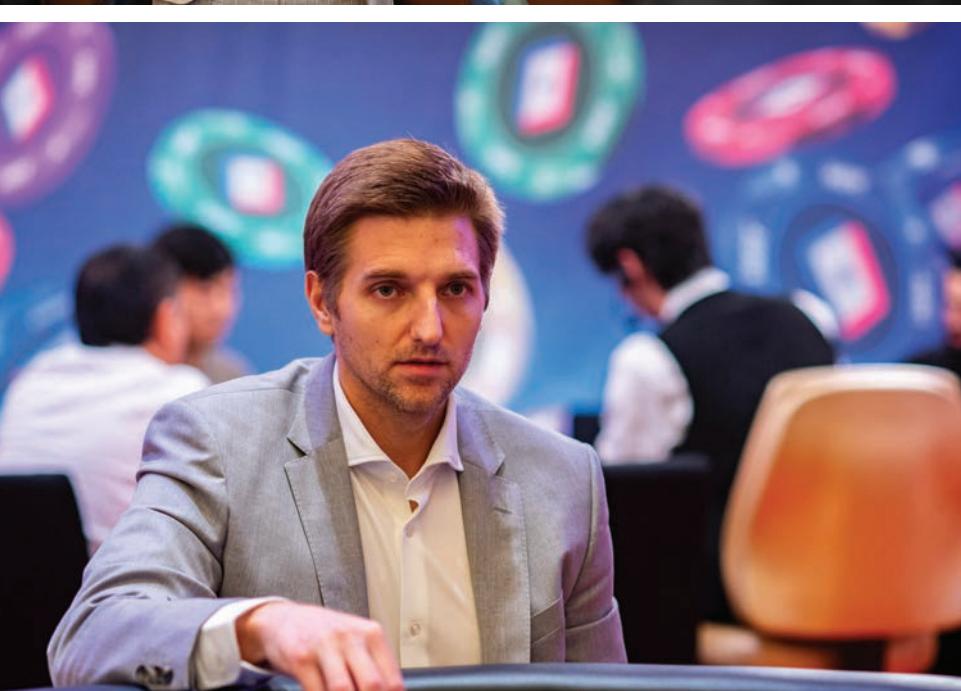
I used that money to study abroad in Australia. I [eventually] came back here, but that is a really special place. I was actually there [recently]. I'm still adjusting from a trip that *WPT* sent me on to Star Sydney. We had *WPT*

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*Australia* down there and I also revisited Melbourne to see old friends and hang out a little bit. It's still an amazing place and country.

When I first went to Melbourne and then I came back and I did study abroad, I was like, 'Wow, this must be the greatest country, the most livable place in the world. This must be it.' But I was 20 years old. I had never been outside the U.S., except a Caribbean island. What the hell did I know?

Now I'm 41 and I've been to 50 countries. I've traveled as extensively as I possibly can during these years. And, yeah, that's, that's the best one. I haven't been everywhere yet, but I'm pretty certain Australia is about as good as it gets for livability.

**Art Parmann:** And yet you got banned?

**Tony Dunst:** Yes, I accidentally overstayed a visa. It was an honest mistake in that I was 21 years old and just an idiot. I was granted a six-month visa, but I was in 12 months of classes.

I'm sure that was made clear to me, but we are so dumb when we are 21. You just don't pay attention to procedural things like that. I just kept going to school. I was supposed to just send a form somewhere and renew the visa. I ended up overstaying by five months, and the immigration department had to come looking for me. They were like, 'The punishment is a three-year ban.'

**Art Parmann:** How tilted were you?

**Tony Dunst:** I was very tilted. We were going to go to the WSOP and visit home, maybe come back in a month. I was in a serious relationship and had a whole network there. I thought I was going to build my life there. Instead, everything was thrown into disorder on extremely short notice, and it was all my fault. I had screwed up our lives through my own stupidity.

Now when I come and go, it's no problem. When you get banned from a country, it sounds much more dramatic than it is. Especially Australia, the land that was [at one time] a big prison.

*Dunst studied theater in college, which came in handy when he snagged the gig working for the WPT.*

**Tony Dunst:** It was summer of 2010 and I had hired somebody to be my agent, thinking maybe he would get me a poker sponsorship. He said, 'Hey, the WPT is doing open auditions in L.A. for this segment. I think you'd be a really good fit.' They wanted that younger generation's voice and strategy to be reflected in the segment.'



I went to the *WPT* offices and they had me watch a video of a hand. They said, 'Now write a segment and perform it for us.' So I did that for the producer. My understanding is that it came down to a decision between myself and Ali Nejad, who is a tremendously talented guy and one of the best poker broadcasters [out there]. They decided to go in my direction, I think because of how experienced I was at tournament poker and how entrenched I was in the online poker world.

**Justin Young:** What was your mindset like at the initial audition? Was it, 'I

really want this, I think I can do this?' Or was it, 'Ah, this is shot in the dark, might as well throw my hat in the ring?'

**Tony Dunst:** Both actually. I wanted to be a professional poker player. I never really wanted a job, so there was no loss in this if I failed the audition. But this was also such a well-crafted job, specifically for my skillset.

I had public speaking training from theater, and some public speaking competitions I did in high school. I dress up more than many poker players, and they needed somebody in a public-facing role who was comfortable in that

kind of attire. Basically, somebody who could project a more corporate image.

*The job was his and that role eventually expanded to include commentary duties.*

**Tony Dunst:** I'd been with *WPT* for seven years at that point. At that stage, PartyPoker owned *WPT*, which is why both Mike [Sexton] and I were sponsored by [the site]. PartyPoker then sold their stake in *WPT* and it was kind of understood that, 'Alright, both you might need to choose a direction. Do you want to stay at PartyPoker or do you want to stay with *WPT*? Because they're not going to be conjoined anymore.'

They made a very strong offer to Mike to become the chairman and he felt that opportunity was too good to pass up. He absolutely loved the *WPT* and really didn't want to leave, but felt like this was what was best for him and his family. So that created the vacancy for me.

I'm sure they had to think about the fact that one day Mike will retire. I think by that point, they had settled on their decision, and it was pretty quick that the higher-ups contacted me and offered me the position. ♠

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# PHIL HELLMUTH: BRACELETS 'BECOMING MEANINGLESS'

## WSOP GOAT Says There's Too Many Events

By Jesse Fullen, Tim Fiorvanti, and Steve Schult



Phil Hellmuth, the all-time leader in *World Series of Poker* titles with 17, thinks there are simply too many WSOP bracelets awarded each year.

During a break in the action on the set of PokerGO's *No Gamble, No Future*, Hellmuth made his perspective clear in an interview with *Card Player*.

"I went public saying that there should be 100 bracelets," Hellmuth said. "I know some of the owners of the *World Series of Poker* [said], 'Phil, it should be 100 bracelets.' [Daniel] Negreanu wants to have more. But right now there's over 300 bracelets overall. I believe they're becoming meaningless."

Hellmuth's 17 career WSOP bracelet wins put him six ahead of Phil Ivey, with 11. Doyle Brunson, Johnny Chan, and Erik Seidel all have 10 each, followed by Johnny Moss with nine. Beyond them sits a generation of younger standouts who appear capable of making a serious run at Hellmuth's record. Michael Mizrachi, Shaun Deeb, and Benny Glaser each have eight bracelets, and the potential to win many more.

While Hellmuth's comments don't seem to be directed at anybody in particular, the Poker Hall of Famer's point is centered around the dilution of one of the game's greatest

prizes. Simply put, there are too many online events.

### More Bracelets Each Year

In addition to the 100 live bracelet events in Las Vegas, and live WSOP Europe and WSOP Paradise festivals, there are multiple yearly online events in North America and the rest of the world that all award gold. Hellmuth was only slightly exaggerating when he said there were more than 300 events. In 2025 alone, there are slated to be 234 bracelets handed out.

"I believe the WSOP is going to become worth nothing," Hellmuth continued. "There are 100 weird names you could give [these events], but this is the *World Series of Poker*, and it has to have an exclusivity to it. Somebody won a bracelet recently, and we said, 'Wow, you won a \$300 [tournament] online?' Another guy won over 37 players. And then we're like, whoa, the bracelets are really being run down and [are] not as important anymore."

Hellmuth, one of the most prolific and public figures in the game, has played through many different eras of the poker industry. In fact, he has won in every decade since his 1988 debut. His 1989 WSOP main event win came against a field of 178 players. A couple of his early bracelet wins came against fields of 88 and 63. But at the 1993 summer series,



for example, there were just 21 bracelets on the line, in total.

#### **'Make The WSOP Great Again'**

During the PokerGO broadcast, Hellmuth reiterated that Negreanu and GGPoker ownership should listen to his pleas to change the system and reduce the number of bracelets on the line each year. From Hellmuth's perspective, watering down the value of a bracelet could be devastating to the brand.

"If you have 350 bracelets per year, everyone's going to have six, and soon," said Hellmuth. "So, yeah, we have to do something about it. We have to save the *World Series of Poker*. I'm not a political guy, but I'm going to say, make the *World Series of Poker* great again. I know that Negreanu wants to cut 200 of the 350 bracelets."

"I'd like to see 100, Daniel wants 140, 150, but there's going to be some big changes. All these worthless bracelets... they 100% have to change. You won a bracelet online, that's a different category."

Hellmuth asserts he'd simply stop playing events if the trend of more bracelet events each year continues. He already teased sitting out the WSOP main event in 2025, under different circumstances, before ultimately reversing course. But with the status Hellmuth holds in the game, he feels like this is a moment where he has to speak out.

"There's so many people that have two or three or four bracelets online, and I don't even know their names," Hellmuth said. "I didn't even hear about them winning. The WSOP risks losing... they paid \$500 million for the WSOP, and if they run it right into the ground, they may end up with a \$50 million asset. If everybody has 20 bracelets, I'm going to stop coming. I play for the history."

#### **How Many Bracelets Is Too Many?**

Is the Golden GOAT right? Are bracelets on the brink of irrelevance?

Maybe. Irrelevancy is a subjective

metric, but the objective piece of Hellmuth's critique can't be ignored. There are countless more opportunities to win a bracelet now than even just a decade ago.

#### **1976 – The Bracelet Is Born**

Seven years into the WSOP's existence, gold bracelets were officially awarded for the first time. From that point in time forward, the bracelet would become the tool of measurement by which all WSOP performances were judged. (Except for in 1982, the one year they awarded gold watches!)

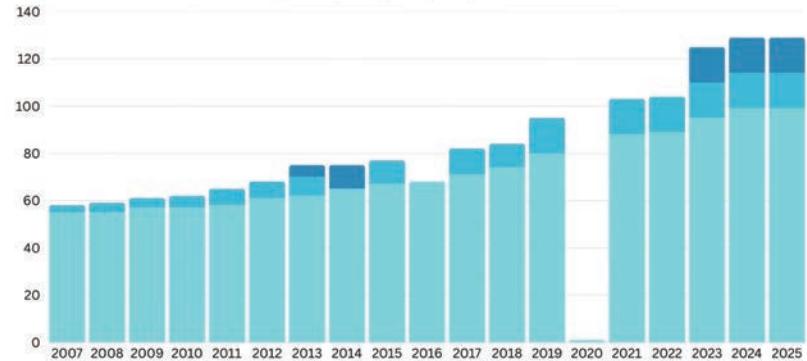
By the end of 1976, Moss had the all-time record for most wins with six. He'd hold onto the top spot in the poker record books all the way until 2005, a decade after his death.

In terms of bracelet events on the schedule at Binion's Horseshoe, the jump from 1975 to 1976 was 60% more tournaments on tap. The following year, there was a 62.5% jump from 1976 to 1977. In those years, it was a move from five bracelet events, to eight, to 13. It's a small drop in the bucket compared to modern changes, though, and the number of events plateaued for well over a decade. From 1977 through 1990, there were never more than 16 bracelets on the line in a given year.

When Hellmuth won his first, in the 1989 main event,

#### **Where Are The Live Bracelets?**

Las Vegas   Europe   APAC/Paradise



I'd Like To Speak To The Manager



there were 14 total bracelet events, all in Las Vegas. By 2007, the year Hellmuth claimed the all-time record with his 11th bracelet, there were 55 events on the WSOP schedule.

#### Bracelet Boom In Vegas

As poker became more popular, the tournament schedule at brick-and-mortar casinos steadily increased. At both the 2024 and the 2025 series at the Horseshoe Las Vegas and Paris Las Vegas casinos, there were 99 bracelet events.

