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January 7, 2025



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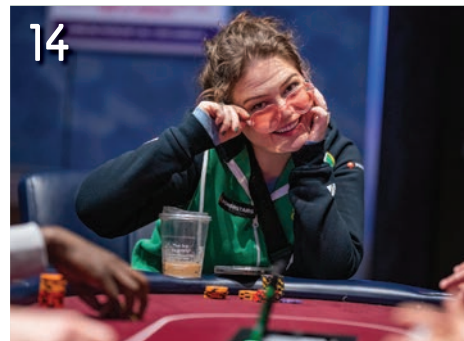
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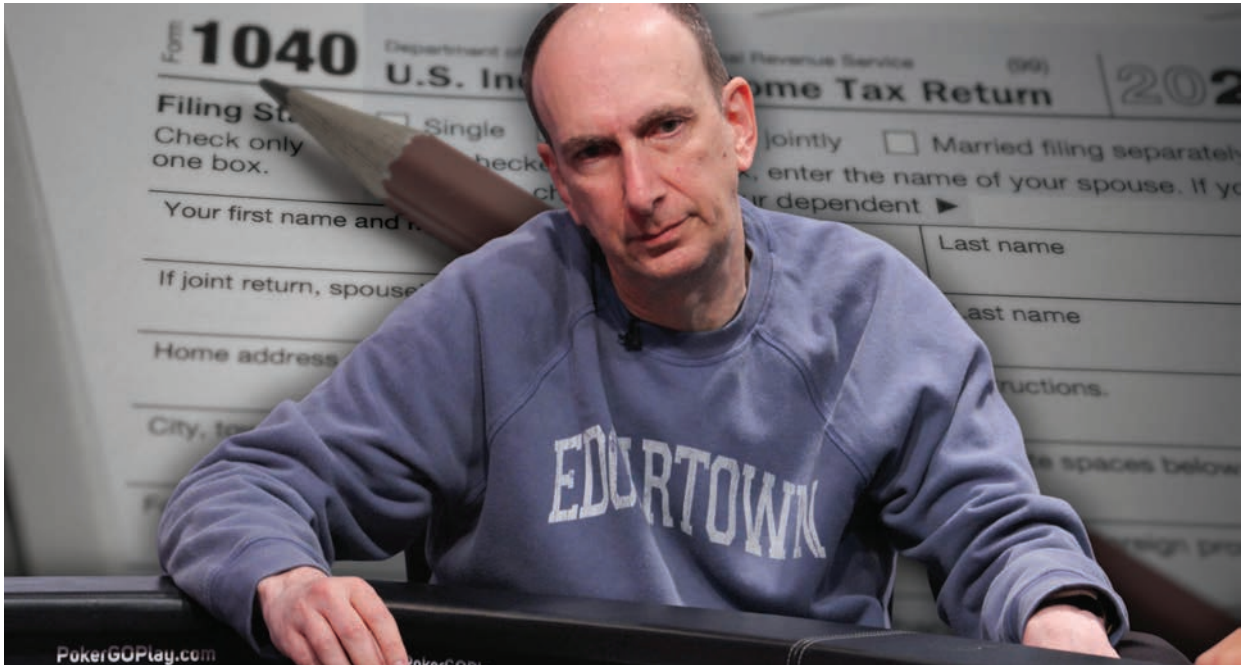
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## NEWS FROM THE GAMBLING WORLD

## POKER LEGEND ERIK SEIDEL SAYS HE'LL 'SEMI-RETIRE' OVER GAMBLING TAX CHANGE

By Sean Chaffin



Gambling tax changes in President Donald Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill" could functionally end the career of a poker legend.

Poker Hall of Famer and high roller regular Erik Seidel said that this bill would put him in "semi-retirement," and that he'll drastically change his schedule unless something changes soon.

"Very concerned about the tax change next year," the 10-time bracelet winner posted on Dec. 8. "It'll put me in semi-retirement. Open to any opportunities, especially if it involves traveling to new spots."

As Matthew McDowell pointed out in response, "When the poker tournament GOAT says this, you know that shit is about to hit the fan."

Trump's spending bill reduced the tax deduction for gamblers, who can now only deduct 90%, instead of 100% of their losses. As a result, poker players could be on the hook for breakeven or even losing years.

For example, if a poker player cashes for \$100,000 in a tournament and then loses \$100,000 in subsequent buy-ins, the player would owe nothing to the federal government. However, if players can only deduct 90% of losses, then the player in question would owe taxes on \$10,000 worth of winnings.

#### Efforts To Change Appear Bleak

Sen. Dina Titus, D-NV, was the first to fight against the

changes. She filed the FAIR BET Act in July, which would restore the tax code to 100% deductions on gambling losses. But Titus failed to attach the change to a defense spending bill.

Other legislative attempts never gained much traction. Rep. Andy Barr, R-KY, filed a similar bill, proving there is bipartisan support to make the change.

Despite the hurdles, Titus continues to push for the House Ways and Means Committee to add her bill to the legislative calendar.

"I was the first in Congress to introduce this fix and haven't stopped garnering support from members and stakeholders since," the Nevada congresswoman said on social media in early December. "In fact, the FAIR BET Act has up to 21 bipartisan co-sponsors with Rep. Mike Ezell (R) most recently joining! We must get this fixed."

#### Dunst Tweet Sparks Player Reactions

Poker pro and *World Poker Tour* commentator Tony Dunst offered his support for Titus' bill, but was skeptical about its success. Dunst said the provision in the bill would affect high rollers the most.

"Edges were already thin in high rollers, and the public nature of these events makes creative accounting difficult," Dunst said. "It would be easy for a high roller with a small edge to end up accumulating so much in buy-ins that they wind up owing considerable taxes on a break-

even-ish year. A few high rollers I've spoken to said they won't play much at all in 2026, and American players in high rollers could become scarce."

Jeremy Ausmus, who won the *PokerGO Tour Championship* in 2024, confirmed high rollers would be hesitant to play.

"My high-stakes volume will likely be way down or non-existent next year," Ausmus said. "Sad times for US poker players."

Longtime American grinder Marty Mathis said his volume will drop precipitously.

"Main event only next year," Mathis posted as a response to Dunst. "Played 3-10 live events a year last three years anyways, but was starting to enjoy Sunday online grind again post *WSOP*."

Former poker pro Kevin Buck, who says that he still plays between 30-50 tournaments each year, also plans on cutting back.

"I am done unless this gets amended," Buck said. "Poker was already not worth my time in terms of hourly but I enjoy the competition. It's definitely not worth owing taxes when I have a break even or slightly losing year."

### Online Poker Could Take Serious Hit

U.S. online poker could also be affected, according to Dunst. He said the provision could force high-volume players to offshore, unregulated sites to avoid US tax regulations. Larger buy-in online tournaments could also

see their numbers decline.

"Some American online grinders I know plan to completely shut down their play on American online sites, myself included," Dunst noted. "Some will shift their volume to offshore sites and cash out via crypto, some will switch to cash games, some will do other things with their life."

"It's hard to say how impacted US sites will be. I suspect their mid- and low-stakes MTTs (multi-table tournaments) will be fine, but higher buy-ins could dry up and not get enough entrants to even run. That was already a problem on *WSOP Online* before the merger with Michigan, and it doesn't take the loss of many regs before the minimum amount of players to start events isn't met."

### Will They Play?

However, Dunst predicted only a small drop in field size for mid-stakes live tournaments with buy-ins between \$1,000 and \$10,000. Because of the large number of recreational players who don't care about taxes, those events should be relatively unchanged.

"Many regs I've spoken to plan to carry on as usual and assume that the bill will be amended soon enough, or that the understaffed IRS won't bother auditing them," he said. "They're probably right, but anyone who's lived through a bad audit knows this is a major gamble."

Cash game play may see a bump in action, as some tournament players shift their attention to a less regulated environment. ♠

## ROUNDERS CREATORS PARTNER WITH SCORSESE ON NETFLIX CASINO DRAMA

By Sean Chaffin

The creators behind *Rounders* are teaming up with Martin Scorsese on a new Netflix series. It focuses on the modern world of Las Vegas casinos.

Brian Koppelman and David Levien, who also created the Showtime drama *Billions*, will serve as showrunners on the eight-episode series. The news comes as Scorsese's classic film, *Casino*, celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

That film, starring Robert DeNiro and Joe Pesci, focused on a mob-controlled Las Vegas of the 1960s and '70s. The new series brings viewers to today's Sin City and is unrelated to the 1995 film.

"The eight-episode drama is set in the high-stakes, sharp-elbowed, present-day Las Vegas casino business, which is a modernized but still dangerous version of the legendary city," *Deadline* reports. "At the center of it stands Robert 'Bobby Red' Redman, president of the hottest hotel casino in town, who has to make some long odds moves to try and secure his position and take more ground."

Koppelman and Levien will serve as executive producers on the project. Others involved include their producing partner Paul Schiff; Scorsese and his Sikelia Productions; Julie and Rick Yorn with Expanded Media; and former *Billions* writer-producer Beth Schacter.

The project evolved from the Yorns, who brought the proposal to Netflix with Scorsese, according



to *Deadline*. The Oscar-winning director already had some success on the streaming service with his 2019 drama *The Irishman*.

The producers originally planned another historical look at Las Vegas. But Netflix brought in Koppelman and Levien to develop a more modern Sin City series. Netflix has not announced a production date or release date.

The writing duo's 1998 film, *Rounders* remains the gold standard for poker movies for many players and fans. Star Matt Damon has hinted that a sequel could eventually be developed, and co-star Ed Norton is also reportedly interested. Damon said he's discussed the possibility with Levien and Koppelman.

"The one we've been talking about for years, and we're trying to, and I just saw Edward Norton a few weeks ago, like all of us want to do ... a second *Rounders* movie," Damon said on the *Rich Eisen Show*.

"So much has happened in the poker world in the last 25 years. It would be fun to catch up with those guys." ♠

# MISSOURI SPORTS BETTING LAUNCHES

By Sean Chaffin

Brick-and-mortar and online sports betting launched in Missouri on Dec. 1, as spelled out in the referendum approved by voters in 2024.

Amendment 2 allowed for sports betting at the state's 13 casinos and online wagering at up to 14 online sportsbooks. The launch began with eight online operators, including Bet365, BetMGM, Caesars, Circa, DraftKings, Fanatics, FanDuel, and theScore Bet (Formerly ESPN BET).

Circa CEO Derek Stevens said the sportsbook hopes to make an immediate impact in Missouri.

"Launching in Missouri is a major moment for Circa Sports as we bring our Las Vegas-born philosophy to one of the most passionate sports regions in the country. We're looking forward to earning the trust of customers across the state and becoming part of Missouri's growing sports betting landscape."

Sports betting in the Show Me State has suffered some delays along the way, but that's all in the past now. There was, however, one notable hiccup just before launch.

Underdog Sports had been expected to launch a sportsbook in Missouri, but the company withdrew their application.

The law directs mobile operators to partner with either a Missouri casino or a Missouri-based professional sports team. There were also two "untethered" licenses available, which went to DraftKings and Circa Sports.

FanDuel, which missed out on one of the untethered



licenses, partnered with MLS' St. Louis City soccer club. Other operators have also partnered with teams, including bet365, which announced a deal with MLB's St. Louis Cardinals early last year.

The Missouri Gaming Commission is charged with regulating the industry. The amendment sets the tax rate at 10%, with operators paying \$500,000 for a license. Player-specific prop bets on games involving Missouri-based colleges are not allowed.

The legal age to place a sports wager 21 and older.

The vast majority of state revenue from the sports betting will go to K-12 and higher education. Ten percent of tax revenue will be sent to the Missouri Department of Mental Health's compulsive gambling fund. ♠

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# GAMING REGULATORS GREENLIGHT NYC CASINO LICENSE BIDS

By Sean Chaffin

After months of casino corporations pushing their plans and proposals, the New York Gaming Facility Location Board approved three downstate casino licenses.

The board announced approvals for Bally's plan at Ferry Point in the Bronx, Resort World's expansion to a full-scale casino at the Aqueduct Racetrack in the Bronx, and Mets owner Steve Cohen's proposal for a casino adjacent to Citi Field in Queens.

The approvals followed on-site visits of the board's five members in November. The bids were the last three remaining after MGM Resorts dropped out of the bidding in October. Each bidder must also pay a \$500 million license fee.

Gov. Kathy Hochul said the casinos will bring in billions of dollars in state revenue to help fund the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and also create thousands of jobs. All three projects are expected to begin construction in 2026 and open by 2030.

The Metropolitan Park project is set to include a Hard Rock casino, a 25-acre public park, shopping, restaurants, built on the 50-acre parking lot next to Citi Field where the Mets play their games.

Those involved with Metropolitan Park said the project would be a major boost to the area's economy.

"The Gaming Facility Location Board has validated the



positive economic impact this project will have, with billions of dollars in tax revenue, 23,000 union jobs, and over \$1 billion in community benefits," Metropolitan Park spokesman Karl Rickett said.

Bally's plan calls for a casino adjacent to the Ferry Point golf course. The waterfront property will feature a 500,000-square-foot casino, 500-room hotel, spa, meeting space, a 2,000-seat event center, shopping options, and more.

Genting Group's \$5.5 billion expansion of the Aqueduct Racetrack racino intends to increase the gaming floor to approximately 500,000 square feet. The revamped Resorts World NYC will become the largest gaming venue in the country, with 6,000 slots and 800 live table games. ♠

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 WPT Seminole Hard Rock 'n' Roll Poker Open  
\$3,500 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Joel Gola  
4,225,000 Chips



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

Hyndi Khomutetsky  
8,725,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 34%  
After Flop: 16%  
After Turn: 0%

### PREFLOP

With 13 players remaining, a six-handed table, and blinds of 50,000-100,000 with a big blind ante of 100,000, Joel Gola raised to 275,000 from the button. Hyndi Khomutetsky three-bet to 750,000 from the small blind, and Gola called.

FLOP



Khomutetsky bet 500,000, and Gola called.

TURN



Khomutetsky bet 1,000,000, and Gola called.

RIVER



Khomutetsky moved all-in. Gola called for 1,975,000.

### COMMENTARY:

The 2025 WPT Seminole Hard Rock 'n' Roll Poker Open \$3,500 main event drew 1,224 entries for a prize pool of \$3,916,800, of which \$605,100 would go to the champion. Just 13 players remained early on day 4, with everyone guaranteed \$40,500. Hyndi Khomutetsky had one of the biggest stacks, which may have encouraged her to step out of line in an attempt to pressure Joel Gola, who had a middling stack. The offsuit three-bet bluffs in this spot all contain at least one blocker, according to the solver. Those hands consist of mainly offsuit Broadway combos and a bunch of A-x. Khomutetsky also used too small of a sizing, as going less than three-times the open invited Gola to continue with many hands she wanted to fold out. Once the players reached the flop, Khomutetsky had another opportunity to shut it down. The J-10-8 texture interacts heavily with the button raise-call range, which can include hands as strong as top set, as well two pairs and straights. She opted to bet small, which doesn't have a lot of utility since Gola would rarely completely miss this flop. Gola had a clear call with a double-gutter, two overcards, and backdoor flush potential. The situation was much the same on the turn, but Khomutetsky started to have an opening where she could blow Gola off some of his decent flopped pairs, stuff like K-J. On the river, she had gotten the best possible runout to go for the all-in bluff, as the board had fallen poorly for some parts of Gola's range. However, he'd have potentially been all in prior to the river with many combos like J-10 that she may have hoped to bluff out, so she was targeting a narrow range. In the end, Khomutetsky lost roughly half of her stack in a hand that could have easily been folded prelop.