You can see a huge spike in events in the early 2000's as online poker became more popular and the Moneymaker effect created an entire new generation of poker players.

Furthermore, event organizers began offering events with lower buy-ins. In 2015, the WSOP ran a \$500 event dubbed *The Colossus*. It was the first time since 1980 that a WSOP open-field event had a buy-in less than \$1,000, and it drew a whopping 22,374 entries. The bar dropped even lower in 2023, with the \$300 *Gladiators of Poker* event which attracted 23,088 runners. The 2019 *Big 50* remains the record holder, with 28,371 ponying up the \$500 buy-in.

The small-stakes events are so popular that there is now a budget-priced tournament every weekend at the WSOP.

#### Bracelets Go Abroad

In 2007, the same year Hellmuth took the all-time bracelet lead, the then-owner of the WSOP brand, took the series abroad. Caesars held the first *WSOP Europe* in London, the first time anyone could win gold outside of Sin City.

In the years that followed, bracelets were won in several other live non-Vegas series events. There was the short-lived *WSOP Asia-Pacific (APAC)*, a yearly bracelet awarded at the *WSOP Circuit* finale under a variety of names, and starting in 2023, *WSOP Paradise* in the Bahamas.

Non-U.S. bracelet expansion was gradual, but appears to have plateaued. There were only three bracelets up for grabs at the first *WSOP Europe* in 2017. It climbed to four the fol-

lowing year and peaked at 15 in 2019. Since then, the series has remained consistent with 15 European bracelets.

All of Hellmuth's bracelets have been won in Las Vegas, except for the 2012 *WSOP Europe* main event.

*WSOP APAC* only ran twice, most notably with Negreanu winning the main event in 2013. The first series was comprised of just five events. The following year it had 10.

The plan was for the *WSOP APAC* and *WSOP Europe* to rotate annually. *WSOP Europe* would only be held during odd-numbered years and *WSOP APAC* on even-numbered years. After a couple years of low turnout, however, the WSOP ended the Asia-Pacific series and replaced it with a broader international *WSOP Circuit* schedule.

In 2023, the series announced *WSOP Paradise*, a 15-bracelet tournament series in the Bahamas that is played in December.

The WSOP now awards 30 bracelets annually at live tournaments outside U.S. borders. They make up about 23% of total live bracelets every year.

#### Moneymaker Effect Creates Larger Fields

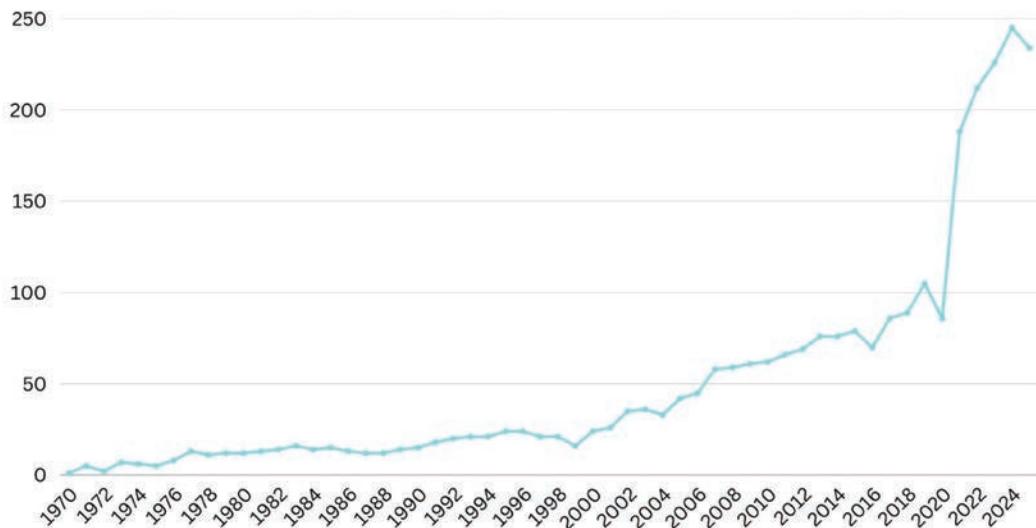
The WSOP main event enjoyed steady growth in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The tournament drew more than 300 players for the first time in 1997, broke the 500 mark in 2000, and then got to the magical number of 839 in 2003 when the accountant from Tennessee won it all.

Between the exponential growth of online poker, and the advent of televised poker coverage, the popularity of poker hit a fever pitch. The WSOP main event field more than tripled from 2003 to 2004, and by 2006, there were more than 10 times as many players in the main event as there were in 2003.

The number of events on tap expanded during that era as well. There were 16 bracelet events in 1999 at Binion's. By 2007, a few years after being acquired by Harrah's, which



Total WSOP Bracelets



would become Caesars Entertainment, that number jumped to 58, a whopping 362% increase.

Live poker boomed in popularity, and so did the number of live events. But the single largest accelerant to the yearly count of bracelets awarded happened online.

Between the WSOP Online platforms across a handful of U.S. states, and on GGPoker internationally, the last five years have seen a dizzying expansion of opportunities to win poker's most coveted prize.

#### Bracelets Go Digital

The online poker world in the United States went from the Wild West to a ghost town over the course of just a few years. The passage of the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act (UIGEA) in 2006 sent several operators

out of the online poker space, and by April 2011, on the day known as "Black Friday," the biggest remaining operators were driven out.

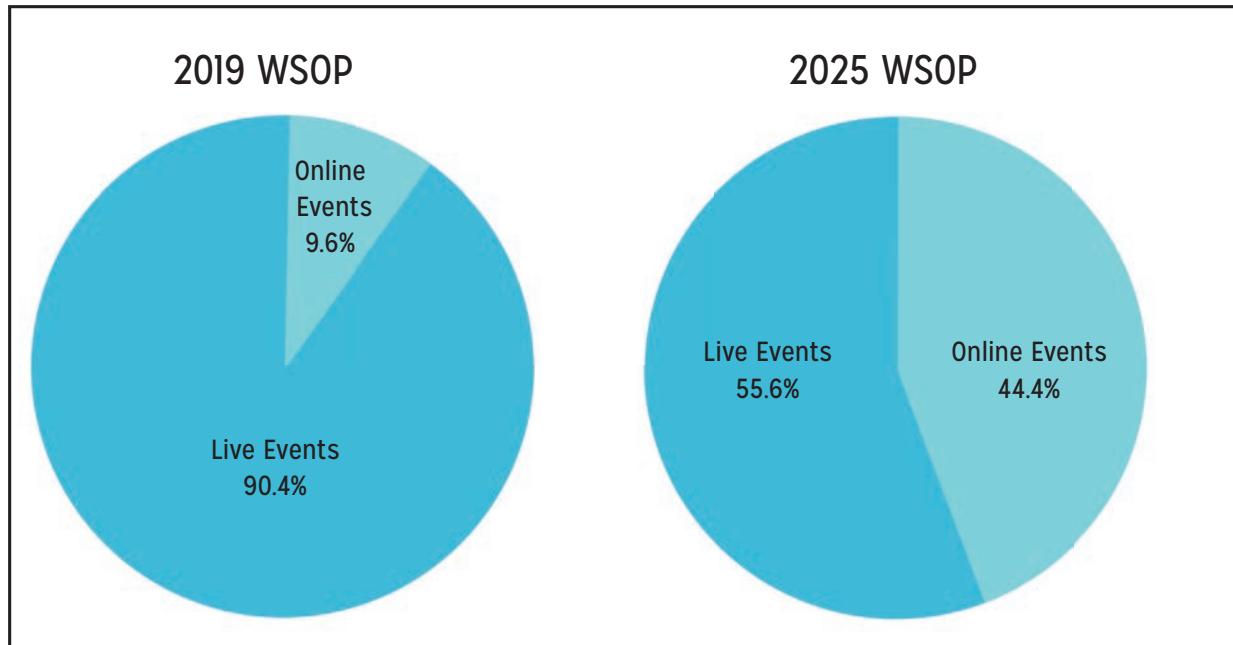
The first fully licensed and regulated hands of online poker didn't arrive until two years later. Shortly thereafter, WSOP launched its online poker platform in Nevada.

In 2015, the WSOP held its first-ever online bracelet event. Organizers had the event play down to its final six players online and brought the finalists back to the Rio Casino to play to a winner. The inaugural event drew 905 entries at a \$1,000 price point, and was won by Anthony Spinella for \$197,743.

There was one online event again in 2016, three in 2017, four in 2018, and nine in 2019. Even at its pre-COVID high



“There’s so many people that have two or three or four bracelets online, and I don’t even know their names. They paid \$500 million for the *WSOP*, and if they run it right into the ground, they may end up with a \$50 million asset. If everybody has 20 bracelets, I’m going to stop coming. I play for the history.”



point in 2019, the online portion of the schedule only represented 8.5% of total bracelets up for grabs.

But the pandemic changed everything.

#### Staying At Home - The Online Poker Revival

When the world at large shut down in March 2020, the poker world was particularly hard hit. For the first of two consecutive summers, there was no live WSOP in Las Vegas. In its place rose the *WSOP Online Championships*.

Instead of a proper summer schedule, organizers awarded 85 bracelets online in 2020, with 33 of those in the U.S. For the first time ever, GGPoker hosted 52 online bracelet events for international players.

The following year, the return of the live WSOP in Las Vegas, albeit in November, caused the biggest single year expansion in total bracelets in the 55-year history of the brand. Even with an October live series, the series organizers put another 85 online bracelets on the schedule. By keeping 85 online events on the docket, there were a total of 188 bracelets won in 2021, compared to just 105 in 2019, a 79%

increase.

In 2015, the single online event represented just 1.2% of total bracelets. By 2021, online events accounted for 45% of the total number up for grabs, a trend that has continued after GGPoker's parent company purchased the WSOP for \$500 million in 2024.

Not only are there online events internationally on GGPoker, and in Nevada on WSOP.com, but players can now win gold from other states that have joined the Multi-State Internet Gaming Agreement (MSIGA), which includes New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. Before MSIGA, there were even series played for Michigan and Pennsylvania online players only, resulting in mediocre field sizes and modest prize pools, despite the gold that was up for grabs. GGPoker also held a series just for their Canadian players in 2024.

The new trend skewing more towards online play than in the past is where the biggest increase in events have come. If the WSOP is going to address any of Hellmuth's inflation concerns, then the online schedule is likely where they'll trim. ♠



# GAL YIFRACH WINS NAPT LAS VEGAS MAIN EVENT

By Erik Fast



The *PokerStars North American Poker Tour* returned to Resorts World Las Vegas for the third consecutive year. This time around, 4,689 entries were made across the 36 events that ran between Nov. 3-12 in the heart of the famed Las Vegas Strip, resulting in more than \$12.6 million in total prize money.

Four of those events ended up with seven-figure prize pools, with the largest coming in the *NAPT Las Vegas* \$5,300 main event. A total of 738 players turned out for the big dance, easily surpassing the \$3 million guarantee to create a final prize pool of \$3,579,300.

After three starting flights and five more days of combined-field action, **Gal Yifrach** emerged victorious with the largest payday of his tournament career. The 39-year-old Los Angeles resident earned \$543,025 to surpass \$3 million in lifetime cashes.

The victory came amidst years-long legal proceedings stemming from a federal indictment alleging his involvement in an illegal gambling business. The two felony charges, for illegal gambling and conspiracy to commit money laundering, were first brought in 2022. He is reportedly facing up to 25 years in prison and \$750,000 in fines.

The alleged gambling ring reportedly began operations in 2018, the same year Yifrach took down the \$3,000 six-max event at the *World Series of Poker* for what was then his largest tournament payday of \$461,305. He later finished third in a \$50,000 high roller at the 2021 *WSOP* for another \$495,305.

Yifrach was one of 111 players to make the money in this tournament. Several big names ran deep, including Jeremy Ausmus (38th), Jesse Lonis (27th), Shannon Shorr (33rd), Mike Vanier (30th), Ryan Riess (26th), Toby Lewis (24th), Evan Sandberg (21st), Mitch Garshofsky (20th), and Jesse Yaginuma (11th).

The healthy turnout saw the top seven finishers earn six-figure payouts. Abdullah Akbarpoor walked away with

\$102,200 as the seventh-place finisher after his A-K ran into the pocket aces of Belgian high-stakes crusher Thomas Boivin. Akbarpoor was unable to come from behind and was sent to the rail at the end of day 5.

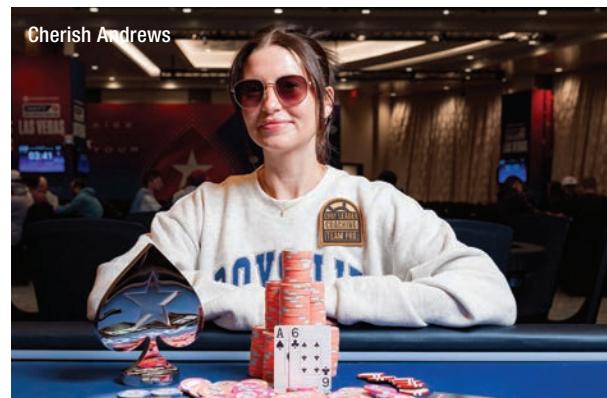
The sixth and final day began with six players remaining and Boivin well out in front of the rest of the pack. Peter Mugar came in critically short with just seven big blinds and never got anything going. In his final hand, he shoved a short stack over a Yifrach button open with K♣ 3♣ from the big blind. Yifrach called with A♣ 8♥ and held through an 8♦ 7♦ 5♥ 7♥ 6♦ runout to narrow the field to five.

Mugar earned \$132,850 for his efforts. The 53-year-old from Boston, Massachusetts now has more than \$1.3 million in lifetime earnings, with this being his second-largest score to date. His top payday remains the \$500,000 that came with a third-place finish in the 2023 *Lucky Hearts Poker Open* at Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood.

Michael Berk managed an early double up with pocket aces against the A-K suited of Boivin, but he was ultimately the next to be eliminated. The 30-year-old former IT professional, now a Vegas-based poker pro, made his last stand with K♣ Q♦. Boivin called the shove of nearly 20 big blinds with A♣ 9♣ and held through a jack-high runout. Berk increased his career haul to more than \$2.3 million with this deep run.

Ekrem Bozkurt got the last of his short stack in ahead, with A♥ K♥ dominating the K♣ 7♣ of Boivin. The board favored the Belgian, though, with 8♣ 7♦ 4♣ 8♣ 5♦ giving him eights and sevens and the knockout. The \$224,450 fourth-place prize was a new top score for the Turkish-born resident of Las Vegas. The 50-year-old former restaurant owner surpassed \$1.1 million in career cashes with this strong performance.

The tournament clock was paused early in three-handed action to allow for negotiations on a possible deal. No agreement was reached, however, and action resumed with the standard payout schedule in place.



"I've made enough money," said Jennifer Shahade, PokerStars Ambassador and two-time US Women's Chess Championship winner. "Let's play it out."

Unfortunately for the 44-year-old Philadelphia native, she was the next to fall, committing her stack from the button with A♥ Q♥. Boivin had picked up another monster preflop holding with pocket kings in the big blind. The J♦ 4♥ 3♦ 10♦ 5♥ board kept the kings best to end Shahade's run in third place.

This podium finish came with \$291,800 in prize money for Shahade, the largest score of her career. The author, podcast host, and former Women's Program Director at the United States Chess Federation now boasts more than \$680,000 in poker tournament scores.

With that, Boivin took better than a 4.5:1 chip lead into heads-up play with Yifrach. The early action favored Yifrach, who earned an early double up with a straight flush to narrow the gap considerably. He then picked off a big bluff attempt to edge into the outright lead.

Boivin, who also finished second in the \$50,000 super high roller at this stop for \$334,700, was able to regain the advantage and pull back out to a 2:1 lead, but Yifrach mounted another comeback to move in front before the two opted to reopen negotiations.

They ultimately agreed to set aside 10 percent of the remaining prize pool and the title to play for, evenly chopping the rest of the money that was still up for grabs. That meant both locked up \$518,575, while the eventual champion would add another \$24,450.

Yifrach won a big pot early with top pair against a river bluff from Boivin. In the final hand of the tournament, Boivin raised on the button with 10♦ 10♣ and Yifrach three-bet shoved from the big blind with A♦ 9♦. Boivin called off and the board came down 9♣ 4♦ 3♦ 5♦ Q♣ to give Yifrach the nut flush and the title.

Boivin grew his career earnings to more than \$14.4 million with this second-place showing for more than half a million dollars. He has made 14 final tables and won two titles in 2025. The 1,520 *Card Player* Player of the Year points that came with this latest result grew his total to 5,305, which is good for 23rd place in the overall standings presented by CoinPoker.

### High Rollers

As per usual with a PokerStars Live stop, there were plenty of massive side events that accompanied the marquee championship. This year, the *NAPT* teamed up with the *PokerGO Tour* to make the eight high-stakes events on the schedule *PGT*-point eligible. More than \$6 million in total prize money was awarded across those high rollers, along with 4,331 *PGT* points.

A spot in the \$1,000,000 *PGT Championship* freeroll was up for grabs in the series-long *NAPT Las Vegas Dream Seat* leaderboard. A total of 48 players earned some points during the festival, but the player who ultimately walked away with the seat was two-time bracelet winner **Nick Petrangelo**.

The Massachusetts native finished second in the \$10,300 mystery bounty for \$121,700 and outlasted 53 players to win the \$20,000 buy-in event for another \$309,030. He now has more than \$41.8 million in career cashes after his strong showing at this stop.

**Cherish Andrews** defeated 84 entries in the first high roller of the festival, which was the mystery bounty event in which Petrangelo placed second. She secured \$331,300 as the champion, with \$111,300 from the main prize pool and another \$220,000 in bounties.

The Pennsylvania pro is having a career year on the circuit, with her three largest paydays all coming in 2025, including this triumph. She also took down a \$25,000 event at the *Seminole Hard Rock Poker Showdown* for \$408,265 and finished second in another high roller event at the same venue

## TOURNAMENTS



later in the year for another \$318,427. Her lifetime haul now sits at \$4.7 million.

**Stephen Chidwick** found the winner's circle in the \$50,000 buy-in event, overcoming a small field of 23 entrants to earn \$557,930 and his 50th career recorded title. In the process, he became just the second poker player in tournament history to surpass \$75 million in earnings. The 36-year-old British poker pro's \$75,274,236 is good for second place on poker's all-time money list, trailing only Bryn Kenney's \$79,777,539.

For his win, Chidwick also earned 306 POY points, enough to push him to 13th place in the standings. With 17 final tables and three titles so far in 2025, the two-time POY winner (2019, 2022) is once again in contention for a run at a third victory in the year-long contest.

Brazil's **Joao Simao** took down the \$10,200 no-limit hold'em / pot-limit Omaha mixed event, proving once again that he's a force to be reckoned with across several of the big bet games. This latest win saw Simao defeat Sam Soverel heads-up to capture the title and a \$174,600 first-place prize. Soverel would get redemption later in the series, however.

This was Simao's second marquee victory in a NLH/PLO event, having also won the 2022 WSOP \$5,000 buy-in event of this format for his second bracelet and a career-best score of \$686,242. His first bracelet came a year earlier in an online \$1,111 buy-in no-limit hold'em charity event.

**Sean Rafael** is emerging as one of the top pot-limit Omaha specialists on the live circuit. At the recent *PGT PLO Series II*, he cashed four times and made three final tables. Rafael also earned the most significant live win of his tournament career back in May, taking down a €25,000 PLO high roller at the *EPT Monte Carlo* stop for \$430,530.

Rafael continued his success with a win in the \$25,000 PLO high roller at the *NAPT*, besting 11 entries to earn \$171,700 and 168 POY points. He currently sits in 30th place

on the leaderboard, with two titles and 14 qualified final-table finishes.

The next high-stakes winner was **Jordan Glazer**, who took down the \$10,200 bounty event for \$42,750. Glazer went on quite the run at this festival, finishing sixth in the mixed NLH/PLO event (\$36,700) and second in the \$25,000 PLO (\$92,410) before earning the title in this event. He wasn't finished, as just one day later he placed second in a \$12,300 bounty event for another \$100,200. He now has nearly \$722,000 in career cashes after adding over \$272,000 to his haul across his four deep runs at this series.

Two-time bracelet winner **Sam Soverel** beat out 39 entries in the aforementioned \$12,300 bounty event to capture the PokerStars spade trophy and his 13th career *PGT* title, taking home \$116,840 for first place and an additional \$84,000 in bounty prizes.

Soverel now sits in second place in the *PGT* season-long standings. The win also came with 240 POY points, elevating Soverel to 16th place in the 2025 standings with 5,707 points.

**Vitalijs Zavorotnijs** earned \$358,400 and 358 points for topping a field of 158 entries in the \$10,300 buy-in that wrapped up on the series' final day. 2023 POY winner Bin Weng finished second, earning \$224,100.

### Other Big Winners

In addition to the many high-stakes events that awarded *PGT* points at this festival, there were also several other notable side events. The fifth-largest prize pool of the series belonged to the \$1,100 buy-in *PokerStars Open Las Vegas*. With 947 entries, the \$500,000 guarantee was surpassed by more than \$409,000.

Several highly decorated tournament circuit regulars made it down to the final table, with **Nikolai Mamut** emerging victorious in the end. The Russian player earned \$158,700 and the spade trophy as the champion. This was his second-largest



Nikolai Mamut



Dylan Weisman



Maria Konnikova

recorded live score, trailing only the \$180,000 he secured as a semi-finalist in the 2024 WSOP \$25,000 no-limit hold'em heads-up championship. He now boasts more than \$1.2 million in lifetime earnings.

Two-time bracelet winner **Dylan Weisman** took down the \$5,300 eighth-game event, topping a field of 36 entries. He overcame a couple of poker legends in Eli Elezra (3rd) and Jennifer Harman (2nd) during short-handed play to secure the title and \$66,350.

**Maria Konnikova** closed out the festival with a victory on the final day. She defeated 2025 WSOP main event runner-up John Wasnock heads-up in the \$5,300 second chance high roller to finish the job.

For Konnikova, the author and PokerStars Ambassador, this is the third spade trophy win of her career, including a hyper turbo title earlier this year at *EPT Monte Carlo*. Konnikova also has a WSOP bracelet and WSOP Circuit ring to her credit, both won online in 2024. She also finished sixth in the \$12,300 bounty event won by Soverel. ♠

## North American Poker Tour Resorts World - Las Vegas, NV

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$1,100 NLH Nov. 3-6 Entries: 947 Prizepool: \$909,120	1 Nikolai Mamut	\$158,700	912
	2 Terrance Reid	\$99,090	760
	3 Jim Collopy	\$70,780	608
	4 Toby Lewis	\$54,450	456
	5 Jon Kyte	\$41,880	380
	6 Andrew King	\$32,220	304
	7 Marc Foggin	\$24,780	228
	8 Yifan Tang	\$19,060	152
	9 Daniel Sepiol	\$14,660	76

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$10,300 NLH KO Nov. 3-4 Entries: 84 Prizepool: \$814,800	1 Cherish Andrews	\$331,300	480
	2 Nick Petrangelo	\$121,700	400
	3 David Coleman	\$176,200	320
	4 Sam Laskowitz	\$64,400	240
	5 Clemen Deng	\$30,300	200
	6 Matthew Lambrecht	\$24,100	160
	7 Chi-Jen Chu	\$19,300	120
	8 Cary Katz	\$15,400	80
	9 Landon Tice	\$12,300	40

Event	Player	Payout
\$5,200 PLO Nov. 4 Entries: 28 Prizepool: \$135,800	1 John Riordan	\$58,400
	2 Frederic Normand	\$36,700
	3 Paul Gunness	\$24,400
	4 Christopher Costa	\$16,300

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$20,000 NLH Nov. 4 Entries: 53 Prizepool: \$1,012,830	1 Nick Petrangelo	\$309,030	360
	2 Faraz Jaka	\$202,600	300
	3 Kristen Foxen	\$146,800	240
	4 Jesse Lonis	\$111,400	180
	5 Cary Katz	\$86,000	150
	6 Jeremy Ausmus	\$65,800	120
	7 Stephen Chidwick	\$50,600	90
	8 Thomas Boivin	\$40,600	60

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$50,000 NLH Nov. 5-7 Entries: 23 Prizepool: \$1,115,730	1 Stephen Chidwick	\$557,930	306
	2 Thomas Boivin	\$334,700	255
	3 Cary Katz	\$223,100	204