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

# ACR POKER AT 25

A New Era Of Innovation, Competition, And Commitment



At ACR Poker, turning 25 isn't a milestone — it's a launchpad.

As we enter 2026, our focus isn't on nostalgia. It's on the groundbreaking experiences, live opportunities, technological innovations, and competitive expansions that will shape the next 25 years of online poker for players around the world.

"25 more years, YES!" says our CEO Phil Nagy, summing up the energy behind what's coming.

And what's coming is big.

## **The Next Chapter: Bigger Events, Expanded Access, And New Poker Experiences**

As we look toward 2026, several major initiatives are already underway, each one designed to elevate access, opportunity, and excitement for every type of player.

### **The \$2.5 Million Moneymaker Mystery Million (March 2026)**

We're kicking off our 25th year with the first-ever \$2.5 Million Guaranteed Moneymaker Mystery Million, a \$100 buy-in Mystery Bounty event that delivers the spirit of the poker boom to a new generation.

Chris Moneymaker's legendary story began with a low buy-in satellite, and this event is built around that exact ethos: any player, any bankroll, any background—anyone can win big.

### **Venom Live 2026: Finalizing Dates And Location Now**

For the first time ever, we're taking Venom beyond the online tables and into a full-scale live environment. We're currently in the process of finalizing the dates and location for the inaugural Venom Live event, with full details expected soon.

What we *can* say now: It will be the biggest live undertaking in ACR Poker history.

### **WSOP Paradise: A New Era Of Friendly, Industry-Shaping Competition**

In December 2025, we were prominently featured inside one of the most talked-about poker spectacles of the year — the *WSOP Paradise* drone show, where our star emblem lit up the Caribbean sky in front of thousands of players.

Together with *WSOP Paradise*, which is operated in collaboration with poker giant GGPoker, we stand as two major forces in the industry. Our healthy, competitive dynamic pushes the entire ecosystem forward. Through this momentum, we have positioned ourselves to qualify and satellite more players into major events than any other US-facing online poker room.

In 2025, we sent 100 players to *WSOP Paradise* via satellites — over \$300,000 in packages — and in 2026, we expect to increase that number significantly. This is what

friendly competition looks like at the highest level: operators pushing each other to innovate, expand, and enhance the player experience.

### **Staking Tickets: A New Standard For Backing And Transparency**

We recently introduced Staking Tickets, giving players and backers a secure, trackable, internal method to handle staking for tournaments. This feature removes the risk, confusion, and off-platform logistics players have been forced to navigate for decades.

### **Telegram Channel: A Direct Connection To Players**

Launched in December 2025, our official ACR Poker Telegram channel is now one of our most powerful engagement tools. In mere weeks, we have already given away hundreds of thousands of dollars in instant tournament drops, spot promos, and real-time rewards.

Telegram is, in every sense, the new heartbeat of our community.

### **Why We Continue To Stand Alone**

The online poker landscape is shifting rapidly. New entrants like WPT Global are experimenting with dual-currency sweepstakes models — many of which are already facing significant legal challenges in major states. Meanwhile, we continue to grow steadily, remain fully operational, and deliver guaranteed value without needing to reinvent the definition of poker.

Players know what ACR Poker stands for: Consistency, transparency, and the willingness to innovate responsibly while keeping poker—real poker—front and center.

### **A Legacy Of Endurance: 25 Years And Counting**

While our future is bold, our past is one we're incred-

ibly proud of.

We began in 2001 under the Americas Cardroom name, part of one of the first online poker networks ever created. While the industry changed, crashed, and reshaped itself around us, we stood firm — paying players in full after Black Friday and Blue Monday while many competitors folded or exited the U.S. entirely.

In 2019, our \$5 million Venom broke the GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ title for the largest cryptocurrency prize ever paid in an online poker tournament.

In 2023, we evolved into ACR Poker, unveiling a modern platform and premium player experience.

From a handful of early Dobrosoft skins to a global player base and 400+ dedicated employees worldwide, our mission has never changed: put the player first, every time.

"I joined ACR Poker because it reminds me of what made poker special in the first place — access, opportunity, and the belief that anyone can rise," said 2003 WSOP main event champion Chris Moneymaker.

Twenty-five years later, that belief still guides everything we build.

### **The Next 25 Years Start Now**

With innovative formats, expanding live plans, new technology like Staking Tickets, and a direct real-time communication channel with players, 2026 is set to be the most ambitious year in our history.

We're not celebrating 25 years by looking backward. We're celebrating by accelerating forward. And we're committed — today, tomorrow, and for 25 years more — to keeping the cards in the air. ♠



Chris Moneymaker stands at the forefront of ACR Poker's next era.



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# COMEDY AND CARDS WITH CAITLIN COMESKEY

Content Creator Talks Poker Origin Story With Table 1 Podcast

By Art Parmann and Justin Young



Comedians from Kevin Hart to David Cross to Ray Romano have been known to get in on the action at the poker table throughout the years. But Caitlin Comeskey is not the type to simply jump in an occasional celebrity tournament.

As a struggling actress in Los Angeles, Comeskey would hop into the casinos in between auditions to play cards. She ultimately decided to combine her passions, expanding into comedy and poker content on YouTube and social media.

While she brings the laughs, Comeskey has also put up some results, including a runner-up finish in the *PokerStars Open Philadelphia* series last April. The native Texan also has a couple of big second-place showings at the Lodge in the *Monthly Monster*. In

2024, she won a *RunGood Poker Series* ring in Tunica, and then a month later she took down the ladies event on the *WPT Voyage* cruise. The PokerStars ambassador has also appeared on PokerGO's *No Gamble, No Future*.

Comeskey recently spoke with the crew at the *Table 1* podcast about how she found her way to poker. Check out the highlights below, or watch or listen to the entire episode on YouTube, Spotify, Apple, or any podcast app.

**Art Parmann:** If we're about making poker fun again, you are about making poker funny again. I've been following you since 2022 when you had that big breakout video about the 'jack-four ordeal.' (A viral sketch about the infamous Robbi Jade Lew-Garrett Adelstein hand in 2022.)

**Caitlin Comeskey:** Nice to meet you!

I got to meet Justin last year when we played on *No Gamble, No Future*...

**Justin Young:** ...which was a blast. I was telling Art I was so intimidated because I knew how funny you were and I knew how funny Stapes (Joe



© PokerStars / Rachel Kay Winter



Stapleton) was. I'm usually the funny one. I was like, 'Am I going to be able to say any words?' You guys were gracious allowing me to make a joke here and there.

**Caitlin Comeskey:** I think we might have been a little bit too funny on that stream because they couldn't use a lot of the footage. I think we only got like one episode out of it – RIP those eight hours of play. Did you watch our episode?

**Justin Young:** Yes, I did.

**Caitlin Comeskey:** How did I do? I never go back and watch live streams. It gives me the biggest cringe to watch myself on camera. In performance stuff and sketches I'm editing, obviously I look at my face a lot. But when it's somebody else editing it and color correcting it, I have no control over it, both creatively and then also I'm playing poker and being myself in front of other people publicly... I can't.

**Justin Young:** Were you more nervous about your actual poker play or your table presence?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** My behavior, always my behavior. (laughing)

**Justin Young:** Well, in that case, I thought you passed with flying colors.

Where'd you grow up and how did you get into gambling?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** I grew up in

Dallas, Texas, in Plano, the northeast area of Texas. I went to a religious school, Christian fundamentalist, Baptist, kindergarten through senior year with the same group of people. But my home life wasn't religious, we very rarely went to church. We never prayed at meals so it was like, what do the kids say? Six, seven.

**Art Parmann:** That's not how you use that.

**Justin Young:** Well, no one knows what it means. She could be spot on. (all laughing) How was religion part of your life then growing up?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** Most of the time, I [played] devil's advocate, and was the questioning kid in the group. Towards my senior year, I started to drink the Kool-Aid a little bit and got more into it, to the point where I arrived in New York City as a freshman at NYU listening to Rush Limbaugh and Mark Levin and reading my Bible and teaching Sunday school. But then I was in acting school and around all different types of people and I was like, 'Actually, that's lame as hell.'

**Art Parmann:** How'd you get from Dallas to New York City?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** I had really good grades and I got an early admittance to NYU. I wanted musical theater at the time. I always sang, and musical

theater summer camp were some of the happiest memories of my childhood. I auditioned for a bunch of programs. NYU was just the best program I got into.

**Justin Young:** Do you remember what you sent in to NYU (to get accepted)?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** Oh, I remember. It was an in-person audition. I went to New York and I auditioned for a bunch of different schools. I auditioned for Juilliard, which was my dream. But they only accept about 16 acting students a year, and they get 5,000 auditions, 4,000 of which are probably 18-year-old white girls with brown hair. They are putting together a company, so they need different types of people.

So, I was drawing pretty dead with Juilliard. But when I auditioned for NYU, I did a Harper monologue from *Angels in America*, who's like this pillod-out housewife. (A mentally unstable woman who hallucinates because of taking large amounts of Valium.)

*Comeskey then discussed moving to L.A., struggling as an actress and getting into comedy, while also mixing in poker at the Hustler Casino.*

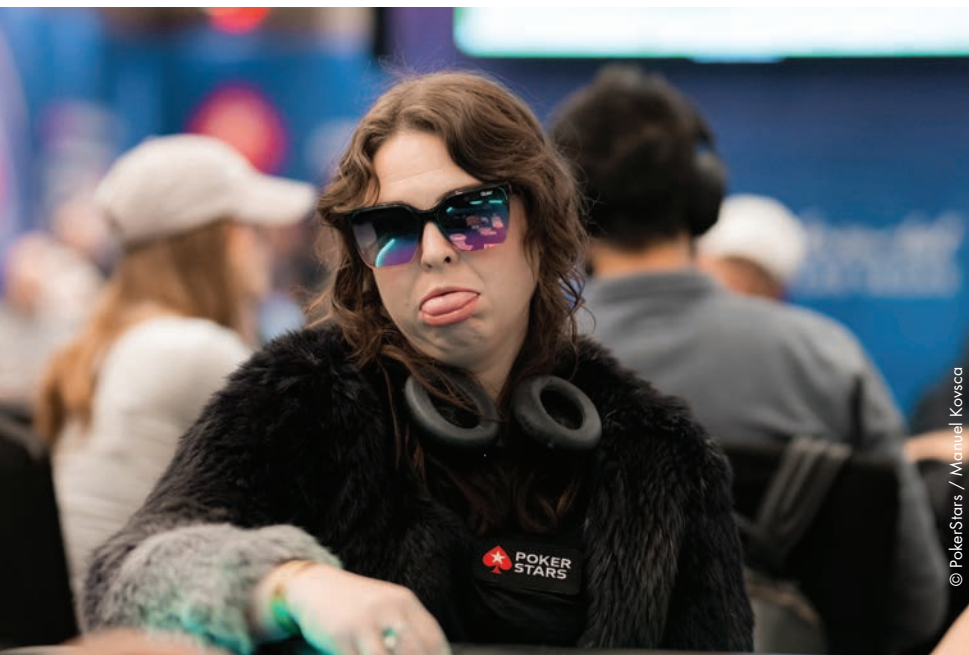
**Justin Young:** I feel like you're young enough that I can ask this, how old



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are you?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** 36, but I look 27 right? (laughing) I've been filming so much content over the last month, I've done three stops in a row, so I've been seeing my face a lot and I think it might be injector time – there are so many valleys on my forehead. I'm like, 'whoa.'

**Justin Young:** Or you could just grow a beard and wear a hat.

**Caitlin Comeskey:** I need to do something, a hat, a paper bag, anything.

**Justin Young:** I'd save that for sex. (laughing)

**Caitlin Comeskey:** How dare you! (laughing) I'm 85% sure my husband is still attracted to me.

**Art Parmann:** I guess you were in high school during the Moneymaker boom. When did poker come along for you?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** My dad taught me how to play super young. I was 10 or 11... poker wasn't legal in Texas back then. I was watching the *ESPN* episodes with my dad and my brother. My dad started taking my older brother to underground games when he was still in high school. My brother was always so cool. He was a jock on the basketball team. He dated older girls in high school.


I was not that. I was the theater girl, and so I always was annoyed that my dad was willing to take my brother and not me. I developed this chip on my shoulder about it.

When I was 21 I played home games with my actor friends when we all moved out to [California] together. Then the first club I ever started playing in regularly was the Hustler when I was living on the west side of Los Angeles.

I'd go play \$1-\$3. I'd show up with \$300 and if I lost it, I went home. I'd go to Hawaiian Gardens, the Bike, and Commerce occasionally, but my favorite was always the Hustler. I don't know why. I guess I just liked the purple and yellow vibes, the aesthetics of it. I'm very shallow.

After college, I toured as a comedian in Best Coast Burlesque. I would always play on my days off. I'm sure I was a losing player overall, I didn't really track it.

I didn't start winning and taking it seriously until 2018 when I moved back to Texas and they had opened legal cardrooms. The games were super soft, and I had a lot of luck right away making money. That's when I quit my



“After college, I toured as a comedian in Best Coast Burlesque. I would always play on my days off. I didn’t start winning until 2018 when I moved back to Texas. The games were super soft, and I had a lot of luck right away making money.”





job in a hotel and started focusing on that.

**Justin Young:** So when you moved out to L.A., what was the goal?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** I wanted to be an A-list actress, of course. I wanted to be the next Jessica Chastain. When I was at NYU, I didn't join an improv team or a comedy troupe. I took myself very seriously as a dramatic actress, and poured my whole heart into my training.

I did really well. I was a star student within my acting conservatory. But when I got to L.A., they said, 'Your type is like a 40-year-old woman, and you're not going to get work as a young person. You have to age into your type,' which was just so hard to hear at 22.

I think it's something a lot of young women get when they're going through that process, and it's a bummer. But they were right. I had a really hard time booking work in my early 20s as an actress, and it's a really hard culture.

The feedback you keep getting is, 'if you want to make it in L.A., you have to make your own content. You have to make your own work.' So, I started

making YouTube videos, little sketches here and there. I started really early. In 2012 was when I started first making content shorts and experimenting with short-form video and things like that.

Around this time is when I started doing stand-up. I remember the first short-form video I ever made was called 'The Vegeholic.' I basically played a super drunk person just shoving fistfuls of spinach into my mouth while my husband's like, 'Please stop. Please stop.'

**Justin Young:** Did you end up booking anything of note?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** One of the coolest things I booked was as featured background in an Elijah Wood short film. He was playing, funny enough, a stand-up comedian. I remember Elijah was super cool. We had a lot of downtime on set, and he's a cigarette smoker. I was a cigarette smoker at the time, and I remember I had cigarettes on me, but I asked to bum a cigarette so I could have a conversation with him.

**Justin Young:** You mentioned your husband earlier. Did you meet him out there?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** I met him in Texas playing cash poker in Killeen. There's

some really fun games in Killeen. Back then, a late friend of ours had a card club, and I met him playing \$5-\$10-\$25.

He's a recreational player. He's in sales and just plays on the side, but he was in a relationship back then. He wasn't really on my radar as a romantic interest. We became friends and then went on our first date and just had an immediate connection.

*The conversation later moved into discussion of Comeskey's time in burlesque and how it helped her career.*

**Caitlin Comeskey:** I worked with a brand called Pinups On Tour, and we put on burlesque shows. We mostly did military venues. Our show was free for veterans and military to attend, so it was like an Americana USO, but saucier, more edgy.