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Event	Player	Payout	POY
<b>\$10,200 NLH/PLO</b> Nov. 5 Entries: 60 Prizepool: \$582,000	1 Joao Simao	\$174,600	360
	2 Sam Soverel	\$113,500	300
	3 Andrew Loomis	\$80,600	240
	4 Sean Winter	\$62,000	180
	5 Cherish Andrews	\$47,700	150
	6 Jordan Glazer	\$36,700	120
	7 Thomas Eychenne	\$28,200	90
	8 Seth Davies	\$21,800	60
	9 Andrew Lichtenberger	\$16,900	30

Event	Player	Payout	POY
<b>\$5,300 NLH</b> Nov. 6-12 Entries: 738 Prizepool: \$3,579,300	1 Gal Yifrach	\$543,025	1824
	2 Thomas Boivin	\$518,575	1520
	3 Jennifer Shahade	\$291,800	1216
	4 Ekrem Bozkurt	\$224,450	912
	5 Michael Berk	\$172,650	760
	6 Peter Mugar	\$132,850	608
	7 Abdullah Akbarpoor	\$102,200	456
	8 Richard Green	\$78,600	304
	9 Matthew Beinner	\$60,450	152

Event	Player	Payout	POY
<b>\$25,000 PLO</b> Nov. 6-7 Entries: 11 Prizepool: \$269,500	1 Sean Rafael	\$171,700	168
	2 Jordan Glazer	\$92,410	140

Event	Player	Payout
<b>\$10,200 NLH KO</b> Nov. 8 Entries: 14 Prizepool: \$65,800	1 Jordan Glazer	\$42,750
	2 Anatoly Nikitin	\$23,050

Event	Player	Payout	POY
<b>\$12,300 NLH KO</b> Nov. 9 Entries: 39 Prizepool: \$458,640	1 Sam Soverel	\$200,840	240
	2 Jordan Glazer	\$100,200	200
	3 Dan Smith	\$52,500	160
	4 Chance Kornuth	\$38,900	120
	5 Jeremy Ausmus	\$42,500	100
	6 Maria Konnikova	\$23,700	80

Event	Player	Payout
<b>\$5,300 8-Game Mix</b> Nov. 10 Entries: 36 Prizepool: \$174,600	1 Dylan Weisman	\$66,350
	2 Jennifer Harman	\$42,800
	3 Eli Elezra	\$28,350
	4 Michael Lang	\$20,500
	5 Minh Ly	\$16,600

Event	Player	Payout	POY
<b>\$10,300 NLH</b> Nov. 10-12 Entries: 158 Prizepool: \$1,532,600	1 Vitalijs Zavorotnijs	\$358,400	720
	2 Bin Weng	\$224,100	600
	3 Sam Laskowitz	\$160,000	480
	4 Barry Woods	\$123,100	360
	5 Daniel Lee	\$94,700	300
	6 Kristen Foxen	\$72,800	240
	7 Isaac Haxton	\$59,200	180
	8 Aram Oganyan	\$49,300	120
	9 Patrick Leonard	\$41,100	60

Event	Player	Payout
<b>\$5,300 NLH</b> Nov. 11-12 Entries: 36 Prizepool: \$174,600	1 Maria Konnikova	\$66,350
	2 John Wasnock	\$42,800
	3 Ian Bradley	\$28,350
	4 Jim Collopy	\$20,500
	5 Ankit Ahuja	\$16,600



# NORTH AMERICAN POKER TOUR ALL-TIME MONEY LIST



Rank	Player	NAPT Earnings	Cashes	Titles
1	Galen Hall	\$2,300,000	1	1
2	Harrison Gimbel	\$2,200,000	1	1
3	Chris Oliver	\$1,800,000	1	0
4	Ty Reiman	\$1,763,000	2	0
5	Sam Stein	\$1,597,306	3	0
6	Anton Ionel	\$1,350,000	1	0
6	Barry Shulman	\$1,350,000	1	0
8	Vanessa Selbst	\$1,200,000	2	2
9	Benjamin Zamani	\$1,000,000	1	0
10	Tom Marchese	\$836,148	2	1

The *North American Poker Tour* first launched in 2010, with the *PokerStars Caribbean Adventure* serving as the first stop that January. The tour hosted seven official main events that first year, with the largest by far being the \$10,000 PCA main event that drew 1,529 entries and was won by **Harrison Gimbel**. He earned \$2.2 million for that score, which is enough to place him second on this leaderboard.

Gimbel, a triple crown winner, trails only **Galen Hall** on the *NAPT*'s all-time money list. Hall beat out 1,560 total entries in the 2011 PCA main event, the largest turnout in the tournament's history. The bracelet winner pocketed \$2.3 million as the champion. Trailing Hall and Gimbel are a handful of players who made deep runs in those two massive PCA main events. Sam Stein stands out among that crowd thanks to another close call in an early *NAPT* tournament. He finished second in the inaugural *NAPT Venetian* \$5,000 buy-in, earning \$522,306. The winner, Tom Marchese, took home \$827,648 for topping the 872-entry field, enough

to put him inside the top 10.

**Vanessa Selbst** holds a special place in *NAPT* history as the only player to ever win two main events on the tour. She took down the inaugural *NAPT Mohegan Sun* main event for \$750,000, and then successfully defended her title in that event the following spring for another \$450,000, bringing her total haul to more than \$1.2 million on the tour.

The tour went on hiatus midway through season 2 following the shutdown of *PokerStars* live operations stateside in the wake of Black Friday. The *NAPT* was then re-introduced in 2023 with the *NAPT Las Vegas* taking place at Resorts World. The festival has now run for three years.

Recent champions from Sin City are represented a little further down the leaderboard. 2024 main event winner Nick Marchington beat out 895 entries in the \$5,300 buy-in affair to earn \$765,200. That's enough to place him 13th in the standings. This year's winner, Gal Yifrach, now sits in 18th thanks to the \$543,025 he secured as the last player standing. ♠

## MATT HIGGINS GETS NINTH RING AT CHOCTAW

By Ryan Lucchesi

It took just a couple of hours for Matt Higgins to top the final table of the latest *World Series of Poker Circuit* main event, hosted by Choctaw Casino in Oklahoma. The victory saw Higgins secure \$218,436 and his ninth career gold ring.

This was his second WSOPC main event triumph, having taken down the big dance at the 2024 Horseshoe Tunica stop for \$167,058. The Georgia resident now has more than \$2.7 million in recorded earnings.

"I got here Friday and busted two bullets in 20 minutes, then lost the third in a huge hand on the money bubble in the first flight," Higgins admitted to Poker.org. "I never panicked, though, and woke up Saturday with a clear conscience and went through my normal routine of affirmations and prayers."

A total of 849 entries were made across the pair of starting flights in the \$1,700 buy-in no-limit hold'em poker tournament, surpassing the \$1 million guarantee to create a final prize pool of \$1,135,113. The final 85 players secured a min-cash worth \$4,354 in prize money.

Higgins took the chip lead with two tables remaining and kept it into the start of day 3. Gold-ring winners Wesley Jones and Zach Peay finished sixth and fifth, respectively. Schuyler Thornton fell in fourth, with the \$70,535 payout taking his career earnings above \$2 million. Damarjai Davenport busted in third place for \$100,399, putting his total winnings over \$1 million.

On the final hand, Jeremy Bowman got it all in with K♥ 10♠ against Higgins and his A♥ Q♣. The final board of the



tournament came down 6♣ 5♣ 2♣ J♦ 6♥, keeping Higgins ahead to give him the title. Bowman took home \$145,618 as the runner-up, which is his largest tournament cash so far on the circuit.

Event	Player	Payout	POY
1	Matthew Higgins	\$218,436	912
2	Jeremy Bowman	\$145,618	760
3	Damarjai Davenport	\$100,399	608
4	Schuyler Thornton	\$70,535	456
5	Zachary Peay	\$50,087	380
6	Wesley Jones	\$36,515	304
7	Cody Jorgenson	\$27,172	228
8	Nikola Mircetic	\$20,892	152
9	Lucas Jumalon	\$16,216	76

© Poker.org

## MAKE A WISH! KLIMENT TARMAKOV WINS ON HIS BIRTHDAY

By Tim Fiorvanti

Kliment Tarmakov won the *World Series of Poker International Circuit Playground* \$2,500 CAD main event, claiming the \$341,865 first-place prize in one of the biggest circuit tournaments of the year. The Toronto player kept the title in Canada, outlasting a field of 1,483 entrants.

Tarmakov's most recent live tournament cash came all the way back at the 2019 *Caribbean Poker Party* in the Bahamas six years ago. Now he'll be headed back to the same island nation, as his winner's prize also includes a \$5,000 package to WSOP Paradise in December.

This final table represented a significant windfall for each of the final nine players. Only David Quang, the runner-up, had over \$1 million in total results coming into this tournament. Tarmakov's previous best live tournament result came in the 2018 *WPT Montreal* championship, also held at Playground Poker Club, in which he finished 14th.

Tarmakov claimed victory in this event on his 38th birthday. The score pushed his career haul to nearly \$614,000.

Quang was the chip leader to start the final day, but Ricardo Cermen-Sandoval went on a tear in the early action. He eliminated Louise Francoeur on the official final table bubble, and pushed towards the top of the chip counts.

Cermen-Sandoval further extended his lead when he eliminated Charanjeev Malhotra in sixth, but he would ultimately fizz out in fourth place. Quang then busted Behnam Patros in third to set up the heads-up showdown.

He had a 3:1 lead over Tarmakov, but the gap was quickly



erased. Tarmakov took control when his pocket sevens held against pocket fours, putting Quang on the brink.

Pocket fours were good enough for Tarmakov, though. He called Quang's final all-in bet and held off the J♦ 10♠ to secure the title.

Event	Player	Payout	POY
1	Kliment Tarmakov	\$341,865	1,440
2	David Quang	\$227,697	1,200
3	Behnam Patros	\$160,673	960
4	Ricardo Sandoval	\$115,091	720
5	David Orlando	\$83,709	600
6	Charanjeev Malhotra	\$61,841	480
7	Matthew Desaulniers	\$46,363	360
8	Jamie Sequeira	\$35,358	240

© PokerStars

# CONNOR RASH SCORES AT WPT BESTBET SCRAMBLE

By Erik Fast



This year's *World Poker Tour bestbet Scramble* drew 327 entries at \$5,000 apiece, surpassing the \$1 million guarantee to create a final prize pool of \$1,487,850. After two starting flights and three more days of combined-field action, Connor Rash emerged victorious. The Tallahassee resident was awarded \$315,350 for the win.

In addition to the money and the honor of having his name etched onto the Mike Sexton *WPT* Champions Cup, Rash also secured 960 POY points. This was his second POY-qualified score of 2025.

Prior to this triumph, Rash's biggest tournament score was an eighth-place finish in the 2024 *World Series of Poker* \$10,000 six-max championship, earning \$78,455. With this win, he surpassed \$1 million in lifetime earnings.

The final day began with six players remaining and Rash in the lead. 2024 *WPT Rock'n'Roll Poker Open* champion Dylan Smith scored the first knockout of the day to move into the top spot on the chip counts. His pocket eights held against the pocket sevens of Jessica Dawley. Smith flopped a set and held from there to eliminate Dawley in sixth place (\$65,000). The bracelet winner now boasts nearly \$1.3 million in career cashes after her latest deep run.

Smith picked up an even larger pocket pair for his next elimination. His pocket queens bested the A♦ 6♥ of short stack Matthew Ahern (\$85,000) to narrow the field to four.

Rash then won a big clash with Smith, showing down a wheel against the top pair, top kicker of his opponent to move back in front ahead of the next key confrontation. Smith min-raised with A♣ 9♥ from under the gun and Rash defended his big blind with J♥ 7♥. The flop came down A♥ 10♥ 5♦ and Rash checked. Smith checked behind and the 6♣ rolled off on the turn. Rash led out with his flush draw. Smith called with top pair and the 3♥ on the river completed Rash's flush. He fired big on the end and Smith thought it over for a while before making the call to slide to 40 big blinds. Rash's stack surged to 137 big blinds after the hand.

The next knockout pitted Russell Dizer's A♥ 8♥ against the 7♣ 6♣ of Rash, who shoved from the cutoff. Dizer made the call from the small blind for just over 15 big blinds and the board came down 10♣ 5♦ 4♣ 8♣ K♦ to give Rash an eight-high straight. Dizer earned \$112,000 for his fourth-place showing.