I'd open the set with a welcome comedy song that I wrote, and then do 10 minutes of stand-up. I was on the stage in between the performers. I learned how to do crowd work, and got so much more time as a stand-up than I would have if I was just grinding open mics, so that was super cool. Then when I went back to L.A., I would host shows at Flappers in



Burbank and West Side Comedy Theater in Santa Monica, and had a little luck there.

**Justin Young:** Did you audition to be the comedy relief?

**Caitlin Comeskey:** One of my closest friends, Julia, did burlesque at the time. We met doing a terrible Shakespeare production in downtown Los Angeles. It was *A Midsummer Night's Dream* set in India and I was one of the fairies. I was very thin and very fit at the time, so I was just a stage ornament. I would be in a dancer pose for 10 minutes while Titania is arguing on stage.

They always needed comedians during burlesque shows. My friend knew I was trying stand-up and doing open mics and different clubs. She was like, 'Hey, you want to come do a burlesque show?'

I remember when I first went to burlesque shows, I was like, 'Oh, my God, these girls are taking their clothes off.' With my background, I was just very aghast. But over time, it all of a sudden became, 'Hey, do you want to try it out?' and I was up there in a wig.

'Welcome to the stage, Missy Farquhar! And she's singing a song!' That's how that came about. When Julia formed her own troupe and decided to put on her producer hat, she was like, 'Do you want to host these shows?' I started going on the road with her. It was so much stage time, which was invaluable.

**Follow Comeskey on Twitter and Instagram @CaitlinComeskey, and check out her YouTube channel @CaitlinTexasPoker. You can also listen to her on the Aceholes Podcast, available on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and more. ♠**



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

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

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



# JOHN RACENER: DISCIPLINE LEADS TO DOLLARS

## Coach Dad Scores 24-Hour Bracelet Win With Baby Run Good

By Sean Chaffin



John Racener had an incredible 2024 campaign at the *World Series of Poker*. The poker pro from Florida cashed 19 times, made five final tables, and earned his second career bracelet. As a result, he finished fourth in the *WSOP* Player of the Year race.

The 39-year-old loves playing a full schedule in Las Vegas every year, rarely misses a day, and has racked up significant results. Most notably, he finished second in the 2010 main event for a massive \$5.5 million payday.

"I usually play whatever event is running every day," Racener said. "If [I bust] something, I just get in whatever is the next event, since I'm a pretty good all-around player."

But the summer of 2025 was different. His wife Monique had just given birth to their third child, and Racener didn't know how long he'd have at the tables. With an infant and two other boys already at home, hitting the daily grind in pursuit of a third bracelet was probably not in the cards. He'd be lucky to get a couple weeks, hardly enough time to shake any rust off his game.

Any doubts Racener had were quickly erased, however, as he immediately found himself in the winner's circle.

"The very first day I showed up, I entered the \$1,500 no-limit hold'em super turbo bounty... and won," he said. "It was really cool to start the summer off like that, landing in Vegas and within 24 hours winning a bracelet. It made me feel good, and it made my family feel that it was worth going out there."

The one-day haul netted Racener a payout of \$247,595, and the latest piece of hardware was quite a surprise for his wife.

"I was kind of short stacked with three tables left and she went to bed with the three-hour time zone difference," Racener recalled. "After I won, I couldn't wait to call her. It was around 5:30 a.m. back home, and I kept calling and calling. I knew she was about to wake up with the baby and get the kids ready for school, but she didn't answer for an hour. The kids were all excited. I told them before I left that I had to win a third bracelet for our third boy because my first two bracelets are in each one of their rooms. I had to win a third one for the [nursery]."

The trifecta trophy adds to quite an impressive poker resumé. Racener could have faded into obscurity after

© PokerGO / Antonio Abrego



he finished runner-up to Jonathan Duhamel in the 2010 main event, but he has proven to be anything but a one-hit wonder. He has more than \$13 million in live tournament winnings dating back to 2006.

"The bracelets are always the most special to me," he admitted. "The *WSOP*, I feel that's where you can make a name for yourself. I feel like the *World Series of Poker* events are the most prestigious tournaments on the planet."

#### Bankroll Building On Mom's Credit Card

Born in Port Richey, Florida, Racener jumped into poker while playing on his high school baseball team. When practices got rained out, he and his buddies would head to a friend's house and play poker. Those rainouts proved to be not only lucrative, but also chart the course of where his life was heading.

"I was always the guy winning everyone's lunch money," he said. "My one buddy there was like, 'Hey, do you know you can play online poker?' I had no idea. He came over the next weekend and set me up at my house. My mom gave me her credit card to deposit \$50 on there, and the rest has been history."

Starting at small stakes and quickly leveling up, it wasn't long before Racener was earning between \$200 and \$400 a night. He had surprisingly solid bankroll management for a teenager, cashing out his profit and making regular deposits into his savings account.

After heading off to Florida Southern College, an even bigger score awaited when Racener jumped in the PokerStars \$215 *Sunday Million*, which had a \$500,000 guarantee at the time.

"I remember like it was yesterday," he recalled. "There were 3,300 people and it started at noon. At 6 a.m. the next day, I won it for \$130,000. I was 18 or 19 years old and I called my mom and dad and told them. They just couldn't

believe it... literally. My dad said, 'I'll believe it when I see the money.' They just couldn't believe that I won that much money in one day playing online poker. That was a really nice bankroll jolt and really started everything."

Racener started mixing in some live tournaments at the local casino and found success in \$500 and \$1,000 sit-and-go's. After classes, he'd head right to the cardroom.

#### Off To The Races

After getting his associate's degree, Racener launched into a full-time poker career. In December of 2006, he finished third in the *WSOP Circuit* main event at Harrah's in Atlantic City for another six-figure score. Two weeks later, he flew to Las Vegas and won one of their weekly \$1,000 events.

In January, he made back-to-back deep runs on the *World Poker Tour*, taking 12th at the *World Poker Open* in Tunica and eighth in at the *Borgata Winter Open* in Atlantic City for a combined \$200,000. In December of 2007 he scored his first major win, banking \$380,000 and a *WSOP Circuit* ring in the Harrah's main event. Just like that, Racener was a major force on the circuit.

About a dozen final tables later, Racener found himself on poker's biggest stage. When he made the main event final table in 2010, play was delayed to build up hype and publicity for the live coverage. It was during the layoff that his mother found out she had liver cancer.

"She didn't tell me because she didn't want it to distract me at all. She didn't want to upset me. She wanted me to be focused. She wanted me to do well," he said. "After I got second, we went out to dinner the next night and she told me everything. I just thought that was so loving and awesome, that she cared so much about me that she didn't want to break that news to me at such an important time in my life and career. She was the best. She was really cool.



We're missing her a lot."

While he fell just short of the big prize, Racener kept knocking on the door with several final tables. His first bracelet finally came in the 2017 \$10,000 dealer's choice championship for \$273,962. In 2024, he took down the \$10,000 limit hold'em championship for \$308,930 and his second piece of gold.

His numbers are even more impressive when you consider his limited schedule. As a busy family man, Racener may not be on the traveling tournament scene like other top-tier players, but he seems to make his sporadic appearances count. That includes a win and a runner-up showing at the *PokerGO Tour Mixed Games Festival* and another victory in a high roller at the Hard Rock Tampa.

### Being Coach John

While many poker players at his level sell their coaching services, Racener instead chooses to coach his sons' sports teams. Striking that balance between being a poker pro and a family man is critical.

"That's my main goal in life, to set them up for success," he said. "I've always been good with kids. When I walk through their school, they are yelling out, 'Hey coach John! Hey, coach John!' Everyone kind of knows who I am in the school and at the fields. All the parents are always saying how good and patient I am with all the kids, which reflects back to poker, because I'm very patient when I play poker."

The other parents don't seem to have any issues with a professional gambler setting the lineups. In fact, Racener says that a lot of them are poker fans themselves.

"Everyone at the school knows [that I play poker.] They're always asking questions. They'll say, 'Send me the link so I can watch online, so I can swipe the updates.' Everyone's very supportive and thinks it's really cool."

Coaching responsibilities and family activities don't leave much time for the poker circuit. Still, it's a role this dad relishes.

"To be honest, and a lot of people are shocked about this, I don't play much poker when I'm back home," he admitted. "I'm very busy with my kids. My whole schedule is around them. I get up at 6 a.m. I get them ready for school, then for their after-school activities. We're training every day after school in some way, shape or form. We have goals set to put them in good positions and be successful."

"That's really all I've got my mind on when I'm back home. I play a little bit online here and there, late at night when the whole house is turned off. I'm always thinking about it though. I'm always watching videos on Twitter, tournament highlights, or big hands and stuff like that. I'm still talking to my friends about the game."

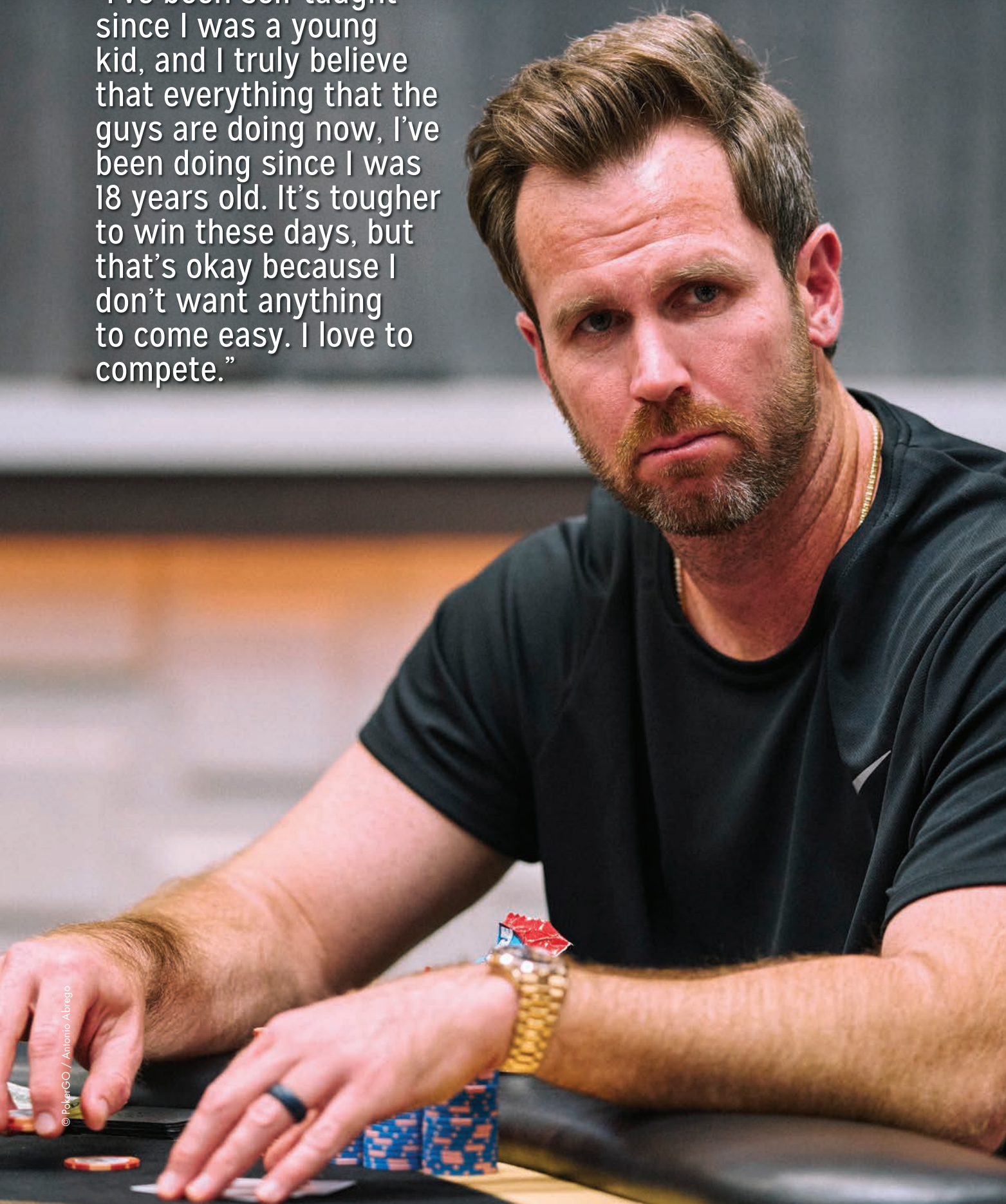
### Lone Wolf Playing For His Pack

When Racener does play, he makes sure he's locked in. The days of partying the nights away on the circuit are long gone.

"I'm not doing anything else," he said. "I'm not going out at night. I'm not even going out to dinners. I'm not doing anything. I'm there to play. When I'm not playing, I'm getting some rest in my room and getting prepared for the next morning. That is my time where I just love to go all in on the game."

In an age where players spend hours each day poring over solvers and immersing themselves in strategy, Racener takes a different approach. He doesn't study on a daily basis. He has friends in the game he will discuss strategy with, including crushers such as Jared Jaffee, Justin Zaki, Chino Rheem,

“I’ve been self-taught since I was a young kid, and I truly believe that everything that the guys are doing now, I’ve been doing since I was 18 years old. It’s tougher to win these days, but that’s okay because I don’t want anything to come easy. I love to compete.”





and Michael Mizrahi, but he mostly prefers to take a lone-wolf approach.

“I’ve been self-taught since I was a young kid, and I truly believe that everything that the guys are doing now, I’ve been doing since I was 18 years old,” Racener said. “I feel like everyone’s just now catching up and doing all that type of stuff – pot control, playing position ranges, all these different chart things. I was already

applying it to my game at 21. It’s tougher to win these days, but that’s okay because I don’t want anything to come easy. I love to compete.”

As a longtime pro, Racener believes part of what has made him successful is bankroll management. He began parlaying much of his winnings into real estate holdings at a young age. His portfolio now includes nine rental homes that have seen their value

increase. He also has investments in cryptocurrency, gold, and more.

Throughout his career, finding a sound financial strategy to retain and grow his winnings has been a major goal. That’s not the case with all players, but Racener is happy to buck the trend. Kicking some bad habits was the first step.

“It’s really sad to see because even some of the guys that I mentioned that I’m good friends with, we know how they went through money. It’s just something that I don’t want to do,” he said. “I’m four years sober (from alcohol) now, but when I was 21 or 22, I had about a million dollars in cash and blew it off. That feeling of not having any money was not fun. It felt like the world had you by the balls. You couldn’t do anything. You couldn’t live how you wanted. It’s depressing when you can’t pay your bills.”

“Once I got a second chance, I surrounded myself with good people, good family and friends. I have a much different outlook on finances and investments now, and it’s helped me a lot. I feel like I’ve matured a ton since the first go-around. That’s my rock... my family. I play to make them happy and provide. So, it’s hard to beat me when that’s what I’m playing for.” ♠

Top Tournament Scores			
Nov. 2010	\$10,000 WSOP Main Event	2nd Place	\$5,545,855
June 2015	\$111,111 WSOP One Drop High Roller	10th Place	\$390,875
Dec. 2007	\$5,000 WSOP Circuit Harrah's Main Event	1st Place	\$379,392
June 2024	\$10,000 WSOP Limit Hold'em	1st Place	\$308,930
June 2017	\$10,000 WSOP Dealer's Choice	1st Place	\$273,962
June 2025	\$1,500 WSOP Super Turbo Bounty	1st Place	\$247,595
Sept. 2022	\$25,000 Hard Rock Poker Open High Roller	1st Place	\$246,990
Dec. 2010	\$10,000 WPT Five Diamond World Poker Classic	4th Place	\$232,271
July 2018	\$50,000 WSOP No-Limit Hold'em High Roller	7th Place	\$220,777
June 2014	\$10,000 WSOP Stud Eight-or-Better	2nd Place	\$217,935
July 2024	\$1,500 WSOP No-Limit Hold'em	4th Place	\$196,170
July 2023	\$10,000 WSOP Main Event	53rd Place	\$188,400
June 2011	\$10,000 WSOP Stud Eight-or-Better	3rd Place	\$171,122
Jan. 2007	\$10,000 WPT Borgata Winter Poker Open	8th Place	\$166,161
March 2024	\$10,000 PGT Mixed Triple Stud	1st Place	\$151,200
June 2016	\$1,500 WSOP No-Limit Hold'em	4th Place	\$143,563
July 2024	\$3,000 WSOP H.O.R.S.E.	2nd Place	\$135,877
Sept. 2022	\$10,000 WPT Hard Rock Tampa	3rd Place	\$114,992
June 2022	\$10,000 WSOP H.O.R.S.E.	5th Place	\$108,253
Dec. 2024	\$25,000 WSOP Paradise Dealer's Choice	5th Place	\$103,527

PokerGO / Enrique Mallavon

# POKERGO PODCAST

*DONNIE PETERS & TIM DUCKWORTH*



THE **POKERGO PODCAST** IS THE HOME FOR THE BEST CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE LATEST HAPPENINGS IN THE WORLD OF POKER.

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# DUAL VENOM MYSTERY BOUNTIES RETURN

Two Massive Tournaments, One Epic Opportunity



At ACR Poker, we've always believed in pushing the boundaries of what an online tournament can be. And starting Jan. 18, we're doing it again — twice.

To kick off 2026, we're launching Dual Venom Mystery Bounty tournaments, giving players two massive standalone events running side-by-side through Feb. 3.

This moment isn't about building another "series." It's about giving players two enormous shots at life-changing money — one in No-Limit Hold'em and one in Pot-Limit Omaha — both packed with suspense, both loaded with mystery bounties, and both accessible through dozens of low-cost and free qualifying paths.

## Two Venoms. Two Formats. Millions On The Line.

Running from Jan. 18 to Feb. 3, players can fire at both. Each event runs from Jan. 18 to Feb. 3, with day 1 flights on Jan. 18, 22, 25, 29 and Feb. 1 at 12:05 pm ET. The field will combine for day 2 on Feb. 2 at 1:05 pm ET. The final table kicks off the next day on Feb. 3 at 4:05 pm ET.

The \$2 million guaranteed pot-limit Omaha event ties the record for the biggest PLO Mystery Bounty we've ever offered, giving four-card fans a marquee competition of their own. Meanwhile, the \$8 million guaranteed no-limit hold'em Venom stands as one of the largest Mystery Bounties in the industry today.

Both tournaments share the same key format element: Mystery bounties do not begin until Day 2. Make it to Feb. 2 and you're already in the money, and every knockout from that point forward could reveal anything from a nice bankroll boost to a life-changing jackpot worth tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars.

## Venom Fever Begins Jan. 12: The Cheapest Way To Qualify

Forget the \$2,650 price tag, you can get in for cheap. Venom Fever starts Jan. 12 and gives you multiple paths to earn your seat for much less, if not FREE.

Hundreds of guaranteed seats will be awarded before the final day 1 flights fire.

Players can take advantage of Venom satellites and mega satellites running every single day. Buy-ins for every bankroll, running constantly.

There are also plenty of Venom freerolls with zero entry fee. Real Venom seats on the line with no investment required.

Free Venom vault tickets are automatically awarded to every ACR Poker player, giving them a chance at a full Venom seat without spending a penny.

And don't forget step tournaments. Start small, climb the ladder, and turn a few dollars into a \$2,650 ticket.

As someone whose poker career changed forever in a

single online satellite, 2003 *WSOP* main event champion Chris Moneymaker has a unique appreciation for events that offer enormous upside for a small investment.

“The beauty of the Venom Mystery Bounties is that everyone has a real chance,” says Moneymaker. “You can get in for cheap — or free — and once you make day 2, every knockout is a sweat. You could hit something huge on the very first hand. It brings back that feeling that anything can happen, and that’s why players love these events.”

Chris’s path is legendary because it proved that anyone could rise through the ranks and make a name for themselves. These Venom Mystery Bounties tap into that same spirit. For us, accessibility isn’t a promotional hook — it’s a core philosophy. If you want in, there should always be a way in.

### **Mystery Bounties: The Format That Changes Everything**

The Mystery Bounty structure has added a level of electricity to tournaments that simply didn’t exist a few years ago, and the Venom editions amplify that effect dramatically.

Here’s the format in a nutshell:

Play any day 1 flight of your choice.

Multi-flight advantage: If you play multiple day 1s, your biggest stack advances.

Reach day 2 and you’re automatically in the money.

Mystery Bounties activate on day 2, and every knockout triggers a random prize reveal.

That means the very first elimination you score on day 2 might be worth more than making the final table. Every all-in has the potential to spark a moment. It’s

poker with a plot twist behind every card.

### **Venom Specials: Big Events Every Day Of Venom**

During each day 1 flight, we’re running Venom Specials — a lineup of added tournaments designed to keep players engaged throughout every Venom window.

These events include a variety of formats, multiple buy-in levels, and millions in combined guarantees.

Whether a player busts early, multi-tables while building a stack, or simply wants more action, the Venom Specials keep the lobby packed with meaningful events.

### **Why We’re Starting The Year With A Bang**

The Venom remains the anchor of our tournament calendar because it reflects what we believe online poker should be: massive prize pools, accessible pathways, and unforgettable moments. Launching two Mystery Bounty Venoms — one NLH and one PLO — side by side gives players more opportunities than ever to take their shot at something big.

We’ve seen time and again that the Mystery Bounty format unlocks the magic that makes poker special. It blends strategy with suspense, patience with adrenaline, and decision-making with a little luck at exactly the right time.

And for us, this isn’t a preview of a “series” — it’s a preview of a year where we continue delivering high-impact stand-alone tournaments that give every player a legitimate path to a breakout moment.

### **Ready to Take Your Shot?**

Venom Fever begins Jan. 12. Day 1 flights start Jan. 18.

Your seat could cost nothing.

Your bounty? That’s the mystery waiting to be revealed. ♠

**THE VENOM MYSTERY BOUNTY**

**ACR POKER**

**EVERY KNOCKOUT ON DAY 2 TRIGGERS A RANDOM MYSTERY BOUNTY — SOMETIMES SMALL, SOMETIMES MASSIVE.**

# MILLIONS AWARDED AT BRAZIL HIGH ROLLER SERIES

By Erik Fast



After more than a decade of growth, it's clear that the nosebleed-stakes tournament circuit is here to stay. The high roller scene added a new locale this fall thanks to the latest stop on the *Brazilian Series of Poker*. The *BSOP Super High Roller Series* featured seven events in total, each of which surpassed the seven-figure mark in total prize money.

All told, there were 1,061 entries at the stop held inside the Sheraton Sao Paulo. Tournaments ran from Nov. 14-29 with more than \$13.8 million in total prize money awarded along the way.

The first event to wrap at this high-stakes focused *BSOP* series was the \$10,000 no-limit hold'em invitational. The tournament attracted 113 entries, resulting in a prize pool worth more than \$1.1 million. **Joao Simao** emerged victorious in the end, earning \$256,000 and his 12th career title. The two-time bracelet winner's triumph on his home soil helped grow his lifetime haul to more than \$11.8 million.

Simao had a strong 2025, with two of his three largest cashes ever. He finished fourth in a *Triton Montenegro* \$50,000 high roller for \$615,000 back in the spring and third in the recent *Super High Roller Bowl \$100,000 Pot-Limit Omaha* event for \$550,000. His biggest cash remains the \$686,242 that he earned as the champion of the 2022 *WSOP* \$5,000 pot-limit Omaha and no-limit hold'em mixed event.

The past few months have been particularly fruitful for Simao. Since the start of September he cashed 10 times for a total of \$1.6 million. This latest win was his second title in that stretch, having taken down a \$10,000 mixed NLH/PLO tournament at the *PokerStars North American Poker Tour* for \$174,600 in November.

The second event saw the stakes doubled, with 56 entries putting up \$20,000 apiece to build a prize pool of

\$1,050,960.

Morocco's **Mehdi Chaoui** came away with the title and the top prize of \$315,000. This victory increased Chaoui's lifetime earnings to nearly \$3.4 million, expanding his lead on the Moroccan all-time money list.

Ivan Luca, who finished second to Simao in the first tournament of the series, backed that strong start up with a fourth-place showing. The Argentinian now has over \$7.7 million in career cashes, with \$342,400 added via his three deep runs at this series. He secured \$174,000 as the runner-up in event no. 1 and added another \$111,400 in this tournament. He'd later finish seventh in another \$20,000 event for another \$57,000.

**Martin Kabrhel** has been quite the closer in 2025. The fast-talking Czech player has made eight final tables this year as of publishing, with four wins along the way. His latest triumph saw him mount a massive heads-up comeback, overcoming a 14:1 chip deficit to take down the \$30,000 no-limit hold'em event.

Kabrhel banked \$422,000 as the champion, growing his career earnings to nearly \$16.9 million in the process. More than \$3.8 million of that has been earned across his 32 cashes to date in 2025. He kicked off 2025 with a victory in a €15,000 pot-limit Omaha event for \$149,520. He then added two *World Series of Poker* bracelets to grow his collection to five. He took down the mini main event in July for \$843,140 and then won the €10,000 pot-limit Omaha mystery bounty event at the *WSOP Europe* for another \$220,545 in October.

This latest score came with 420 POY points. He also finished fourth in the \$100,000 event at this stop and ninth in the \$6,000 finale, adding another \$455,000 and 392 points with those two deep runs. Kabrhel's total of 5,850 is

© BSOP

Martin Kabrhel



Alen Fillipi



three titles, including defeating Shaun Deeb heads-up at the *WSOP* to earn his first bracelet in the \$1,000 no-limit hold'em event.

The latest triumph was also the largest for Zizka. He beat out a field of 36 entries in the \$100,000 main event to earn a career-best score of \$1,200,000. Before this year, his biggest score was an 81st-place finish in the 2023 *WSOP Europe* main event for roughly \$20,000.

Boianovsky added to his previous win in the \$50,000 event by finishing second in the \$100,000 event for a new career-best score of \$760,000. As a result, the Brazilian pro became the series' biggest winner with \$1.4 million in earnings. It bumped his lifetime earnings to north of \$3.6 million.

#### Alen Fillipi Wins Largest Guaranteed Tournament Ever Held In Latin America

The festival closed with the *BSOP Championship* main event, which cost 30,000 Brazilian real or \$6,000 USD to enter. The no-limit hold'em tournament sported a record \$4 million guarantee, the largest ever for a poker event in Latin America. A total of 714 entries were made in the end. While the top 103 finishers earned a share, only one player would walk away with the trophy and the title.

After four starting flights and four more days of combined-field action, hometown hero **Alen Fillipi** emerged victorious. The Sao Paulo resident was awarded \$683,600 for the win. This was his largest payday yet, topping the \$178,515 that he earned with a seventh-place showing in the 2022 *WSOP* Millionaire Maker event. He now boasts seven figures in career cashes, including a top-100 showing in the 2025 *WSOP* main event for \$100,000.

Fillipi sat in fifth chip position to start the final table amongst a sea of Brazilians looking to win on home soil. The only non-native player still in the mix was Martin Kabrhel. The Czech poker star's run in the main event concluded when his A-10 ran into the A-K of Diones Lopes during the early action. He earned \$55,000 as the ninth-place finisher, bringing his total haul for the festival to \$877,000.

The final three agreed to a deal that redistributed the remaining prize money a bit, leaving the title and \$152,600 to play for. Lopes locked up \$519,400, Matheus Grazziotin \$423,000, and Fillipi \$521,000. The first hand after the deal saw Lopes call a shove from Fillipi on a Q♣ 8♠ 5♥ 2♠ board with A♦ Q♠. He was facing K♠ 6♠. The 9♠ river filled Fillipi's flush to set up the heads-up showdown.

Fillipi held a 4:1 chip lead over Grazziotin to start. The match lasted just a single hand. Grazziotin limped in from the button with 5♠ 4♣. Fillipi checked holding J♥ 4♦ and the two saw a flop of 10♠ 5♦ 4♠. Fillipi check-called, only to turn jacks-up with the J♦. He checked again and Grazziotin bet with his bottom two pair. Fillipi called, and the 6♥ completed the board. Fillipi checked a third time, and Grazziotin moved all-in. Fillipi made the call to bring the event to a close. ♠

currently enough to place him inside the top 20 on the 2025 POY leaderboard, sponsored by Coin Poker.

With 40 entries, the \$50,000 high roller built a final prize pool of \$1,880,000 that was split amongst the top six finishers. **Felipe Boianovsky** earned \$640,000 as the champion. He was not yet done adding to his career earnings in a major way at this festival, though.

Leandro Zavodini finished runner up for \$440,000. It was a great return trip for Zavodini, who took down a high roller at the 2024 *BSOP Millions* for a career-best score of \$603,479. He now has more than \$1.3 million in career earnings.

Just two days after placing second in the \$30,000 high roller won by Kabrhel, **Ottomar Ladva** battled his way through a field of 58 entries in the \$20,000 single-day high roller to find the winner's circle and earn \$321,000. With the \$292,000 the Estonian secured for his runner-up showing earlier, the \$21,000 that came with a 10th-place finish in the kickoff invitational won by Simao, and the \$300,000 he pocketed for fifth place in the \$100,000 main event, Ladva's total haul for the festival came to \$934,000.

His career earnings now exceed \$4.2 million. Ladva's largest payday is still the \$487,734 that came with a €25,000 high roller win at the 2024 *EPT Barcelona* series.