Rash entered three-handed action with just over 70

percent of the total chips in play. The final trio battled for around seven orbits, with plenty of shoves along the way. The next knockout saw Byron Kaverman call off his last 10 big blinds with A♣ K♦ from the big blind facing a button rip from Rash, who was dominated with K♣ 5♥. Rash flopped a five and held from there, with the final board reading Q♥ 5♣ 2♣ 10♦.

Kaverman earned \$150,000 as the third-place finisher. It was another close call on the tour for Kaverman, who finished second in the 2014 *WPT Championship* for \$727,860. The bracelet winner now has nearly \$21.9 million in lifetime cashes to his name.

With that, Rash took better than a 7:1 chip lead into heads-up play. Smith found an early double-up and then won a big pot with two pair to cut the distance between them considerably, but it wasn't enough.

In the final hand of the tournament, Rash limped from the button with 9♣ 8♥ and Smith checked holding 7♥ 5♣. The flop came down 10♣ 7♣ 5♥ and both players checked. The J♥ hit the turn, giving Rash a straight. Smith checked and Rash bet. Smith check-raised with his two pair. Rash then reraised and Smith shoved. Smith was in need of a seven or five on the end, but the K♦ rolled off instead to bring the event to a close.

Smith was awarded \$200,000 as the runner-up. This pushed his career earnings past the \$5.1 million mark. The 800 POY points that came with this deep run moved him into 71st place in the overall standings presented by CoinPoker. He's made 10 final tables in 2025, with two titles won along the way.

Event	Player	Payout	POY
1	Connor Rash	\$315,350	960
2	Dylan Smith	\$200,000	800
3	Byron Kaverman	\$150,000	640
4	Russell Dizer	\$112,000	480
5	Matthew Ahern	\$85,000	400
6	Jessica Dawley	\$65,000	320
7	Mitch Garshofsky	\$49,500	240
8	Justin Fawcett	\$38,500	160
9	Mike Vanier	\$30,500	80

## TOURNAMENTS

# CIRCUIT RESULTS

© Parkwest Bicycle



Soohyun Kim



Joan Crespi

© Ante Up

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
Big Poker Oktober Parkwest Bicycle Bell Gardens, CA  \$400/\$600 NLH Nov. 2-12 \$1,500,000 GTD Entries: 2,100 Prizepool: \$1,500,000	1 Soohyun Kim	\$163,600	432
	2 Salim Admon	\$254,745	360
	3 Hoang Van Le	\$187,890	288
	4 Srivinay Irrinki	\$92,845	216
	5 Massoud Eskandari	\$72,390	180
	6 Rudy Cervantes	\$56,775	144
	7 Hamid Karimi	\$44,200	108
	8 Hriman Gokani	\$35,125	72
	9 William Wilson	\$26,120	36

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
DeepStack  Venetian Las Vegas, NV  \$1,600 NLH Nov. 13-17 \$400,000 GTD Entries: 282 Prizepool: \$400,440	1 Joan Crespi	\$82,302	456
	2 Kfir Nahum	\$57,930	380
	3 Javier Fernandez-Colomar	\$41,530	304
	4 Brian Reinert	\$30,333	228
	5 Ekrem Bozkurt	\$22,579	190
	6 Stephen Foutty	\$17,136	152
	7 William Paul	\$13,264	114
	8 Victor Shih	\$10,476	76
	9 Quang Ngo	\$8,446	38

© Venetian



Jose Fibla



Konstantinos Patsourakis

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Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
DeepStack  Venetian Las Vegas, NV  \$600 NLH Nov. 5-9 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 530 Prizepool: \$267,650	1 Jose Fibla	\$45,965	420
	2 Anastassios Leotsarakos	\$32,806	350
	3 Kainoa Nguyen	\$23,752	280
	4 James Kim	\$17,448	210
	5 Nikhil Gera	\$13,005	175
	6 Dylan Wilkerson	\$9,840	140
	7 Dan Shahar	\$7,558	105
	8 Anastasija Zavorotnaja	\$5,895	70
	9 John Phan	\$4,670	35

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
GUKPT  Grosvenor Casino Blackpool, United Kingdom  £1,250 NLH Nov. 6-9 £250,000 GTD Entries: 279 Prizepool: \$379,322	1 Konstantinos Patsourakis	\$89,067	432
	2 Liam McMurray	\$59,854	360
	3 Thomas Clack	\$39,942	288
	4 Steve Roberts	\$26,672	216
	5 Michael Rolt	\$18,314	180
	6 Noel Mcivor	\$13,388	144
	7 Iwan Jones	\$10,546	108
	8 Ewen Trevidy	\$8,843	72
	9 Osman Mustanoglu	\$7,703	36

All payouts in USD.

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## TOURNAMENTS

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Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
WPT bestbet Scramble bestbet Jacksonville, FL \$1,700 NLH Nov. 7-11 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 404 Prizepool: \$406,020	1 Benjamin Scrogins	\$81,090	720
	2 Nicholas Raio	\$54,060	600
	3 Brian Dumaplin	\$39,770	480
	4 William Morley	\$29,605	360
	5 Dee Oakes	\$22,300	300
	6 Rodney Turvin	\$17,000	240
	7 Pablo Valdivieso	\$13,120	180
	8 Bryan Bennett	\$10,250	120
	9 Andrew Difeo	\$8,110	60



© Playground Poker Club

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
WSOP Circuit Playground Poker Kahnawake, Canada C\$1,000 NLH Nov. 10-13 C\$800,000 GTD Entries: 996 Prizepool: \$612,797	1 Fenghua Cai	\$101,421	912
	2 Griffin Benger	\$66,669	760
	3 Anthony Bakri	\$46,335	608
	4 Scott Carragher	\$32,759	456
	5 Christopher Alcindor	\$23,572	380
	6 Bradley Gibson	\$17,267	304
	7 Danesh Luthra	\$12,887	228
	8 DJ Sharma	\$9,798	152
	9 Srinvas Gottiparthi	\$7,597	76

© Kings Casino



Event	Player	Payout
Italian Poker Sport Kings Casino Rozvadov, Czech Republic €380 NLH Nov. 10-17 €1,500,000 GTD Entries: 4,729 Prizepool: \$1,769,723	1 Francesco Recupero	\$299,280
	2 Lulei Hu	\$163,560
	3 Laszlo Veszi	\$117,160
	4 Slavomir Rakovan	\$83,520
	5 Walter Van Camberg	\$66,120
	6 Wayne Watson	\$51,620
	7 Merab Meladze	\$39,788
	8 Nader Hazgui	\$28,768



© Playground Poker Club

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
WSOP Circuit Playground Poker Kahnawake, Canada C\$5,000 NLH Nov. 17-18 C\$500,000 GTD Entries: 183 Prizepool: \$600,604	1 Dylan Laird	\$137,886	672
	2 Guillaume Nolet	\$91,547	560
	3 Allen Shen	\$62,473	448
	4 Dustin Melanson	\$43,814	336
	5 Rob Mancini	\$31,595	280
	6 Cindy Spier	\$23,451	224
	7 Mark Bailey	\$17,928	168
	8 Ning Ma	\$14,129	112
	9 Alex Fortin-Demers	\$11,495	56

## TOURNAMENTS

© WSOP



Omar Lakhdari



Michael Giardina

© VBally's Black Hawk

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
WSOP Circuit Casino	1 Omar Lakhdari	\$135,700	720
Middelkerke	2 Radoslaw Kopec	\$90,045	600
Middelkerke, Belgium	3 Jakub Sterba	\$61,870	480
€1,500 NLH	4 Cecile Ticherfatinne	\$43,240	360
Nov. 11-16	5 Klaas Vercruyse	\$30,820	300
Entries: 414	6 Christian Di Salvio	\$22,368	240
Prizepool: \$654,865	7 Andre Bock	\$16,560	180
	8 Xander Michielsen	\$12,535	120
	9 Sonny Franco	\$9,660	60

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
Colorado Fall Championship	1 Michael Giardina	\$46,310	456
Bally's	2 Antonio Vargas	\$46,228	380
Black Hawk, CO	3 Zach Gutierrez	\$40,145	304
\$1,200 NLH Nov.13-16	4 Richard Dixon	\$32,210	228
\$200,000 GTD	5 Nicholas Hammarstrom	\$17,058	190
Entries: 292	6 Zachary Ackley	\$13,167	152
Prizepool: \$299,260	7 Luan Do	\$10,175	114
	8 Von Muse	\$8,080	76
	9 Hung Mai	\$6,255	38

© WSOP



Taizsh Mihai



Yang Lu

© Peppermill

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
WSOP Circuit	1 Taizsh Mihai	\$188,095	840
Grand Victoria	2 Angel Suarez	\$125,390	700
Elgin, IL	3 Bohdan Slyvinskyi	\$86,342	560
\$1,700 NLH	4 Jai Vallurupalli	\$60,600	420
Nov. 13-17	5 Cero Zuccarello	\$43,369	350
\$750,000 GTD	6 John Reading	\$31,660	280
Entries: 693	7 Glen Nelson	\$23,585	210
Prizepool: \$1,049,895	8 Michael Herget	\$17,937	140
	9 Michael Vavalle	\$13,932	70

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
Fall Poker Palooza	1 Yang Lu	\$54,000	720
Peppermill	2 Adam Nattress	\$49,700	600
Reno, NV	3 Caleb Ralston	\$43,100	480
\$1,000 NLH	4 Andre Litvinov	\$42,900	360
Nov. 14-16	5 Rambo Halpern	\$19,600	300
\$300,000 GTD	6 Michael Smith	\$15,700	240
Entries: 433	7 Yanki Koppel	\$13,060	180
Prizepool: \$398,700	8 Charles Varner	\$10,500	120
	9 Michael Flaherty	\$7,870	60



Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
Fall Poker Open	1 Matt Zambanini	\$204,000	1080
Borgata	2 Kashka Corpenering	\$140,900	900
Atlantic City, NJ	3 Jose Wong	\$97,975	720
\$2,700 NLH	4 Andrew Porter	\$65,300	540
Nov. 14-18	5 Ari Katz	\$45,900	450
\$1,000,000 GTD	6 Paul Volpe	\$36,625	360
Entries: 464	7 Michael Dentale	\$29,650	270
Prizepool: \$1,113,600	8 Clemen Deng	\$24,275	180
	9 Angel Lopez	\$19,925	90



Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
Master Classics of Poker	1 Timothy Chung	\$234,370	1080
Holland Casino	2 Raoul Kanme	\$156,026	900
Amsterdam, Netherlands	3 Elias Suhonen	\$111,428	720
€3,000 NLH	4 Wladimir Stepanian	\$85,756	540
Nov. 18-22	5 Mohamed Taabouni	\$65,772	450
Entries: 427	6 Luka Sorainen	\$50,421	360
Prizepool: \$1,325,106	7 Bastiaan Faessen	\$38,775	270
	8 Camilla Reventlow	\$29,776	180
	9 David Boyaciyan	\$23,026	90

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 PokerStars NAPT Las Vegas  
\$5,300 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Thomas Boivin  
15,030,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 58%  
After Flop: 62%  
After Turn: 75%



Gal Yifrach  
5,030,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 41%  
After Flop: 37%  
After Turn: 20%

### PREFLOP

With three players remaining and blinds of 100,000-150,000 with a big blind ante of 150,000, Thomas Boivin raised to 300,000 from the button. Gal Yifrach called from the big blind.

#### FLOP



Yifrach checked, and Boivin bet 300,000. Yifrach called.

#### TURN



Yifrach checked. Boivin bet 350,000, and Yifrach called.

#### RIVER



Yifrach checked, and Boivin bet 1,200,000. Yifrach folded.

### COMMENTARY:

After Michael Berk and Ekrem Bozkurt busted out, the final three players had secured \$291,800, and Thomas Boivin remained in a commanding chip position. He had around 100 big blinds, while Jennifer Shahade was on about 10 blinds and Gal Yifrach about 30. That meant Yifrach had to be very cautious since he was in good position to ladder up. He defended one of the weakest hands he was supposed to play from the big blind, and he flopped a diamond draw. He check-called a small size from Boivin, and the turn improved Yifrach to a combo draw, albeit a poor one since his possible straights would sometimes be dead already. Facing another small bet, he had a mandatory call, and the river delivered the weak straight. Boivin finally sized up with a bet closer to the size of the pot, and Yifrach was in a tough spot. If he only called on the river with king-high straights or better, then Boivin could print money by betting the river with any two cards. A jack-high straight was certainly good enough to consider calling, but it was indifferent according to the solver, meaning that calling and folding had similar expected value. Yifrach clearly thought about it, but he may have decided that folding and preserving his stack was the tiebreaker in a close spot. With Shahade likely to be all in soon, Yifrach could wait her out and see whether she doubled or busted. He mucked his weak straight and was rewarded when Shahade busted moments later.