Czech backgammon pro **Zdenek Zizka** is just 26 years old, but has already worked his way to the grandmaster level. Now 'ZZ' is on the fast track to a similar status in the poker world, having accumulated more than \$2.4 million on the tournament circuit across more than 30 cashes in 2025. Along the way, Zizka made eight final tables and won

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### BSOP Super High Roller Series - Sheraton Hotel - Sao Paulo, Brazil

Event	Player	Payout
<b>\$10,000 NLH Invitational</b>  Nov. 14-15  Entries: 113 Prizepool: \$1,130,000	1 Joao Simao	\$256,000
	2 Ivan Luca	\$174,000
	3 Thiago Macedo	\$112,000
	4 Dennys Ramos	\$93,000
	5 Eduardo Parra	\$75,000
	6 Rafael Mota	\$60,000
	7 Luiz Ferreira	\$45,000
	8 Vinicius Rezende	\$34,000
	9 Gabriel Tavares	\$26,000

Event	Player	Payout	POY
<b>\$20,000 NLH</b>  Nov. 15-17  Entries: 56 Prizepool: \$1,050,960	1 Mehdi Chaoui	\$315,000	360
	2 Ruben Lopes	\$228,000	300
	3 Rafael Moraes	\$147,000	240
	4 Ivan Luca	\$111,400	180
	5 Hugo Machado	\$86,200	150
	6 Gabriel Tavares	\$67,300	120
	7 Zdenek Zizka	\$53,860	90
	8 Masato Yokosawa	\$42,000	60

Event	Player	Payout	POY
<b>\$30,000 NLH</b>  Nov. 17-18  Entries: 44 Prizepool: \$1,320,000	1 Martin Kabrhel	\$422,000	420
	2 Ottomar Ladva	\$292,000	350
	3 Rodrigo Seiji	\$186,000	280
	4 Andre Akkari	\$142,000	210
	5 Thiago Macedo	\$111,860	175
	6 Rafael Moraes	\$86,800	140

Event	Player	Payout	POY
<b>\$50,000 NLH</b>  Nov. 19-20  Entries: 40 Prizepool: \$1,880,000	1 Felipe Boianovsky	\$640,000	510
	2 Leandro Zavodini	\$440,000	425
	3 Vladimir Minko	\$280,000	340
	4 Ruben Lopes	\$216,000	255
	5 Leonardo Rizzo	\$170,000	213
	6 Pedro Padilha	\$135,000	170



Event	Player	Payout	POV
\$20,000 NLH Nov. 20 Entries: 58 Prizepool: \$1,160,000	1 Ottomar Ladva	\$321,000	360
	2 Rodrigo Selouan	\$251,000	300
	3 Carlos Serrano	\$155,000	240
	4 Alisson Piekazewicz	\$118,000	180
	5 Affif Prado	\$91,000	150
	6 Rafael Mota	\$71,000	120
	7 Ivan Luca	\$57,000	90
	8 Allan Mello	\$44,000	60

Event	Player	Payout	POV
\$100,000 NLH Nov. 21-23 Entries: 36 Prizepool: \$3,438,000	1 Zdenek Zizka	\$1,200,000	480
	2 Felipe Boianovsky	\$760,000	400
	3 Renan Bruschi	\$540,000	320
	4 Martin Kabrhel	\$400,000	240
	5 Ottomar Ladva	\$300,000	200
	6 Gabriel Tavares	\$238,700	160

Event	Player	Payout	POV
\$6,000 NLH Nov. 22-29 Entries: 714 Prizepool: \$3,877,000	1 Alen Fillipi	\$683,600	1,824
	2 Matheus Grazziotin	\$423,000	1,520
	3 Diones Lopes	\$519,400	1,216
	4 Pedro Padilha	\$230,000	912
	5 Ramiro Araujo	\$170,000	760
	6 Gregory Fabiao	\$124,000	608
	7 Giorgio Tonin	\$95,000	456
	8 Bernardo Soares	\$70,000	304
	9 Martin Kabrhel	\$55,000	152



# NISHANT SHARMA WINS ASIAN POKER TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP FOR \$1.2 MILLION

By Tim Fiorvanti



The 2025 *Asian Poker Tour Championship* festival ended a successful year for the tour on an incredible high. Over two-and-a-half weeks of tournaments at Red Space in Taipei City, Taipei, the festival drew tremendous numbers across the board.

The total series attracted a combined 28,265 entries, which resulted in over 1 billion TWD (\$34.2 million USD) in total prize money awarded.

The signature event of the series, the *APT Championship* \$10,000 main event, stood out among the rest. With 671 entries, the \$5 million guarantee was easily surpassed to create a final prize pool worth more than \$6.2 million.

The strong turnout made for a sizable first-place prize of \$1,184,985, which was ultimately awarded to India's **Nishant Sharma**. He overcame a stacked final table that included several decorated tournament professionals on his way to securing the 24k gold lion trophy.

Prior to this win, Sharma's top score on the live circuit had been \$230,475. It's not often you earn that large a sum for a 34th-place finish, but for Sharma, it happened in the 2018 *World Series of Poker* main event. Now, with this *APTC Taipei* triumph under his belt, Sharma's career earnings sit at just shy of \$2 million.

The turnout and the prize pool for this main event were all the more impressive because of a single day 1 flight, and a pure freezeout format with no option to re-enter. There were 595 players by the close of day 1, and 76 players took

advantage of the late registration window on day 2 to close the field at 671.

A total of 95 players cashed in this event, with Frank Cucchiarra (86th), Roman Hrabec (85th), Fabian Gumz (84th), Steve O'Dwyer (77th), and Aditya Agarwal (56th) among the recognizable names who finished in the money.

The field was narrowed to just nine contenders by the end of the fourth day of play. Sharma was the big stack to start the day, with four-time *WSOP* bracelet winner Dominik Nitsche sitting on the next-largest stack.

Bracelet winner and 2010 *EPT Prague* champion Martin Finger was the first to fall at the final table. The German ran  $A\clubsuit K\clubsuit$  into the pocket aces of *WPT* champion Matas Cimbolas to finish ninth for \$97,507.

Cimbolas was the next to hit the rail, though, with his pocket queens being cracked by the A-Q of Hao Shan Huang. An ace-high runoff after the chips went in preflop saw Cimbolas settle for \$123,094 as the eighth-place finisher.

Nitsche's final stand pitted his pocket fives against the pocket kings of two-time *WSOP* bracelet winner Alexandru Papazian. The superior pocket pair held up to send Nitsche packing in fourth place for \$400,582. He now has more than \$21.6 million in career cashes to his name.

Papazian was soon left short after clashing with Sharma, and was eliminated in third place. The Romanian's career haul grew to more than \$4.9 million after adding \$522,931 for this podium showing.

Sharma still had roughly a 5:1 chip lead entering heads-up play, which he extended even further before the final hand. Sharma limped in from the button with K♠ K♥ and John Costiniano checked his option with J♠ 3♣. The flop came down 6♥ 3♠ 3♥ to give Costiniano trips. He fired a single big blind and received a call. The Q♥ turn saw another bet from Costiniano, and this time Sharma raised. Costiniano moved all in, and Sharma quickly called.

Costiniano was ahead with his three of a kind, but the A♥ on the end gave Sharma a flush to lock up the pot and the title. Costiniano was awarded \$731,606 as the runner-up.

#### Lee, Hrabec, And Joyce Win High Rollers

While there were several massive side events, a trio of high rollers produced particularly big winners during the festival.

American high-stakes poker pro **Calvin Lee** triumphed in the \$50,000 buy-in super high roller. The WSOP bracelet winner defeated a field of 36 entries in the tournament dubbed the *Superstar Championship*, banking \$600,210 after overcoming a stacked final table.

This was the third-largest score yet for Lee, who has been a more regular presence on the live scene in 2025. The 2015 WSOP \$3,000 six-max event champion recorded four of his five top paydays in 2025, including a second-place showing in a *Triton Poker Jeju* \$25,000 high roller in the spring for nearly \$1.2 million and fifth in a \$60,000 buy-in at the same venue this fall for another \$618,000.

Lee now boasts career earnings of nearly \$5.2 million. This latest victory came with 408 *Card Player* POY points. With 5,142 total points, he now sits in 28th place in the race standings.

**Roman Hrabec** enjoyed the best year of his poker career in 2024, with two *Triton Super High Roller* titles and three seven-figure results. But outside of a \$20,000 high roller victory back in February at *WPT Cambodia*, the big scores have been a little tougher to come by in 2025.

That turned around for Hrabec in Taipei, as he took down a \$25,000 high roller. The \$428,759 first-place prize was his best of the year, and one of his best live results overall.

Hrabec outlasted a field of 81 entrants on his way to victory. He defeated Canadian-born Alex Wice heads-up. For Wice, this was the second-largest live result of his career, and his third six-figure result of 2025. The long-time high-volume online player logged his best live score since January 2011, when he finished third in the *EPT Deauville* main event. Wice also made the final table of the \$50,000 buy-in event won by Lee, finishing seventh.

**Toby Joyce**, a bracelet winner with more than \$3.3 million in career cashes, picked up the second-largest score of his career by taking down the \$15,000 high roller championship. The Irish pro outlasted 172 entries to lock up the title and \$562,753. Joyce's top score remains the more than \$1.1 million he earned as the runner-up in the 2019 *WPT Five Diamond* main event.

Gerald Karlic finished fourth for \$208,163. This came just over a week after he took down an earlier side event for \$229,971.

#### Other Highlights From Taipei

While the high rollers naturally drove eye-popping prize pools, some of the small buy-in events did the same thanks to considerable turnouts. A \$490 buy-in event drew 2,398 entrants, for example, with **Ruiko Mamiya** turning her mod-



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est investment into nearly \$99,000.

**Sofia Lovgren** has live tournament results dating back to 2010, and she's served as an ambassador for several online poker platforms over the years. In terms of all of her previous live tournament results, Lovgren's mystery bounty victory at the *APT Championship* tops them all.

Lovgren outlasted a field of 667 entrants in the \$1,100 event to claim a first-place prize of around \$186,000, when you factor in the multitude of bounties she won. In total, Lovgren banked 12 profitable eliminations, including the two biggest bounty prizes on offer.

The last 12 months of **Gerald Karlic's** poker career have been a revelation. After finishing second in a massive €550 buy-in event in his home country of Austria for \$210,895, Karlic recorded an even bigger second-place finish in the *EPT Prague Eureka* main event, spinning his €1,100 buy-in up to \$416,222 after a heads-up deal.

Then, in October, Karlic had another career-best runner-up result, taking second in the *WSOP Europe* main event for \$885,690. After all of those second-place finishes, Karlic put a win on the board in Taipei.

Karlic outlasted a field of 98 in the \$10,000 buy-in event for a \$229,971 first-place prize. He defeated **Nevan Chang** heads-up, but Chang would go on to an even greater victory in the days that followed.

In fact, Chang was one of the biggest winners on home

soil during this festival. After finishing runner-up to Karlic, the hometown hero broke through with a victory in the mini main event.

The \$1,144 buy-in tournament drew 1,603 entrants. Chang made a heads-up deal with Justin Singam Joel heads-up, making Chang's victory worth \$227,100. That also came with 1,080 *Card Player* POY points. According to *APT* reporters on the scene, Chang now has 10 career titles to his name.

Prior to his arrival on this trip to Taipei, Australia's **JP Rounce-Sue** had never recorded a cash of more than \$6,700. He took third in a small PLO event earlier at this stop for his first-ever five-figure cash, and by the end of the week, he broke the six-figure threshold.

Rounce-Sue defeated Dutch poker standout Rob Hollink heads-up to win the *Natural8 Cup Championship*, a \$3,000 buy-in no-limit hold'em event. Outlasting a field of 490, Rounce-Sue earned \$241,231 for his victory.

Hollink, an *EPT* and *WSOP* champion, hit his high point for the trip in this event. The second-place finish was added to a fourth-place finish in the *APT Championship* mini main event, and a single-day turbo victory in the opening days of the festival.

Kitty Kuo, a popular poker personality with over \$3.6 million in career tournament results, finished in eighth place in her hometown. She earned \$27,626 for her efforts.

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## APT Championship - Red Space - Taipei City, Taiwan

Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$165,000 NLH Nov. 16 Entries: 74 Prizepool: \$350,085	1 Tanupat Punjarojanakul	\$96,245	336
	2 Hikaru Hishinuma	\$68,448	280
	3 Michel Molenaar	\$44,816	224
	4 Punnat Punsri	\$34,480	168
	5 Kyosuke Nagami	\$27,312	140
	6 Joseph Cheong	\$21,360	112
	7 Poseidon Ho	\$16,800	84
	8 Daniel Neilson	\$13,136	56
	9 Andreas Tomazou	\$9,984	28

Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$35,000 NLH KO Nov. 16-17 NT\$15,000,000 GTD Entries: 667 Prizepool: \$380,792	1 Sofia Lovgren	\$72,595	840
	2 Hao Cheng	\$44,822	700
	3 Man Lui	\$32,038	560
	4 Jin Hong	\$24,541	420
	5 Justin Tsui	\$19,443	350
	6 Takashi Arima	\$15,142	280
	7 Chen Lin	\$11,034	210
	8 Yu Heon	\$7,542	140
	9 Sheung Chan	\$5,974	70

Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$25,000 NLH Nov. 17-19 NT\$20,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,867 Prizepool: \$1,274,916	1 Anonymous	NA	
	2 Wutikrai Phraikhieo	\$122,592	450
	3 Rangka Teeraphat	\$85,293	360
	4 Wai Lo	\$61,686	270
	5 Chuang Hao	\$50,067	225
	6 Asish Ghosh	\$40,144	180
	7 Po Liao	\$30,688	135
	8 Jan Leoncio	\$21,635	90

Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$80,000 NLH 7-Max Nov. 17-18 Entries: 313 Prizepool: \$679,369	1 Eng Choi	\$136,815	720
	2 Anonymous	NA	
	3 Hannes Jeschka	\$66,528	480
	4 Anusorn Asiralertsiri	\$53,702	360
	5 John Perry	\$42,102	300
	6 Benjamin LeBlond	\$31,866	240
	7 Seungmook Jung	\$23,405	180



Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$3,000 NLH Nov. 19-22 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 490 Prizepool: \$1,241,765	1 JP Rounce-Sue	\$241,231	1080
	2 Rob Hollink	\$151,997	900
	3 Bawoo Yun	\$108,874	720
	4 Hajime Watanabe	\$85,747	540
	5 Chang Seong Chae	\$67,373	450
	6 Adrian State	\$52,624	360
	7 Christopher Mateo	\$39,622	270
	8 Kitty Kuo	\$27,626	180

Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$300,000 NLH Nov. 20 Entries: 98 Prizepool: \$876,073	1 Gerald Karlic	\$229,971	432
	2 Nevan Chang	\$161,197	360
	3 Vincent Huang	\$106,442	288
	4 Rehman Kassam	\$83,664	216
	5 Justin Chu	\$67,459	180
	6 Winfred Yu	\$52,563	144
	7 Samuel Mullur	\$41,613	108
	8 Alex Lynskey	\$32,416	72

Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$75,000 NLH Nov. 21-22 Entries: 480 Prizepool: \$988,796	1 Atsushi Yokoyama	\$192,125	720
	2 Kotaro Nakayama	\$121,030	600
	3 Hokyun Kang	\$86,694	480
	4 Hun Tae Choi	\$68,278	360
	5 Nicholas Teeuwen	\$53,648	300
	6 Darius Neagoe	\$41,904	240
	7 Martin Sedlak	\$31,552	180
	8 Ankit Ahuja	\$21,997	120

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$25,000 NLH Nov. 21-23 Entries: 81 Prizepool: \$1,894,673	1 Roman Hrabec	\$428,759	672
	2 Alex Wice	\$331,568	560
	3 Danny Tang	\$246,307	448
	4 Axel Hallay	\$189,469	336
	5 Hikaru Hishinuma	\$138,310	280
	6 Manuel Fritz	\$102,314	224
	7 Biao Ding	\$80,525	168
	8 Poseidon Ho	\$65,936	112

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Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$165,000 NLH Nov. 22 Entries: 155 Prizepool: \$733,286	1 Haruhiko Shinohara	\$170,499	576
	2 Yuan Lei	\$115,491	480
	3 Thomas Ward	\$76,995	384
	4 Anthony Hu	\$63,062	288
	5 Edgar Asehan	\$50,595	240
	6 Hung Hsin	\$39,232	192
	7 Gaku Fujita	\$29,037	144
	8 Adam Martinsson	\$21,338	96

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$50,000 NLH Nov. 23-24 Entries: 39 Prizepool: \$1,853,925	1 Calvin Lee	\$600,210	408
	2 Daniel Neilson	\$417,660	340
	3 Dylan Linde	\$276,590	272
	4 Vincent Huang	\$207,445	204
	5 Webster Lim	\$145,670	170
	6 Steve O'Dwyer	\$108,795	136
	7 Alex Wice	\$87,585	102

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$10,000 NLH Nov. 24-28 \$5,000,000 GTD Entries: 671 Prizepool: \$6,200,413	1 Nishant Sharma	\$1,184,985	2100
	2 John Costiniano	\$731,606	1750
	3 Alexandru Papazian	\$522,931	1400
	4 Dominik Nitsche	\$400,582	1050
	5 Neng Zhao	\$317,360	875
	6 Hao Huang	\$247,181	700
	7 Hao Chuang	\$180,106	525
	8 Matas Cimblas	\$123,094	350

Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$150,000 NLH Nov. 25 Entries: 256 Prizepool: \$1,056,043	1 Dawid Smolka	\$224,547	612
	2 Ryosuke Ikari	\$151,184	510
	3 Dennis Kim	\$106,592	408
	4 Lester Edoc	\$86,422	306
	5 Yukako Hiroi	\$68,371	255
	6 John Tech	\$51,917	204
	7 Dae Hwang	\$37,901	153
	8 Dongjun Han	\$27,709	102

Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$35,000 NLH Nov. 25-27 Entries: 1,603 Prizepool: \$1,542,396	1 Nevan Chang	\$225,454	1080
	2 Joel Singam	\$198,865	900
	3 Justin Chu	\$107,238	720
	4 Rob Hollink	\$78,003	540
	5 Raiden Kan	\$61,747	450
	6 Chang Hung	\$48,367	360
	7 Kwok Ng	\$36,985	270
	8 Wei Lin	\$26,119	180

Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$165,000 NLH Nov. 26 Entries: 99 Prizepool: \$468,357	1 Akichika Kawai	\$122,946	432
	2 Jin Woo Jung	\$86,179	360
	3 Van Sang Nguyen	\$56,906	288
	4 Danny Tang	\$44,730	216
	5 Ryota Shinde	\$36,064	180
	6 Naohiro Matsuda	\$28,102	144
	7 Paul Hong	\$22,246	108
	8 Axel Hallay	\$17,328	72

Event	Player	Payout	POY
NT\$60,000 NLH Nov. 27-28 Entries: 477 Prizepool: \$787,082	1 Jose Colada	\$152,723	720
	2 Liang Lee	\$96,221	600
	3 Ryoji Negishi	\$68,922	480
	4 Masayuki Murata	\$54,282	360
	5 Wipawadee Kanarakaspong	\$42,650	300
	6 Deepak Shetty	\$33,312	240
	7 Ravn Teo	\$25,085	180
	8 Michael Concepcion	\$17,488	120

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$15,000 NLH Nov. 27-29 Entries: 173 Prizepool: \$2,420,498	1 Toby Joyce	\$562,753	936
	2 Huu Nguyen	\$381,228	780
	3 Matthias Lipp	\$254,151	624
	4 Gerald Karlic	\$208,163	468
	5 Punnat Punsri	\$167,015	390
	6 Jun Obara	\$129,495	312
	7 Alex Wice	\$95,852	234
	8 Chase Cokaliong	\$70,437	156

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$7,500 NLH Nov. 28-30 Entries: 147 Prizepool: \$1,238,006	1 Wayne Lam	\$274,211	576
	2 Kiat Lee	\$185,082	480
	3 Johan Schultz-Pedersen	\$127,392	384
	4 Michael Egan	\$103,869	288
	5 Dumitru Pora	\$82,822	240
	6 Paulius Plausinaitis	\$63,632	192
	7 Anthony Hu	\$46,301	144
	8 Trong Hieu Ngo	\$33,549	96



# HERO CALL PROPELS KEVIN NEE TO WPT ROCK 'N' ROLL POKER OPEN TITLE

By Erik Fast



The Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood, Florida hosted the penultimate stop on the 2025 *World Poker Tour* schedule. The centerpiece of its 52-event *Rock 'N' Roll Poker Open* festival was the \$3,500 no-limit hold'em main event, which carried a \$3 million guarantee on the prize pool.

**Kevin Nee** overcame a sizable field of 1,224 entries in the tournament, earning his first major title and \$605,100.

"It feels amazing, it hasn't really sunk in yet," Nee told *WPT* reporters after his win. "Kind of just adrenaline for the past four or five days, so I'm sure at some point it will hit me and I will be very excited."

Prior to this breakout victory, Nee's top score was the \$15,500 he earned with a 58th-place finish in the *Hard Rock Poker Open* main event this August. Now, the Pennsylvania resident has nearly \$650,000 in total cashes to his name.

The strong turnout for this event saw the \$3 million guarantee easily surpassed, with \$3,916,800 paid out across the top 153 finishers. Bracelet winner and *WPT* champion Nenad Medic (7th), Rob Wazwaz (8th), Frank Lagodich (11th), 2020 *WSOP Online* main event champion Stoyan Madanzhiev (14th), two-time bracelet winner Shannon Shorr (19th), and Natasha Mercier (20th) were among the big names who ran deep.

The final day began with six players remaining and Joel Gola out in front. The first knockout of the day came after a few orbits. Hyndi Khomutetsky got the last of her stack in preflop with A♦ Q♥ leading the A♣ J♦ of Gola, but the A♣ 5♣ 2♥ 6♣ J♣ runout saw Gola spike two pair to steal the pot, ending Khomutetsky's run in sixth place for \$127,000.

Anthony Merlo then ran pocket eights into the pocket tens of fellow short stack Chad Eveslage during five-handed play. He was soon sent packing in fifth place, taking home

\$166,000.

Eveslage was the clear short stack heading into four-handed action. The two-time *WPT* champion and four-time bracelet winner had just five big blinds by the time he shoved and was sent packing by Aram Zobian. Eveslage secured \$220,000 for his efforts, growing his lifetime haul to more than \$11.2 million in the process.

Gola went for a big multi-street bluff that was picked off by Nee to see the two swap places on the leaderboard. A handful of deals later, Zobian got the last of his stack in with top pair against a flush draw for Nee, which came in on the turn.

The bracelet winner and 2018 *World Series of Poker* main event sixth-place finisher secured \$295,000 for his podium finish. He now boasts career earnings of nearly \$8.8 million.

That gave Nee just better than a 2:1 chip lead over Gola going into heads-up play. It took him just a single hand to convert that lead into the title. He raised on the button with A♠ 2♠ and Gola three-bet shoved with K♣ J♣. Nee called and flopped the nuts with Q♠ 7♠ 5♠. The 4♣ turn and Q♥ were mere formalities.

Gola earned \$395,000 as the runner-up, a new personal best for the Philadelphia resident.

## Double Trouble: Dario Dussan And Boris Kolev Dominate Side Events

While the main event was the largest tournament of the festival, there were plenty of other impactful events held at the stop which ran from Nov. 19 through Dec. 3. A total of 16,636 entries were made across the series, resulting in nearly \$12.4 million in prize money being awarded along the way. The venue has surpassed \$600 million in tournament prize money paid out across their 56 festivals held since 2011.

Two players in particular shined in the side events at



Dario Dussan



Dussan's Second Win



Boris Kolev



Kolev's Second Win



David Lee



Aram Oganyan

this festival. **Dario Dussan** kicked things off in style, topping a staggering field of 6,853 entries in the \$2 million guaranteed \$400 no-limit hold'em event at the top of the schedule to earn \$278,150. He outlasted a tough final table that included *WPT* champions James Carroll (5th) and Darryll Fish (3rd).

Later on in the series, Dussan also took down the \$3,000 pot-limit Omaha event, besting 62 entries to earn \$61,075. These were the two largest scores yet for the Colombian player.

**Boris Kolev** dominated the two largest buy-in events of the series. The Bulgarian pro and two-time bracelet winner went back-to-back, winning the \$10,000 buy-in for \$226,100 and the \$25,000 high roller for another \$465,900.

Earlier this year Kolev also took down a \$10,000 buy-in event in Cyprus for his first \$1 million payday. The \$692,000 in total earnings that he secured at the Hard Rock grew his career haul to nearly \$6.6 million.

Poker power couple Brock Wilson and Cherish Andrews both made the final table of the \$10,000 event, finishing fifth and fourth, respectively. Wilson then went on to take sixth in the \$25,000 event.

Kolev defeated Max Neugebauer heads-up in the \$25,000.

Neugebauer, the 2023 *WSOP Europe* main event champion, banked \$277,200 for his runner-up finish, the second biggest score of his career.

Other notable winners down the stretch in Florida included **David Lee** and **Aram Oganyan**. ♠



## TOURNAMENTS

### Rock 'n' Roll Open - Seminole Hard Rock - Hollywood, FL

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$400 NLH  Nov. 19-24  \$2,000,000 GTD Entries: 6,853 Prizepool: \$2,261,160	1 Dario Dussan	\$278,150	528
	2 Niall Costigan	\$184,000	440
	3 Darryll Fish	\$136,000	352
	4 Henry Billete	\$102,000	264
	5 Billy Ward	\$77,000	220
	6 James Carroll	\$59,000	176
	7 Philip Toister	\$45,000	132
	8 Quentin Jones	\$35,000	88
	9 Andrew Miller	\$27,500	44

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$1,100 NLH  Nov. 23-25  \$300,000 GTD Entries: 699 Prizepool: \$678,030	1 David Lee	\$103,370	840
	2 Stephen Gerber	\$71,000	700
	3 Moshe Refaelovitz	\$53,000	560
	4 Jonathan Wang	\$39,500	420
	5 James Salmon	\$30,000	350
	6 Alexis Rivera	\$22,800	280
	7 John McDonald	\$17,500	210
	8 Ari Katz	\$13,600	140
	9 Edward Medoff	\$10,700	70

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$3,500 Main Event  Nov. 28-Dec. 3  \$3,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,224 Prizepool: \$3,916,800	1 Kevin Nee	\$605,100	1440
	2 Joel Gola	\$395,000	1200
	3 Aram Zobian	\$295,000	960
	4 Chad Eveslage	\$220,000	720
	5 Anthony Merlo	\$166,000	600
	6 Hyndi Khomutetsky	\$127,000	480
	7 Nenad Medic	\$98,000	360
	8 Rob Wazwaz	\$76,000	240
	9 Shane Santacroce	\$59,000	120

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$10,000 NLH  Nov. 30  Entries: 68 Prizepool: \$646,000	1 Boris Kolev	\$226,100	360
	2 Alex Keating	\$129,200	300
	3 Clemen Deng	\$79,135	240
	4 Cherish Andrews	\$56,525	180
	5 Brock Wilson	\$43,605	150
	6 Yang Wang	\$33,915	120
	7 Matthew Zambanini	\$29,070	90
	8 Dylan Smith	\$25,840	60
	9 Asher Conniff	\$22,610	30

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$3,000 PLO  Dec. 1  Entries: 62 Prizepool: \$169,880	1 Dario Dussan	\$61,075	216
	2 Jordan Semel	\$35,930	180
	3 Juan Restrepo	\$22,515	144
	4 Renji Mao	\$15,350	108
	5 Vadim Shlez	\$11,900	90
	6 Dylan Smith	\$9,345	72
	7 Robert Cowen	\$7,645	54
	8 Frank Brannan	\$6,120	36

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$25,500 NLH  Dec. 1-2  \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 51 Prizepool: \$1,259,700	1 Boris Kolev	\$465,900	420
	2 Max Neugebauer	\$277,200	350
	3 Brandon Wilson	\$170,100	280
	4 David Coleman	\$119,700	210
	5 Justin Liberto	\$94,500	175
	6 Brock Wilson	\$75,600	140
	7 Thomas Boivin	\$56,700	105

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$5,000 NLH 8-Max  Dec. 2  \$250,000 GTD Entries: 121 Prizepool: \$568,700	1 Aram Oganyan	\$143,900	528
	2 Nick Yunis	\$96,000	440
	3 Brett Bassock	\$72,000	352
	4 Adi Rajkovic	\$54,000	264
	5 Justin Liberto	\$40,500	220
	6 Landon Tice	\$31,000	176
	7 David McGowan	\$23,700	132
	8 Connor Rash	\$18,400	88



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## STEPHEN HUBBARD DOMINATES PGT TEXAS PLO ROUNDUP

By Tim Fiorvanti



series, following a win in a \$5,300 PGT PLO high roller for \$36,000. There were three such high rollers at this stop in total. Hubbard topped 11 entries in the first.

The second drew the same turnout, with **Brevin Andreadis** taking home \$38,500 as the champion after defeating **Bryce Yockey** heads-up. Yockey then went on to outlast 13 entries in the final high roller, securing \$45,500 for the win.

This was Yockey's fourth PLO title of 2025, including three wins at the *PokerGO Tour PLO Series* in Las Vegas. In fact, all eight of his wins since 2017 have come in PLO. The two-time bracelet winner surpassed \$7.9 million in career earnings with his \$70,000 in combined cashes during the series.

Like Yockey, Jordan Glazer also managed three cashes, taking 16th in the main event while finishing runner-up twice in the high rollers for a combined \$45,500.

For a pot-limit Omaha specialist such as **Stephen Hubbard**, the recent proliferation of tournament festivals centered around his game of choice offers a wealth of opportunities.

Hubbard cashed in, in a big way, during the 2025 PGT Texas PLO Roundup at the Champions Club Texas in Houston. The Utah native bested a field of 337 in the \$3,300 buy-in, *PokerGO Tour* main event. He won a first-place prize of \$215,000, and earned 720 POY points in the process.

Hubbard entered the final table as the chip leader, having been out in front during several stretches of the tournament. Deep runs came from multi-time *WSOP* bracelet winners Alex Livingston (8th), Jim Collopy (15th), Caleb Furth (17th), and Bryce Yockey (24th), as well as *WPT* champions club member Frederic Normand (35th).

Once action on the final day kicked off, Hubbard proceeded to knock out five of his last six opponents, including the final four eliminations of the tournament. Among those to fall at the final table were Chris Costa (4th), a plastic surgeon based out of Las Vegas who has two PLO high roller wins on his poker résumé. By the time the field was reduced to three, Hubbard had more than three times as many chips as his two remaining opponents combined.

Philip Shing faced a massive deficit when heads-up play began. He managed one double-up, but got no closer than a 5:1 deficit. On the final hand, the chips went in on the river of an  $A\spadesuit Q\heartsuit 8\diamondsuit 10\spadesuit 5\diamondsuit$  board. Shing, after betting all the way down with  $K\spadesuit 8\heartsuit 6\clubsuit 3\heartsuit$ , attempted a river bluff for all of his chips. Hubbard, who had turned a straight with  $J\spadesuit 9\heartsuit 7\heartsuit 7\diamondsuit$ , was all too happy to call and secure his victory.

Shing pocketed \$155,000 as the runner-up, giving him nearly \$3 million in lifetime earnings.

The main event was actually Hubbard's second title of the

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$3,300 PLO Nov. 20-24 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 337 Prizepool: \$1,011,000	1 Stephen Hubbard	\$215,000	720
	2 Philip Shing	\$155,000	600
	3 David Shaw	\$100,000	480
	4 Christopher Costa	\$65,000	360
	5 Vito Lu	\$50,000	300
	6 Joe Firova	\$40,000	240
	7 Sterling Savill	\$30,000	180
	8 Alex Livingston	\$25,000	120
	9 Christopher Hannel	\$25,000	60

Event	Player	Payout
\$5,300 PLO Nov. 22 Entries: 11 Prizepool: \$55,000	1 Stephen Hubbard	\$36,000
	2 Jordan Glazer	\$14,000
	3 Phu Vo	\$5,000

Event	Player	Payout
\$5,300 PLO Nov. 23 Entries: 11 Prizepool: \$55,000	1 Brevin Andreadis	\$38,500
	2 Bryce Yockey	\$16,500

Event	Player	Payout
\$5,300 PLO Nov. 24 Entries: 13 Prizepool: \$65,000	1 Bryce Yockey	\$45,500
	2 Jordan Glazer	\$19,500

# DANIEL MAOR WINS PGT TRUE CLASSIC RAGS TO RICHES

By Erik Fast



The *PokerGO Tour True Classic Rags To Riches* \$3,300 no-limit hold'em event drew 161 entries to build a final prize pool of \$483,000. The top two dozen finishers made the money, with the largest chunk ultimately captured by **Daniel Maor**. He topped a tough final table to secure the title and \$110,000, the third-largest score yet for the part-time player.