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

## TOURNAMENTS

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Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
Master Classics of Poker Holland Casino Amsterdam, Netherlands €10,300 NLH Nov. 21-22 Entries: 24 Prizepool: \$270,480	1 Joris Ruijs	\$121,716	
	2 Tobias Garp	\$81,144	
	3 Roope Tarmi	\$40,572	
	4 Tom Vogelsang	\$27,048	

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
MSPT Ameristar East Chicago, IN \$1,110 NLH Nov. 20-23 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 514 Prizepool: \$497,080	1 Aaron Johnson	\$92,000	840
	2 Michael Suggs	\$77,483	700
	3 Xi Nguyen	\$46,485	560
	4 Matt Miller	\$35,157	420
	5 Lee Rzentkowski	\$26,368	350
	6 Angel Suarez	\$20,020	280
	7 Kojo Enu	\$15,625	210
	8 Jerry Miller	\$12,207	140
	9 Yoon Kim	\$9,278	70

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 PokerStars NAPT Las Vegas  
\$5,300 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Thomas Boivin  
18,080,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 59%  
After Flop: 61%  
After Turn: 23%



Gal Yifrach  
3,975,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 39%  
After Flop: 37%  
After Turn: 77%

### PREFLOP

With two players remaining and blinds of 100,000-150,000 with a big blind ante of 150,000, Thomas Boivin raised to 375,000 from the button. Gal Yifrach called from the big blind.

FLOP



Both players checked.

TURN



Yifrach checked, and Boivin bet 450,000. Yifrach check-raised to 2,000,000. Boivin moved all-in, and Yifrach called for 1,450,000 more.

RIVER



### COMMENTARY:

Heads-up play at the *NAPT Las Vegas* main event had only just begun when Gal Yifrach defended the big blind holding a weak suited connector and flopped a straight flush draw. Thomas Boivin flopped a strong hand with two pair, but he opted to play it slow and check it back. That was an interesting decision, since two pair was rather vulnerable on such a coordinated board, but the solver actually does mix this holding pretty evenly between betting and checking. Understanding that the K $\heartsuit$  on the turn would not only improve some of Boivin's holdings, but also prompt him to bluff sometimes, Yifrach set the bait with another check after turning a flush. Boivin decided it was time to get some value and bet about half the pot. Yifrach made a bit of a strange play, raising for more than half of his remaining chips. When players do this, they are most likely not folding, so Boivin had to decide whether two pair with a heart blocker was good enough to get it in. If Yifrach was check-raising hands like Kx J $\heartsuit$  or worse two pairs, then Boivin was beating value and folding wasn't an option. As it stood, Boivin was behind, but he still had outs to a full house and the chance to make a better flush, which amounted to more than 20% equity. Unfortunately for him, he missed on a chance to end the tournament when Yifrach smashed a straight flush.

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



© RGPS



© RGPS

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
RunGood Grand Prix	1 Maksim Tatarintsev	\$38,890	240
Jamul Casino Jamul, CA	2 Zachary Kelley	\$27,250	200
\$600 NLH Nov. 21-23 \$150,000 GTD Entries: 348 Prizepool: \$180,960	3 Gabriel Habbaba	\$17,520	160
	4 William Wilson	\$11,229	120
	5 Jose Medina	\$8,659	100
	6 Barbara Lanese	\$7,155	80
	7 Bradley Miller	\$6,017	60
	8 Jeffrey Burquist	\$4,940	40
	9 Henry Trinidad	\$3,887	20

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
RunGood Grand Prix	1 Jonathan Lawson	\$56,865	300
Horseshoe Council Bluffs, IA	2 Wesley Cannon	\$39,967	250
\$800 NLH Nov. 21-23 \$111,111 GTD Entries: 390 Prizepool: \$273,000	3 Nolan Garrett	\$25,689	200
	4 Mike Estes	\$16,871	150
	5 Robert Sherraden	\$12,995	125
	6 Ryan Ramsdell	\$10,756	100
	7 Siphonh Tran	\$9,009	75
	8 Jared Grayson	\$7,371	50
	9 Richard Terry	\$5,706	25

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# GETTING PAID WITH THE NUTS

By Jonathan Little

Early in a \$3,500 buy-in main event, I raised to 700 out of my 60,000 stack from the button with 8♣ 7♦, the small blind, a tight, passive guy with 40,000, called. The big blind, a splashy 50-year-old with 75,000, called as well.

From the button, I am more than happy to raise with an overly wide range, especially if the players yet to act are not three-betting too often. 8-7 offsuit is loose, but acceptable.

The flop came 6♦ 5♦ 4♥. That is good for me! My opponents checked, and I bet 1,300. The small blind called, and the big blind raised to 4,000.

My continuation bet is completely normal, given I have one of my best made hands. I would also bet with many of my draws, although I would not bet too often with my unpaired overcards because this board should connect quite well with my opponents' ranges.

Facing the big blind's check-raise, there is no point in slow playing because it is quite easy for one of my opponents to have a decently strong hand on this flop, given they did not three-bet before the flop.

I reraised to 12,300, and the small blind folded. But the big blind quickly called.

At this point, I can reasonably put the big blind on a strong made hand like a set or a high-equity draw, such as



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a strong flush draw or a pair with a straight draw.

The turn was the J♣. The big blind checked, and I bet 16,000 into the 28,000 pot. He quickly called.

This blank turn is as beautiful as the flop. I made

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another bet for value, expecting my opponent to continue with his entire flop range. It is important that you do not bet too large in this situation, because the worst thing you can do is bet so large that your opponent hero folds various two pair hands and marginal draws.

The river was the 3♣. The big blind led for 20,000. I of course went all-in for 17,000 more and was immediately called by 7♥ 6♥, a worse straight.

When he leads into me, I assumed he must be bluffing because leading with anything else is almost certainly terrible.

This may seem like a standard set-up situation, but I think my opponent lost more chips than he should have. If I found myself in my opponent's shoes on the river, I would have check-called to induce bluffs from busted draws.

As played, he forced me to play perfectly. If I had a seven, I would call, and if I had a worse hand, I would fold. It is as simple as that.

My opponent took the exact worst possible line on the river. That's lucky for me! Never forget, you have to get lucky to win a tournament. This is a form of luck that many people fail to consider. ♠



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 [Poker-Coaching.com/CardPlayer](http://Poker-Coaching.com/CardPlayer).

## FIVE POST-FLOP LEAKS THAT ARE KILLING YOUR TOURNAMENT GAME

By Alex Fitzgerald

Many tournament players lose chips not from bad luck, but from subtle post-flop mistakes they don't even realize they're making. In this article, we'll expose five common leaks that could be quietly draining your stack.

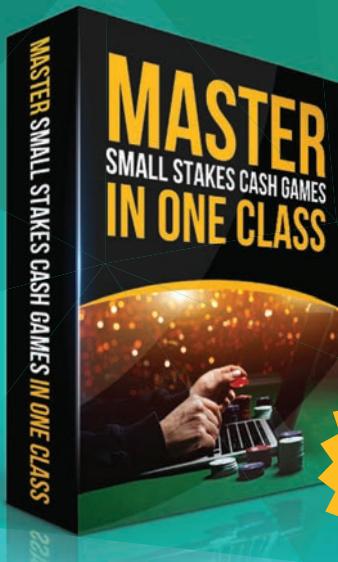
### You Always Call The Flop Bet With A Pair

Listen, if some solid player raises from early position and then bets 75% of the pot into four players on the flop, he has the nuts. It's top pair top kicker at the worst, but it's likely an overpair or set that's worried about some set coming in. You can fold more often versus these players when they fire that huge on the flop.

However, no matter where you're at in the country, you'll see people constantly call on the flop with mediocre top pairs and even second pairs, because they feel exploitable if they fold to the first bet.

You're only exploiting yourself if you call there. Think about it. What percentage of the time is it going to be checked down after a guy lobs that bomb at half the table? 20% of the time? 10% of the time? Usually, when they have made that kind of investment, they're going to keep

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firing. You're really just calling the flop with the intention to fold the turn. It's free money for the other guy.

With top pair or second pair, you're going to be continuing most of the time. That doesn't mean you will be continuing all of the time. Think about each hand individually.

### You Always Call A Large Bet With A Draw

This leak causes a ton of problems for most tournament grinders. If they flop a draw, there is no folding. If they still have the draw on the turn, they're still not folding. They're not analyzing the price. They're not looking at their implied odds.

What most people fear in these situations is folding and then seeing they would have hit the draw. When chips start flying in it is akin to torture. For the rest of the night, they are thinking about the huge pot they could have won if they were just brave enough to call another bet.

However, this kind of thinking ignores logic. Again, if some solid player is firing huge bets into you and other players, especially on later streets, it's likely they have a monster. If they have a set, the flush cards you're drawing to that pair the board aren't even outs. Many of these solid players aren't the type to immediately stack off when a scare card comes, so your implied odds are more limited.

Ask yourself before each call if the implied odds are actually there. If you have a loose cannon you're dealing with who always calls off deep, then by all means draw thinly. If you have a solid player who is pricing you out, don't worry if you would have hit the draw. You weren't supposed to call anyway.

### You Never Raise Without Two Pair Or Better

Many players only raise post-flop if they have two pair or better. This makes them instantly exploitable. Any thinking player could easily bet/fold their top pairs versus a player with this obvious strategy.

Are you worried you're one of these players? Track your play next time. Do you ever raise with one pair, a draw, or a blocker? If you never do so, your game needs another dimension.

Now, the good news is that most of your opponents call too much, so you can get away with value-intensive ranges for a long time. You just want to make sure you're developing that gear for when you do move up.

When should you raise with a weaker hand? You can start with this play:

If your solid opponent bets small on a board with a flush draw and straight draw multi-way, it's often a mediocre hand

that's trying to keep the pot small. They're worried if they check that they will get blasted off the hand. They would rather bet themselves and set the price. If you have a solid top pair versus them multi-way then raise for value. You'll likely get called by a number of weaker pairs and draws. And if you did stub your toe on a set, you're going to find out quickly when they reraise again. You can fold at that point, no harm, no foul.

### You Always Call On The River With Two Pair Or Better

I see this happen all the time. A young guy has been playing solid all day. He gets to a river multi-way when a flush draw comes in. He checks and a solid senior citizen puts in a huge bet. The senior citizen is mostly in the cardroom for coffee and conversation. He never gets out of line.

In this case, you know the tighter player almost certainly has the flush, especially multi-way. You can make thin folds there with two pair and whatnot.

However, many younger guys will call there because they're so worried about being exploited... by a guy who is there primarily for socialization.

If you never find yourself making a big fold with two pair or better on the river, then that's a gear you need to develop. As you move up, players will get better at noticing when you're likely near the top of your range, and they will make you pay dearly.

### You Always Call The Turn Bet When A Draw Misses

This is another leak you see many players have. Whenever they have a mediocre pair and the draw misses on the turn, they automatically think, "Great! I bet he has a missed draw he's barreling with. I can call again!"

This is really just an excuse to keep gambling. If your opponent is tighter in nature, then it is possible they have a draw on occasion, but most of their hands are going to be value combinations. You should make the thin fold, even with some mediocre top pairs, especially if you're not willing to call a river bet that is likely coming.

### Conclusion:

Fixing just one of these post-flop leaks can instantly sharpen your tournament performance. Clean up your game, and you'll find yourself going deeper and cashing more often. ♠



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: Getting Owned By A VIP

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 circuit on his Punt Of The Day Substack.*

"Sure, you're better at poker than me, but I have an advantage over you. You've never played with me before, so I am unpredictable and you can never guess what I have."

I have heard so many variations of this sentiment from so many different people in my life in poker, and it is amazing that people still believe it. Everyone thinks their bad game represents some specific type of bad poker that is unique to them and only them.

The reality is, not every player is bad in the same way, but there are groups of poker players who are bad in similar ways. If you play enough poker and are observant, you get good at categorizing unknown players and estimating tendencies.

That being said, there is a kernel of truth to the legend of the unpredictable player. Over the course of several hands, it's unlikely that a novice player will consistently stymie a top player with their unusual play, but in the short run they can get one over on a top player.