Maor works in the poker industry as the Director of Business Development and Liquidity for ClubWPT Gold. While he's not a poker professional, it would be hard to tell from his results on the live circuit in recent years. He now has more than \$1.9 million in career cashes to his name. His top score came in a \$3,500 BetMGM event at ARIA in 2024, which saw him top 1,141 entries to earn \$613,914. Just over a month later, he won his first bracelet in a \$10,000 buy-in *WSOP Online* event for \$330,263.

Only the top 24 finishers secured a share of the \$483,000 prize pool in this event, with notables like Sam Laskowitz (21st), Doug Lee (20th), David 'ODB' Baker (15th), and Michael Rossitto (10th) running deep.

The final day began with seven remaining and Terry Fleischer out in front. Jack Hardcastle was the first to fall, running  $Q\heartsuit 9\heartsuit$  into the  $K\heartsuit Q\heartsuit$  of Anthony Hu. Neither player connected with the ten-high runout and Hardcastle settled for \$15,000. The *WPT* champion from the UK now has nearly \$2.8 million in career earnings.

*WPT* champion and three-time bracelet winner Michael Wang was the next to hit the rail, with his pocket sixes unable to come from behind against the pocket eights of Fleischer. Wang's lifetime haul now sits at more than \$9.6 million after adding \$20,000 with this sixth-place showing. He currently sits in 35th place in the 2025 POY race standings presented by CoinPoker, with three titles and 11 final tables on the year.

Shortly after that, Anthony Hu's last 11 or so big blinds went in preflop with  $K\heartsuit 10\heartsuit$  trailing the  $A\heartsuit 10\heartsuit$  of Calvin Anderson. The two-time *PGT* event winner was awarded \$25,000 as the fifth-place finisher, increasing his overall total to more than \$3.4 million.

Jared Jaffee was the chip leader heading into four-handed action, but was ultimately the next to be eliminated. The bracelet winner and two-time *WPT* champion was whittled down to just a handful of big blinds, which went in with  $J\clubsuit 9\heartsuit$  trailing the  $A\heartsuit 6\heartsuit$  of Anderson. Jaffee was one card away from doubling after flopping a jack, but the  $A\heartsuit$  on the end put Anderson back on top. With a \$35,000 payout, Jaffee now boasts over \$6.9 million in lifetime cashes.

Maor overtook the chip lead when he flopped tens full of fives and won a big pot against Anderson, who made fives full of tens. The rest of Anderson's stack went in with  $A\spadesuit 10\spadesuit$  trailing Maor's pocket kings. Anderson flopped a gutshot straight draw and turned outs to the nut flush, but bricked the river to finish third for \$50,000. The five-time bracelet winner surpassed \$8.1 million with this podium showing.

Heads-up was a brief affair. Maor started with nearly a 5:2 lead. On the second hand of the match, he raised the button with pocket nines and called Fleischer's three-bet jam. It was a classic race, with Fleischer holding  $A\clubsuit K\heartsuit$ . The board ran out  $Q\heartsuit 8\heartsuit 7\spadesuit 5\clubsuit 4\heartsuit$  and Maor's pocket pair held to bring the event to an end.

Fleischer cashed for \$74,000 as the runner-up. He's now approaching \$3.1 million in career earnings.

Player	Payout	POY
1 Daniel Maor	\$110,000	468
2 Terry Fleischer	\$74,000	390
3 Calvin Anderson	\$50,000	312
4 Jared Jaffee	\$35,000	234
5 Anthony Hu	\$25,000	195
6 Michael Wang	\$20,000	156
7 Jack Hardcastle	\$15,000	117
8 Maziar Keshavarzi	\$15,000	78

## CIRCUIT RESULTS



© Banco Casino

Event	Player	Payout	POY
Festival in Bratislava	1 Sebastian Kotowicz	\$91,377	456
	2 Andrej Tekel	\$57,155	380
Banco Casino Bratislava, Slovakia	3 David Urban	\$38,903	304
	4 Maximilian Meier	\$28,899	228
€550 NLH Nov. 19-24 €500,000 GTD Entries: 887 Prizepool: \$554,373	5 Tomas Stvrtecky	\$22,230	190
	6 Michal Hamacek	\$17,082	152
	7 Jari Mahonen	\$13,689	114
	8 Rikard Larsson	\$10,940	76
	9 Daniel Gumula	\$8,775	38



© WSOP

Event	Player	Payout	POY
WSOP Circuit	1 David Gonzalez	\$213,524	912
	2 Luis Yepez	\$142,328	760
Commerce Casino Commerce, CA	3 Zelin Wang	\$99,328	608
	4 Elad Elmakias	\$70,476	456
\$1,700 NLH Nov. 20-24 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 820 Prizepool: \$1,242,300	5 Daniel Lee	\$50,857	380
	6 Joshua Field	\$37,337	304
	7 Omar Bravo	\$27,894	228
	8 Chad Lipton	\$21,214	152
	9 Andrew Ostapchenko	\$16,429	76



© Dusk Till Dawn

Event	Player	Payout	POY
WSOP Circuit	1 Francis Obadun	\$251,410	912
	2 Jack O'Neill	\$167,587	760
Dusk Till Dawn Nottingham, United Kingdom	3 Pranav Agarwal	\$117,299	608
	4 Gilbert Black	\$83,424	456
£1,500 NLH Nov. 20-24 £1,000,000 GTD Entries: 845 Prizepool: \$1,435,489	5 Sandeep Shah	\$60,316	380
	6 Mark Stokes	\$44,336	304
	7 Stephen O'Keeffe	\$33,144	228
	8 Nigel Chukwu	\$25,204	152
	9 Danish Gandhi	\$19,511	76



© King's Resort Casino

Event	Player	Payout	POY
Million PLO Series	1 Mikkel Plum	\$188,848	840
	2 Harald Casagrande	\$116,348	700
King's Casino Rozvadov, Czech Republic	3 Tobias Frey	\$82,708	560
	4 Volodymyr Hera	\$64,148	420
€1,100 PLO Nov. 21-24 €1,000,000 GTD Entries: 595 Prizepool: \$983,063	5 Yuriy Nasikovskiy	\$49,648	350
	6 Anonymous	NA	
	7 Krzysztof Piotr Paszek	\$28,188	210
	8 Oleksii Holubov	\$18,908	140
	9 Predrag Vulovic	\$14,268	70

All payouts in USD.

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## TOURNAMENTS



Event	Player	Payout	POY
WSOP Circuit Star Gold Coast Broadbeach, Australia	1 Romain Morvan	\$65,559	288
	2 Tino Lechich	\$40,519	240
	3 Poe Jiang	\$26,844	192
	4 Josh Hutchins	\$18,535	144
	5 Thijs Hilberts	\$13,364	120
A\$5,000 NLH Nov. 25-26 Entries: 68 Prizepool: \$206,448	6 Emmanuel Derecho	\$10,079	96
	7 Hannah Lee	\$7,970	72
	8 Natalia Rozova	\$6,622	48
	9 Nathaniel Hutton	\$5,797	24



Event	Player	Payout
German Poker Masters	1 Artur Wasek	\$117,856
	2 Anonymous	NA
	3 Benyamin Alacam	\$79,112
King's Casino Rozvadov, Czech Republic	4 Armand Muratoglu	\$85,956
	5 Arda Vekiloglu	\$84,100
	6 Anonymous	NA
€285 NLH Nov. 26-Dec. 1 €1,000,000 GTD Entries: 3,914 Prizepool: \$1,086,745	7 Audran Philippart	\$24,940
	8 Fryderyk Nikodem	\$20,358
	9 Davide Vita	\$14,339



Event	Player	Payout	POY
WSOP Circuit Star Gold Coast Broadbeach, Australia	1 Yuanting Wang	\$184,833	1,260
	2 Hussein Salman	\$114,226	1,050
	3 Shane Dye	\$84,042	840
A\$2,500 NLH Nov. 28-Dec. 2 Entries: 667 Prizepool: \$976,981	4 Salvatore Fazzino	\$62,556	630
	5 Joe Hachem	\$47,114	525
	6 Hayato Kitajima	\$35,907	420
	7 Chun Lau	\$27,698	315
	8 Unensaikhan Bolovson	\$21,627	210
	9 Emanuel Seal	\$17,095	105



Event	Player	Payout	POY
Cape Town Million	1 Alexandre Blanc	\$52,716	240
	2 Edgar Antezana	\$34,800	200
	3 Jon Persent	\$23,200	160
GrandWest Casino Cape Town, South Africa	4 Naven Naicker	\$15,080	120
	5 Michael Cupido	\$12,064	100
	6 Jedd Kossew	\$9,860	80
ZAR 15,000 NLH Nov. 27-30 ZAR 4,000,000 GTD Entries: 344 Prizepool: \$251,395	7 Alexander Rizvi	\$7,830	60
	8 Franco Da Matta	\$6,380	40
	9 Jayson Zulch	\$5,336	20

© Star Gold Coast

© King's Resort Casino

© Star Gold Coast

© GrandWest Casino

## TOURNAMENTS



© Erno Rounders

Event	Player	Payout	POY
WSOP Circuit  Casino San Remo San Remo, Italy  €1,500 NLH Nov. 27-Dec. 2 Entries: 871 Prizepool: \$1,287,563	1 Gregory Grech	\$161,115	912
	2 Luca Bernardis	\$148,837	760
	3 Alessandro Smittarello	\$92,335	608
	4 Alexandre Doyer	\$70,122	456
	5 Hasan Halil	\$53,708	380
	6 Fabien Motte	\$41,354	304
	7 Claudio Daffina	\$32,016	228
	8 Alan Zagury	\$24,998	152
	9 Alessandro Confalone	\$19,720	76



© RGPS

Event	Player	Payout	POY
RunGood Dream Factory  Thunder Valley Lincoln, CA  \$1,100 NLH Nov. 28-30 \$250,000 GTD Entries: 281 Prizepool: \$270,380	1 Tyler Patterson	\$60,185	456
	2 Kristopher Burchfield	\$42,520	380
	3 Sasha Sabbaghian	\$27,405	304
	4 Edward Campbell	\$16,965	228
	5 Vu Pham	\$13,095	190
	6 Jacob Blackketter	\$10,850	152
	7 Philip Tardif	\$9,115	114
	8 Nicholas Iriarte	\$7,565	76
	9 Fernando Pardo-Bazan	\$6,045	38



© Poker.org

Event	Player	Payout	POY
WSOP Circuit  Harrah's Cherokee, NC  \$400 NLH Dec. 2-4 \$750,000 GTD Entries: 3,241 Prizepool: \$1,069,530	1 Tyler Phillips	\$127,911	480
	2 Jacob Ferro	\$79,041	400
	3 Ricardo Eyzaguirre	\$59,675	320
	4 Joshua Butler	\$45,467	240
	5 August Cadotte	\$34,962	200
	6 Jordan Levine	\$27,136	160
	7 Christopher Perkins	\$21,260	120
	8 Robert Elliott	\$16,815	80
	9 Michael Stephenson	\$13,428	40



© Poker.org

Event	Player	Payout	POY
WSOP Circuit  Harrah's Cherokee, NC  \$1,100 NLH Dec. 3-5 \$300,000 GTD Entries: 556 Prizepool: \$542,100	1 Levi Carden	\$102,692	840
	2 Maurice Hawkins	\$68,907	700
	3 David Rubin	\$47,174	560
	4 Bradley Mercer	\$32,944	420
	5 Lou Ojeda	\$23,478	350
	6 Asaf Ben-Shushan	\$17,081	280
	7 Patrick Martorella	\$12,693	210
	8 Daniel Bonet	\$9,638	140
	9 Luke Wasikowski	\$7,428	70

Aleksei Vandyshv



Juha Helppi



© Diamond Poker Series

© Diamond Poker Series

Event	Player	Payout	POY
Diamond Poker Series	1 Aleksei Vandyshv	\$255,704	672
	2 Aku Joentausta	\$173,219	560
All In Casino Prague, Czech Republic	3 Juha Helppi	\$115,479	448
	4 Cesar Garcia	\$94,583	336
	5 Sampo Ryyanen	\$75,886	280
€5,200 PLO Dec. 1-4 €1,000,000 GTD Entries: 182 Prizepool: \$1,099,800	6 Sebestyen Balint	\$58,839	224
	7 Omar Eljach	\$43,547	168
	8 Carlo van Ravenswoud	\$32,000	112
	9 Veselin Karakitukov	\$25,518	56

Event	Player	Payout	POY
Diamond Poker Series	1 Juha Helppi	\$195,344	600
	2 Aki Vihikainen	\$230,492	500
All In Casino Prague, Czech Republic	3 Alexander Petersen	\$216,456	400
	4 Luuk Van den Belt	\$109,678	300
	5 Cesar Garcia	\$88,102	250
€10,400 PLO Dec. 4-6 €1,000,000 GTD Entries: 107 Prizepool: \$1,166,728	6 Kevin Gorsic	\$68,788	200
	7 Jeremy Trojand	\$54,230	150
	8 Veselin Karakitukov	\$41,412	100
	9 Ole Schemion	\$30,334	50

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 WPT Seminole Hard Rock 'n' Roll Poker Open  
\$3,500 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Chad Eveslage  
6,400,000 Chips

Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 33%  
After Flop: 51%  
After Turn: 33%



Kevin Nee  
10,075,000 Chips

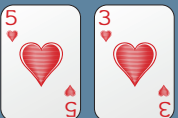


Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 39%  
After Flop: 11%  
After Turn: 10%



Joel Gola  
19,400,000 Chips

Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 27%  
After Flop: 37%  
After Turn: 57%



## PREFLOP

With six players remaining and blinds of 125,000-250,000 with a big blind ante of 250,000, Chad Eveslage raised to 500,000 from under the gun. Joel Gola called from the small blind, and Kevin Nee called from the big blind.



Gola checked, and Nee bet 700,000. Eveslage and Gola called.



Gola and Nee checked. Eveslage bet 1,700,000. Gola called, and Nee folded.



Gola moved all-in, and Eveslage folded.

## COMMENTARY:

The final six players at the WPT Seminole Hard Rock 'n' Roll Poker Open were guaranteed at least \$127,000, with \$605,100 reserved for the winner. One player had a stack of 11 big blinds, so there was some ICM pressure on the remaining competitors. Given that, Chad Eveslage could have just mucked his hand, as  $J\clubsuit 9\clubsuit$  is on the border of the opening range. Those marginal hands generally gain the most by folding under ICM pressure. He instead opened, and Joel Gola called with a hand that was way too loose for the solver's liking, even while sitting on a big stack. Kevin Nee could have squeezed as a bluff with good blockers in the big blind, especially if he had a sense of how wide Gola was calling. He decided to see the flop, though. There, he made a very optimistic lead. In some ways, Nee had the right idea, as his range in the big blind was the most likely to connect with the low texture. But red K-Q was just way too wide, with poor turn and river playability. He didn't get through anyone, as his opponents had actually connected, so he wisely shut it down immediately on the turn. With some equity but little showdown value and a range that could still include some strong overpairs, Eveslage decided to bet the turn. Hands like his are some of the best bluffing candidates in these situations. He left himself a stack size that made for an appropriate river jam if he chose to continue firing either as a bluff or if he made his hand. Folding would have been reasonable from Gola, considering he still had Nee behind him, but he stuck around for the river, where he connected with a full house. He decided to lead all in, which ended any chance of Eveslage going for the bluff. Eveslage actually mused that he could beat some weaker draws, but he had little choice aside from dumping his hand and conceding the pot.