Tournament poker is a long iterated game. Winning a hand doesn't mean anything, winning a tournament or

Dao Minh Phu



being up money over a large sample of tournaments is what matters. However, the best way to do that is to make sure you play every hand as well as possible, which ideally means being one step ahead of the curve and predicting the plays of unpredictable players.

In today's POTD, I played a hand vs Dao Minh Phu, a rich Vietnamese VIP whose patented move at the *Triton*

Triton Poker  
©

*Cyprus* series was getting all in for hundreds of big blinds with two cards lower than a six. However, he's also a player who has multiple gears and was playing more seriously as we got into the money of the first event. I got cute and tried to outsmart him and he punished me for it. Read on to see how.

**Event:** 2023 Triton Cyprus \$25,000 GG Super Millions  
**The Hand**

There are a few tables remaining and we are in the money, sitting on a stack of 1,200,000 with blinds at 25,000-50,000 with a 50,000 big blind ante. It folds to me on the button and I look down at  $4\heartsuit 4\spadesuit$ . I raise to 100,000, and Dao Minh Phu calls from the big blind, having started the hand with a covering stack of 2,600,000.

**Flop:**  $Q\spadesuit J\heartsuit 2\clubsuit$  (pot: 275,000)

He checks, and I check behind.

**Turn:**  $2\heartsuit$  (pot: 275,000)

Dao Minh Phu bets 225,000, and I call.

**River:**  $5\spadesuit$  (pot: 725,000)

Dao Minh Phu bets 400,000. I fold, and he turns over  $6\spadesuit 4\clubsuit$ .

**What Was I Thinking?**

Dao Minh Phu is a wild card who plays quite aggressively, and one of his patented moves is announcing a quick all-in over a bet. I thought that for chips, Q-J-2 isn't a pure continuation bet after raising the button. I also thought I would rather keep the pot small against him, especially if he might do something like check-jam for twice the pot size.

I thought I would check back the flop and figure it out on later streets. On the turn, he bet quickly and on the larger size, which I read as strong, but I figured I could not fold a pair just yet.

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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On the river, Mr. Phu quickly reached for chips, and I needed to determine if I would call half my remaining stack. I was short on timebanks and tried to get a live read off of him, but could not. I wasn't sure if he would value bet a jack for this size and figured having a heart was slightly bad, so I folded.

### What Did I Get Wrong?

There aren't that many technical things about this hand. For chips, I pure raise preflop, and I mix flop checks.

The turn is a pure fold for chips, and having a heart in my hand is bad. When the board pairs, I'd rather have black fours because on a 4♥ river I can stack a flush.

On the river, having a heart is bad for me in theory and specifically against Mr. Phu. Even if he is occasionally bluffing total air, he's still more likely to bet the turn and the river with a missed flush draw than with, say, 6-4 offsuit. I should note his turn bet is not that big a deviation from the solver's big blind strategy.

From the big blind, the solver frequently bets the turn with 4-3, 5-3 and 5-4 offsuit. They prefer a heart, but this is very close to being a solver-approved turn bet from Mr. Phu.

On average, I have a pretty simple fold on the river, but it's live poker against a VIP player who likes to bluff, so it's always good to think when you have a bluff catcher in that spot.

However, when playing someone who is an executive for the "Alibaba of Vietnam," nailing the correct solver play is not what matters. What matters is making the right play in the moment.

If you watch the hand from the livestream, you will hear him say, "Once you checked the flop, I think you missed."

He is 100% right. I figured I could keep the pot small vs.

him, and if he bluffed me with a flush draw or 10-9, so be it.

Instead, he correctly identified that I had an unbalanced, exploitative check range and aggressively bet into me quickly and confidently. It is funny that when I rewatch the stream and look at his eyes, I see weakness and think he's bluffing, but I think that's largely confirmation bias from knowing he's bluffing.

I am not a live tell expert, but I trust my instincts, and in game his behavior did feel confident. It turns out it was false confidence. I was wrong. He exploited my strategy and tricked me.

### Grade

I got outplayed by the type of player people travel around the world to play high-stakes poker against.

I have bluffed Phil Ivey, made hero folds vs. Mikita Badziakouski, and hero calls vs. Isaac Haxton. When I look back at all the poker I've played, I will focus on those memories, instead of the time a billionaire bluffed me, windmilled it in my face, and the whole table laughed at me.

In the words of Randy Lew on the broadcast, "You just got owned, Sam Greenwood."

I'm going to give myself a D. ♠



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.

# TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 PokerStars NAPT Las Vegas  
\$5,300 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 63%  
After Flop: 72%  
After Turn: 84%

Gal Yifrach  
10,980,000 Chips



Thomas Boivin  
11,130,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 36%  
After Flop: 28%  
After Turn: 16%

## PREFLOP

With two players remaining and blinds of 100,000-150,000 with a big blind ante of 150,000, Gal Yifrach limped from the button. Thomas Boivin raised to 800,000, and Yifrach called.

FLOP



Boivin bet 500,000, and Yifrach called.

TURN



Boivin bet 2,400,000, and Yifrach called.

RIVER



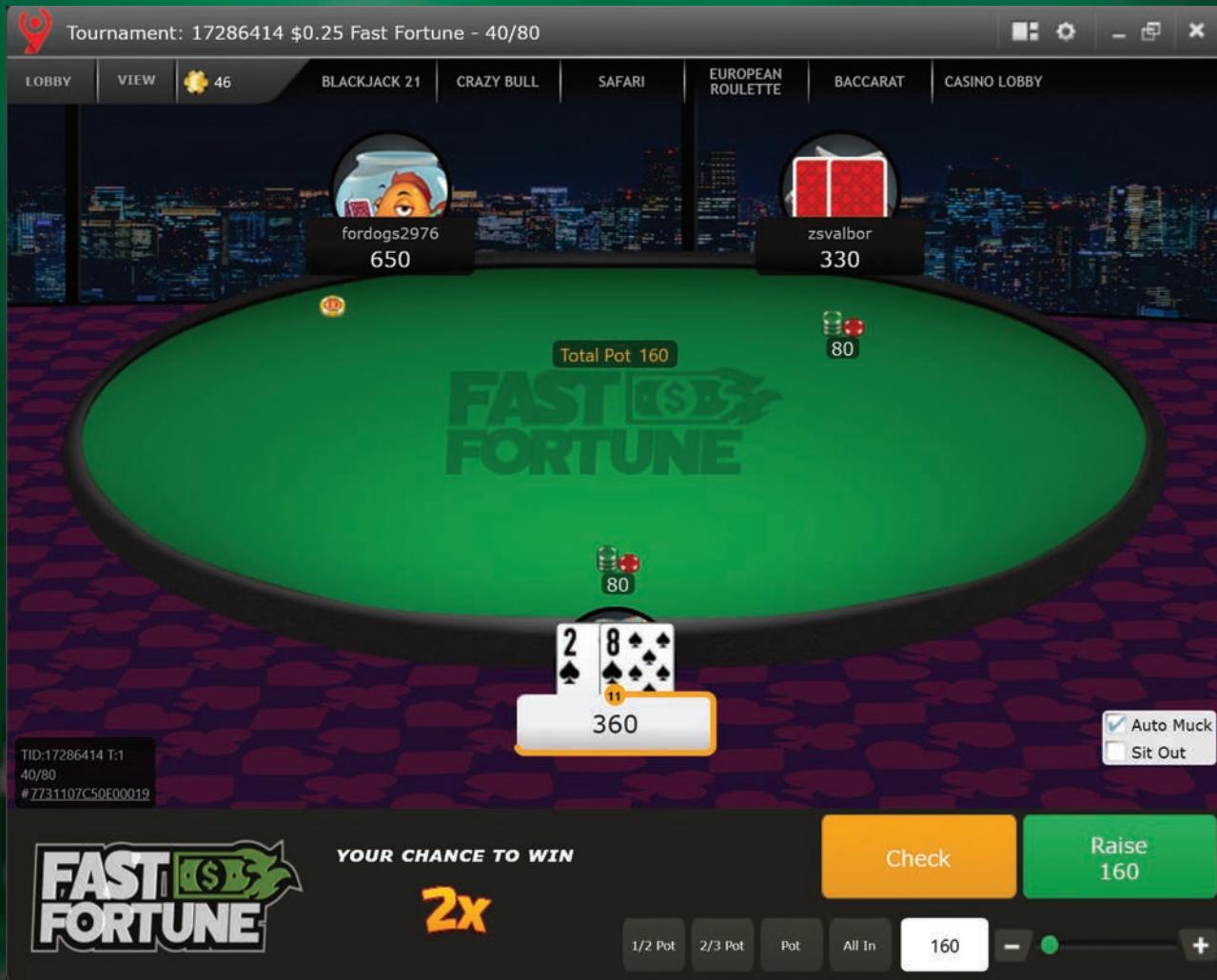
Both players checked.

## COMMENTARY:

Gal Yifrach had climbed back from his deficit and taken the chip lead against Thomas Boivin in the *NAPT* Las Vegas main event when this hand occurred. Yifrach limped a pretty good hand. Having a limping strategy is fine in these heads-up situations, so he needed to include some hands that would be happy to call a raise like K♣ 4♦. Boivin opted to bluff with his offsuit rags, which he also needed to do so at some frequency since playing deep-stacked pots out of position with them doesn't tend to go very well. Lower rainbow boards often call for larger flop sizings when stacks are deep, but Boivin went with a small bet. That wager would garner some immediate folds from better hands that may have limp-called, stuff like Q-6 and 9-8. Since Yifrach had a pair, he had an easy call. The 7♦ was a good card for Boivin to keep barreling. He still had equity with his gutshot, and he could bluff many rivers that completed straights and flushes since he had the 6♣ in his hand. Yifrach knew he was still beating bluffs, so he called to see the river. The 2♦ was a rather bad card for Boivin. Now, having a club was bad since he blocked Yifrach's weakest flop and turn cards. And Boivin would hardly ever have trips himself, since isolating preflop and then betting large on the turn would make no sense with most hands that have a deuce in them. Meanwhile, Yifrach could have had any number of suited twos, along with top pair hands that likely wouldn't fold on a brick. Boivin shut it down, and Yifrach won a key pot that helped propel him to victory, though the two did make a deal a bit later to take most of the prize money out of play.



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# BIG POTS FROM SMALL BETS

By Mark Mazmanian

As mixed games are typically less common than hold'em or Omaha, I appreciate anything which helps proliferate them and gives new players an opportunity to enjoy different variants of poker. Because of this, I try to participate and give action whenever there is an event aimed at growing the mixed game community.

Resorts World in Las Vegas recently hosted the *Mixed Game Festival XII*, which ran multiple tables of \$4-\$8 and \$8-\$16 mix and provided a welcoming friendly environment for players from all over to try new games at comfortable limits. Which brings me to a hand I played in **Super Razzdeucey**.

Super Razzdeucey is a split-pot, lowball-stud game where half the pot is awarded to the best 2-7 low (7-5-4-3-2 is the nuts), and half to the best badugi (5-4-3-2 rainbow is the other nuts.) Like any split-pot game, the objective is to play hands that can scoop the whole pot.

The fact that it is super means each player receives an additional down card at the beginning of the hand. Then, each player must discard one of their hole cards before proceeding to fourth street. The game finishes with a normal stud structure until each player has seven cards.

In the hand in question, seven players anted \$1, and I was dealt a (Q♣ 4♣ 2♣) 7♦. I discarded the queen, giving me a very formidable 7-4-2 with three suits. I needed a non-



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pairing heart for my badugi and already had three cards to a wheel.

The high card king brought in \$1, the 5♦ limped, the 6♣ raised, the 8♣ called, and two jacks folded. I saw no hearts amongst the low cards, which was a positive, but the 5, 6, and 8 were all helpful cards to me, so I elected to just call rather than raise. The pot was \$24 headed to fourth street.

The 3♦ didn't help my badugi, but it did improve my low-ball hand. The 5♦ added a king, the 6♣ added the 7♥, and the 8♣ added the 6♣. With my board being low, I had first action and elected to lead \$4. All three opponents called, making the pot \$40.

On fifth street the hand got interesting as the boards read 5♦ K♥ 8♦, 6♣ 7♥ 9♥, and 8♣ 6♣ 9♣. I smashed the 3♥, which completed my badugi while pairing my board. Also noteworthy here, my 7-4-3-2 badugi was the best possible given everyone's boards. I bet \$8 and everyone called, growing the pot to \$72.

Sixth street set up an unusual scenario, as 5-K-8 added a 7, 6-7-9 paired his 6, and 8-6-9 paired his 9. My card was somehow yet another three, but my 7-4 badugi was still a board lock to be best. If I could hit a 5, 6, or 8 on the river, I'd have a great chance to scoop.

As played, 5-K-8-7 checked, 6-7-9-6 bet, and 8-6-9-9 raised! Before his chips hit the felt I announced "three bets." Everyone called, and the pot had suddenly swelled to \$168.

On the river, all three opponents checked and I kept my card face down to the side as I fired dark. They all called, bringing the total pot to \$200 even (not bad for a \$4-\$8 game) and I announced, "7 smooth badugi, and this last card is..."

I flipped over a 10, which of course did not win, and I split the pot with the player who had a board of 6-7-9-6 and made a 9-7 low.

While it would have been nice to get the whole pot, I'll take my \$100 half. Hands like this speak to the fun and exciting situations that mixed games can offer! ♠



Mark Mazmanian has been a mixed-game specialist for more than two decades playing in games all over the country. The Las Vegas resident can be reached on IG at maztastic1 or by email at markmaz17@hotmail.com.

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	Dec. 26-Jan. 6	Trailblazer Poker Tour	Texas Card House - Rio Grande Valley ■ Edinburg, TX
<b>JANUARY</b>	Jan. 1-12	WSOP Circuit Las Vegas	Planet Hollywood ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Jan. 5-12	PGT Last Chance Series	Aria PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Jan. 5-19	Signature Series	Wynn ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Jan. 6-20	WPT Lucky Hearts Poker Open	Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino ■ Hollywood, FL
	Jan. 7-18	WSOP Circuit Oklahoma	Choctaw Casino & Resort ■ Durant, OK
	Jan. 7-19	Beau Rivage Heater	Beau Rivage Resort & Casino ■ Biloxi, MS
	Jan. 8-19	100 Grand Stack Series San Diego	Sycuan Resort & Casino ■ El Cajon, CA
	Jan. 9-11	Winter Poker Meltdown	Turning Stone Casino & Resort ■ Verona, NY
	Jan. 14-25	Colorado Showdown Series	Bally's ■ Black Hawk, CO
	Jan. 14-Feb. 2	Trailblazer Poker Tour	Texas Card House ■ Houston, TX
	Jan. 15-26	WSOP Circuit Northern California	Thunder Valley Casino & Resort ■ Lincoln, CA
	Jan. 25-31	PGT Kickoff Series	Aria PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Jan. 29-Feb. 1	Diamond Poker Championship	Talking Stick Resort ■ Scottsdale, AZ
<b>FEBRUARY</b>	Feb. 3-10	PGT Mixed Games Series	Aria PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Feb. 10-16	Ohio Poker State Championship	Jack Casino ■ Cleveland, OH
	Feb. 12-14	Mixed Games Super High Roller Bowl	Aria PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Feb. 15-March 2	Trailblazer Poker Tour	Texas Card House ■ Dallas, TX
	Feb. 17-22	MSPT Club Poker Championship	Potawatomi Hotel & Casino ■ Milwaukee, WI
	Feb. 18-March 1	European Poker Tour	Palais des Congres de Paris ■ Paris, France
<b>MARCH</b>	March 11-15	MSPT Festival Larchwood	Grand Falls Casino ■ Larchwood, IA
	March 17-22	MSPT Festival Riverside	Riverside Casino & Resort ■ Riverside, IA
	March 24-29	Missouri Poker State Championship	Ameristar Casino, Resort & Spa ■ St. Charles, MO
	March 26-April 6	Irish Open	Royal Dublin Society ■ Ballsbridge, Ireland
	March 31-April 12	World Series of Poker Europe	Hilton Hotel ■ Prague, Czech Republic
<b>APRIL</b>	April 6-27	Trailblazer Poker Tour	Texas Card House ■ Austin, TX
	April 7-19	Minnesota Poker State Championship	Running Aces Card Room ■ Columbus, MN
	April 8-28	WPT Seminole Hard Rock Poker Showdown	Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino ■ Hollywood, FL



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## POKER GLOSSARY



**Action Card** - A card that causes an increase in betting.  
**Air** - A bad hand with little to no value.  
**Angle (Shooting)** - An unethical play used to gain information or an advantage.  
**Backdoor** - A draw needing two streets to complete.  
**Balance** - Playing different hands in the same way so opponents can't read you.  
**Bankroll** - The amount of money you have to play poker with.  
**Barrel** - A continuation bet followed by a bet on the turn and/or river.  
**Blocker** - Holding one of your opponent's outs.  
**Bluff Catcher** - A weak hand that can only beat a bluff.  
**Bounty** - A prize earned for a knockout in a tournament.  
**Brick** - A blank card that is unlikely to have helped.  
**Broadway** - A straight to the ace.  
**Bubble** - The time period right before a tournament reaches the money.  
**Burn** - A card that is removed by the dealer to prevent cheating.  
**Calling Station** - A loose, passive player who rarely folds.  
**Chip Race** - Coloring up the smallest chips in circulation during a tournament.  
**Chop** - A split of the pot.  
**Coin Flip** - A situation where the odds for each player are roughly 50/50.  
**Collusion** - Working with another player to cheat.  
**Continuation Bet** - When the preflop aggressor makes another bet on the flop.  
**Crying Call** - A call from a player who does not believe his hand is best.  
**Dead Money** - A player with no chance of winning. Also, extra money in the pot.  
**Donk Bet** - An early position bet by a player who was not the aggressor in the previous betting round.  
**Drawing Dead** - When your hand can no longer win.  
**Drawing Live** - When your hand is behind but can still draw out.  
**Effective Stack** - The smallest stack among two players in a heads-up pot.  
**Eight-Or-Better** - A qualifier common in high-low split games.  
**Equity** - The mathematical expected value of your hand.  
**Expected Value** - The weighted average of what you should profit in the long run.  
**Family Pot** - When every player at the table sees the flop or fourth street.  
**Felted** - To lose all your chips, such that there are none left on the felt.  
**Float** - To call with a weak hand with the intention of bluffing later.  
**Freeroll** - A tournament with no buy-in, or a tournament stake with no makeup.  
**GTO** - Game Theory Optimal play aiming for an unexploitable strategy.  
**Gutshot** - An inside straight draw.  
**Hero Call** - Calling with a relatively weak hand when you suspect a bluff.  
**Hollywood** - Exaggerating and overacting to sell strength or weakness.

**Horse** - A player financially backed by someone else.  
**ICM** - The Independent Chip Model assigns monetary value to tournament chips.  
**Implied Odds** - The additional chips you expect to win if your draw improves.  
**Juice** - Rake, or the fee collected by the house or casino.  
**Kill** - A button that temporarily increases the stakes of the game.  
**LAG** - A loose, aggressive player.  
**Limp** - To enter a pot by calling the minimum bet rather than raise.  
**Muck** - To fold.  
**Nit** - A rock, who rarely takes risks or gives action, and only plays premium cards.  
**Nuts** - The best possible hand on a given board.  
**Open** - To bet first.  
**Orbit** - A full rotation of the blinds at the table.  
**Overbet** - To make a bet that is more than the current size of the pot.  
**Overcall** - To call a bet after others have already called.  
**Paint** - A face card jack, queen, or king.  
**Pat** - A hand that no longer needs any more draws.  
**Polarized** - When a player's range is split between either very strong hands or air.  
**Quarter** - To win 1/4 or 3/4 of a pot by tying a hand in a high-low split game.  
**Rabbit Hunt** - To look at future cards after folding and the hand is complete.  
**Railbird** - Someone who hangs out on the sidelines of a poker room.  
**Rainbow** - Three or four cards of different suits.  
**Range** - The possible starting hands a player might have given their action.  
**Ratholing** - Going south or sneaking your chips off the table during the game.  
**Scoop** - To win both halves of the pot in a high-low split game.  
**Semi-Bluff** - To bluff with a drawing hand that could improve to the best hand.  
**Slowroll** - To delay or avoid showing when you have the best hand.  
**Snow** - Holding on to bad cards in draw poker in order to bluff.  
**Straddle** - A voluntary bet placed before the deal to increase pot size and incentivize action.  
**TAG** - A tight, aggressive player.  
**Tell** - A detectable change in a player's behavior that gives away the strength of their hand.  
**Tilt** - Frustration or anger that leads to poor play.  
**Variance** - The statistical measure of how results differ from expectation.  
**VPIP** - The percentage of hands voluntarily played preflop.  
**Wet Board** - A dynamic board with many several possible draws.  
**Wheel** - A five-high straight.



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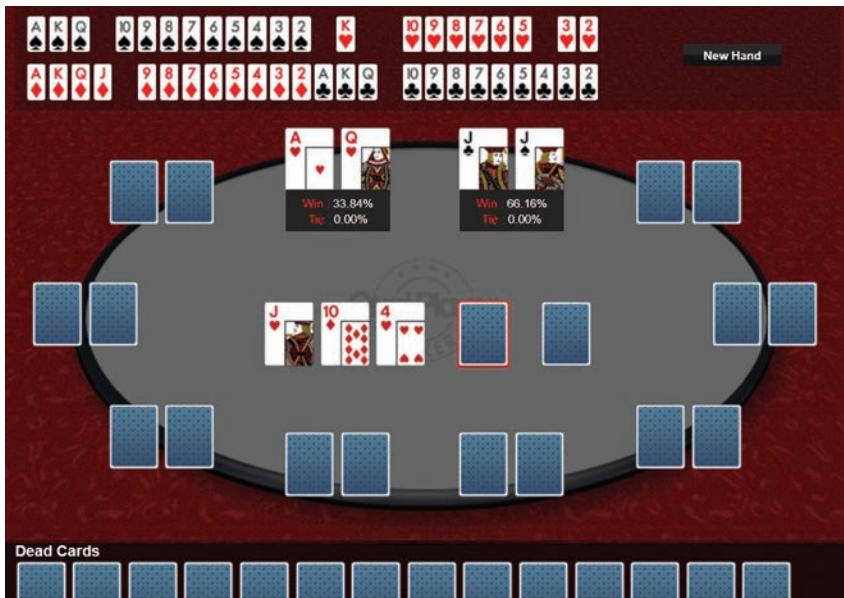
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## CALCULATING OUTS

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

## HAND MATCHUPS

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

\*Approximate Percentages



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# TOP PAIR MULTIWAY

By Jonathan Little

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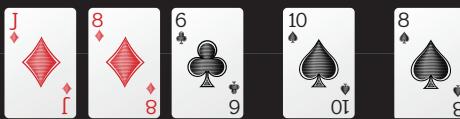


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100-200 (200 BBA)

You are eight-handed in a \$5,000 buy-in live tournament with blinds of 100-200. The UTG player raises to 600 out of his 36,000 stack and it folds to you in the hijack seat with K♠ J♠.

**Question 1:** Should you fold, call, reraise to 2,000, or reraise to 3,000?

**Answer:** K-J suited much prefers to call and see the flop against an early position raiser because their range should be quite strong. It would be a disaster if you three-bet and then get four-bet because K-J suited fares well against an initial raising range but poorly against an early position four-betting range.

You, the button, and the big blind all call. The flop comes J♦8♦6♣ and UTG bets 1,500.

**Question 2:** Should you fold, call, raise to 4,500, or raise to 7,000?

**Answer:** Top pair, second kicker is a hand that is almost always good but is very vulnerable to being outdrawn, making raising a reasonable option. The problem is that there are still two players yet to act who could have a better hand than yours, plus UTG could also have you beat.

Especially against a bet that is not too small, the best play is to call and see how the action develops. If you get raised, you can fold, avoiding a likely cooler. While calling will result in you getting outdrawn by a hand that would have folded to a raise some portion of the time, it is the best play because it ensures you do not play a giant pot against an overly strong range that has you crushed.

You call and the button calls. The turn is the 10♠ and UTG bets 6,000.

**Question 3:** Should you fold, call, raise to 12,000, or go all-in?

**Answer:** When UTG makes a substantial turn bet into two opponents, they are indicating they have a strong polarized range, including A-J and better made hands, as well as high-equity draws, like flush draws and K-Q.

Calling may be viable against overly loose, aggressive players, but against most players, the prudent option is to fold and wait for a better spot. Multi-way, you must proceed with caution, especially when you are not closing the action. When multiple players seem happy to put money in the pot, you should fold most of your marginal made hands that do not have much potential to improve on the river.

You fold and the button calls. The river is the 8♠, UTG bets 20,000, and the button folds. ♠



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