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

## TOURNAMENTS



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Event	Player	Payout	(POV)
Manila Megastack	1 Edilberto Gopez	\$97,750	456
	2 Eoghan Macgabhann	\$61,200	380
Okada Manila Manila, Philippines	3 Raymond Tiu	\$43,520	304
	4 Junele Oswa	\$34,000	228
	5 Rikiya Ogura	\$26,095	190
PHP 45,000 NLH Dec. 4-7 Entries: 850 Prizepool: \$564,997	6 Yeldarb Mantos	\$20,060	152
	7 Jinhyun Kim	\$15,300	114
	8 Alessandro Oppicini	\$11,900	76
	9 Siyuan Liu	\$9,150	38



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Event	Player	Payout	(POV)
Winter POKER Classic	1 Buzhyew Ansha	\$138,953	912
	2 Kou Vang	\$114,000	760
Running Aces Columbus, MN	3 Wesley Cannon	\$70,986	608
	4 Cameron Leibfried	\$52,999	456
	5 Shane Stegora	\$40,150	380
\$1,100 NLH Dec. 4-7 Entries: 838 Prizepool: \$811,360	6 Daniel Kennedy	\$30,514	304
	7 Chris Potenza	\$23,287	228
	8 Blake Bohn	\$18,469	152
	9 Leo Pinamonti	\$14,454	76



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# Final Table Takedown: Marshall White Makes Two Huge Hero Calls For Ring No. 7

By Craig Tapscott



Marshall White started playing poker while in college at Appalachian State, where he double majored in Philosophy and Spanish. The poker boom was in full effect on his campus, and White was better than most at separating others from their beer money in his weekly home game.

He dabbled online, and started moving up in stakes. By junior year, he was making enough from poker to pay his rent. By senior year, poker was putting significant cash into his pocket, enough that he decided to turn pro after graduation.

The former river rafting guide has found considerable success on the *World Series of Poker Circuit*, racking up seven rings in total, including two high roller titles. His biggest cash remains the \$330,841 he banked for taking down a *World Poker Tour* side event at Borgata back in 2017.

In late November, White overcame a massive field of 3,526 players at Harrah's Cherokee in North Carolina, taking down the \$400 buy-in *WSOP Circuit* kickoff event for a \$135,620 payday. That's a massive 33,805% return on investment!

*Card Player* caught up with White to talk about his latest victory and to break down two key hands he played en route to the title.

**Craig Tapscott:** What does it feel like to now have seven *WSOP Circuit* rings?

**Marshall White:** I'm not chasing trophies or accolades, but poker tournaments are hard to win. So, it's cool to have them as a little token of the time I've put in the game and found at least a modicum of success.

**CT:** How do you determine what events you're going to play during the year?

**MW:** I do play full-time, and I travel mainly within the southeast, playing low- and mid-stakes tournaments, with a couple of trips to Vegas each year.

I look for good-value tournaments. I also check where friends will be, because I put a lot of value in enjoying myself and having a good time while I'm not playing poker. At most of these stops, if I'm not in a poker tournament, there's a good chance you'll find a big group of us playing a game like *Codenames* in the lobby.

I enjoy and appreciate the flexibility of the job. When the travel gets to be too much, I'm happy to stay home and play online as well.

**Series:** WSOP Circuit Cherokee  
**Event:** \$400 No-Limit Hold'em  
**Entrants:** 3,526  
**Prize Pool:** \$1,163,580  
**First-Place Prize:** \$135,620

**CT:** This was a huge field. With a lot of reentries. How do you usually approach the first levels of play in a marathon event?

**MW:** It's very much a minefield you have to navigate through and get very lucky to come out on top.

I will take more gambles earlier on, especially in earlier flights and while registration is open, to try and position myself with a stack with more maneuverability later on. There is a lot of value in having a big stack on day 2 to leverage, having more tools at your disposal to continue accumulating



White Won Ring No. 6 In 2023

© WSOP

© Palm Beach Kennel Club

chips.

But I didn't find a bag on the first three flights, so on the fourth and final flight, I was putting more value on making it through. I bagged a below-average stack, but got a full double on the second hand of day two and continued building from there. I think I had about 3x the average stack by the first break.

Anything can happen on day 2, but you've got to be there for it.

**HAND NO. 1**

**Stacks:** Marshall White – 8,000,000 (66 BB)  
Villain – 3,800,000 (31 BB)  
**Blinds:** 60,000-120,000 with a 120,000 big blind ante  
**Players Remaining:** 16

**MW:** This was the last hand before the dinner break on day 2, with two tables left. I had been quite active previous to this hand, doing a lot of chipping up without showdown.

The action folded to me on the button...

**White raised from the button to 250,000 holding Q♠ 10♠. The villain in the big blind called.**

**CT:** Did you have any reads on the player in the blind at this time?

**MW:** Not really. I had definitely been the most active player at the table and was winning a lot of uncontested pots. But I got a vibe from the big blind that he was ready to put his foot down and fight back.

**Flop:** 8♦ 8♠ 7♥

**Villain led out for 350,000.**

**CT:** What hands would donk bet in this spot?

**MW:** He could be leading a lot of things. Perhaps a seven, eight, straight draws, or random bluffs.

With two overs and some backdoor potential, position to navigate future streets, being ahead of all straight draws, and also just not necessarily believing the big blind's lead, I decided to call.

**CT:** From your extensive experience, what are most recreational players doing when they lead out in a scenario like this one?

**MW:** The lead here can be hard to decipher. Better players will be balanced, but I've found that most recs are typically pretty weak here. Very rarely do they hold an eight.

I think a lot of the time, they just hope I missed and will fold, and that's the extent of their plan.

**White called.**

**Turn:** K♦

**Villain checked.**

**MW:** The turn brought backdoor diamonds, and he checked quickly.

The king was better for my range than his, and I considered betting with plans to barrel the river to pressure a seven.

But I think the times he does have a seven, he is likely to get sticky with it on a lot of rivers. And because I was still ahead of all straight draws, I think I just

had the best hand a lot of the time and didn't want to face a potential check-raise.

Getting to showdown seems preferable to trying to get him to fold a seven.

**White checked.**

**River:** 4♠

**Villain bet 1,100,000.**

**MW:** He went with a big bet just north of a million into about 1,400,000. He also said something along the lines of, "whatever this is" as he made the bet with two fistfuls of stacks.

**CT:** Kind of a weird way to put the bet out. What was running through your head at the time?

**MW:** Most of the straight draws missed, with 5-6 being the only one that got there. And although it's not great to have a ten in my hand as a bluff catcher here, I still just wasn't buying what he was selling.

His line didn't really add up, and his body language was screaming weakness. His river bet seemed nervously ham-fisted.

**White called, and Villain turns over J♠ 3♠. White won the pot of 3,580,000.**

**MW:** He showed up with a complete airball. I went to dinner break towards the top of the chip counts, and I was feeling good about making a great read.

**CT:** What are some of the things you're looking for or questions you're asking yourself in a spot like this?

**MW:** I'm looking at the hand as a whole. I'm thinking about what makes sense and using each individual data point to get

## POKER STRATEGY

there.

I thought it was unlikely he would go bet/check/bet with an eight. His value hands to take this line seemed to be 5-6 or a random king, most likely.

The physical tells told me he didn't want a call. I didn't like having a ten in my hand, but ultimately, when they show up with a hand like J-3, I have to remind myself that in these sorts of fields, blockers are not as relevant as one might think.

**HAND  
NO.2**

**Stacks:** Marshall White – 40,000,000 (50 BB)

Villain – 25,000,000 (31 BB)

**Blinds:** 400,000-800,000 with an 800,000 big blind ante

**Players remaining:** 3

**Villain raised to 1,800,000 from the button, and the small blind folded.**

**MW:** I was holding pocket tens in the big blind. Obviously, a very strong hand three-handed, playing just over 30 big blinds effective. I was happy to three-bet and get this in.

**White raised to 6,500,000, and the villain called.**

**Flop:** K♦ K♥ J♥

**MW:** It was obviously not the best flop. I thought his peels were going to be a lot of Broadway combos.

**White checked, and Villain checked behind.**

**Turn:** 5♠

**White checked, and Villain bet 3,500,000.**

**MW:** I thought we had a pretty easy call, despite the board texture. I knew I was often going to face a tough river decision, but I was happy to call and assess at that point.

**River:** 3♦

**White checked, and Villain moved all-in.**

**CT:** You asked for a tough decision, and your wish came true.

**MW:** Yes. As was expected, we were now faced with a tough river spot. Tens didn't feel great to have because they block some of the hands I wanted him to show up with. But we do not have the 10♥, which is at least slightly relevant to unblock missed flush draws.

**CT:** Did you pick up any reads?

**MW:** I had been playing with this guy for a while by then, and had picked up a couple of tells. But similar to the first hand, I just felt like he was weak.

I tanked for a bit but ultimately trusted my read and called.

**White called. The villain turned over 9♣ 7♦, and White won the pot of 50,400,000.**

**CT:** Great call.

**MW:** Thanks. That hand gave me a 3:2 chip lead going into heads-up play and helped propel me to victory.

**CT:** You made two amazing hero calls. That had to feel good.

**MW:** I think both of these hands were important because I trusted my reads on both of them and found big calls even with arguably bad bluff catcher candidates. But in these massive field, small buy-in tournaments, you face a lot of player types, and it's important to notice tendencies, develop reads, and trust yourself.

And as evidenced by these two hands, often when I'm trying to construct ranges of opponents, they will show up with something completely off the wall that you didn't even consider. You have to take that randomness into account. ♠

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# MORE RAKE IS NOT BETTER FOR A WIDER RANGE

By Jonathan Little

The ante and rake structure of the game you are playing should impact your strategy quite a bit. If you treat all no-limit hold'em games the same, you will leave a lot of money on the table.

When there is no ante and also a rake, the pots you are fighting for are somewhat small. This is usually the case in low-stakes cash games where rake is taken out of each pot, and the impact is quite large pertaining to which hands you can defend from the big blind.

Suppose the cutoff raises to 2.75 big blinds out of their 100 big blind stack and everyone folds to you in the big blind. With no ante and a rake, assuming your opponent plays well, you can only defend with 29% of hands. Compare that to a tournament with a 1 big blind ante and a no rake, where you can defend with 76% of hands!

28% of hands includes 2-2+, A-2 suited+, A-9 offsuit+, K-2 suited+, K-10 offsuit+, Q-5 suited+, Q-J offsuit, J-8 suited+, 10-7 suited+, 9-6 suited+, 8-5 suited+, 6-4 suited+, and 4-3 suited.

76% of hands includes all pairs and suited hands, A-2 offsuit+, K-2 offsuit+, Q-4 offsuit+, J-7 offsuit+, 10-7 offsuit+, 9-7 offsuit+, 8-6 offsuit+, 7-5 offsuit+, 6-4 offsuit+, 5-3 offsuit+ and 4-3 offsuit.

You will find that almost all players defend their big blind with far more than 28% of hands when facing a raise, which will make it difficult for them to win in the long run.

In both of these ranges, you should three-bet (re-raise) with your best hands as well as a smattering of your suited connectors. If you only three-bet with your best hands, you will be easy to play against because it will be obvious to your opponent that you have a premium holding when you three-bet.

It is also worth noting how small blind strategy changes when there is a rake and no ante. When someone raises before you, you should only three-bet or fold.

You should not call with any hand from the small blind because you are not closing the action and a chunk of the pot will be raked away. You will also entice the big blind to call, resulting in you having the worst position in a three-handed pot.

By three-betting, you win the pot before the flop some portion of the time (and thus pay no rake in most venues), and when you get called, you will usually be heads-up and the pot will be large such that the rake is more negligible (assuming the rake is capped).

As the rake becomes a larger percentage of the pot, you should further tighten your ranges because the pots you are fighting for are smaller. In games with an uncapped rake, you should play extremely tight.

Despite this, you will often see many players in these games seeing every flop to try to make a strong hand. These players are close-to-guaranteed to lose because their money is



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being consistently raked away. The only way to beat a game with a high rake is to play an extremely tight strategy such that you rarely actually pay the rake and you win most of the pots you play.

Simply put, as your pot odds get worse, you must play tighter ranges.

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

# PUNT OF THE DAY: PHIL IVEY HAS QUADS

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.*

The more you do something, the more you grow accustomed to it. I try to not take things in my life for granted, up to and including that people are interested in reading the more than 200 essays, blog posts, and newsletters that I've written for *Punt of the Day*.

I was in awe when people told me stories about playing poker with Phil Ivey. I remember being 17 years old and getting kicked out of the Rio Convention Center for trying to spectate the WSOP. The security guard said I needed to be 21, and he was not fooled by my very bad fake ID.

If you told that devastated 17-year-old that he would eventually play poker with Phil Ivey so often that Phil would know who he is, he would be floored.

I want to thank everyone for reading and supporting *POTD*, and given the theme of the blog is self-criticism, I'd like to take this brief moment to remind myself — hey, you've made it, Phil Ivey knows your name!

In 2023, I tweeted, "20 years after Moneymaker and 8 years after PioSOLVER, the most reliable way to have a poker hand go viral is still aces getting cracked."

Generally, people like watching poker hands where someone has pocket aces. It's better if they lose, but hands where they win still seem to attract more eyeballs than usual. Another way for a poker hand to go viral is for the hand to feature at least one of Phil Ivey, Daniel Negreanu, or Phil Hellmuth. Yet another way for a poker hand to go viral is for a *Casino Royale*-type setup where someone has quads or better and coolers someone else.

Given what I just outlined, it will not surprise you to learn that a hand where I had the second nuts and Phil Ivey had the nuts, quad aces, is probably the most-viewed hand I've ever played. (The YouTube clip has 1.7 million views alone and the hand was picked up by outlets such as *USA Today*.)

There are some other things that led to this hand's popularity. The tournament took place in March of 2020, making it one of the last live tournament series before COVID lockdowns began. So in the following months, when PartyPoker streamed online tournaments and those tournaments went on break, they would show PartyPoker live event highlights.

Of course, a frequent hand they chose to showcase was Phil Ivey busting this poor shmuck who thought his flush was good.

Imagine this scenario: You've been playing online poker for 20 straight days, you have a deep run in a tournament, so you load up YouTube to see your opponent's hole cards from hands played 30 minutes ago. You see someone, let's just say Michael Addamo, bluffed you, or someone else, let's say



© PartyPoker / Oleg ParaMon

Mikita Badziakouski, correctly hero-folded to you.

You're still playing the tournament, but the stream goes on break. Then you see a replay of Phil Ivey cooling you yet again. Every reply in the chat is, "Why is this such a big cooler? Doesn't this Greenwood idiot realize he can lose to a full house?"

You feel like responding to the trolls, "Actually, it's Short Deck, and in Short Deck a flush beats a full house, so I only lose to quads, that's why the announcers are so shocked as well," but you don't.

If that happened to me once, it would have been unpleasant, but it happened to me several times. It happened so many times that when I gave a fireside chat at VClub in Toronto this summer, I got this question.

"How do you feel about this hand being so popular when most of the people who watched it didn't even know a full house loses to a flush?"

That doesn't bother me too much — if people in a YouTube chatbox hate your play in a poker hand, you probably played it well — but there was one thing that irked me about this hand. I actually think I could have found the hero fold, despite having the second nuts.

**Event:** 2020 PartyPoker Millions \$50,000 Short Deck  
**The Hand**

There are three players remaining and we are in the money, sitting on a stack of 4,375,000. There is a 60,000 button ante.

Phil Ivey (7,205,000) completes, Wai Kin Yong (3,360,000) folds, and I check K♠ 8♠ on the button.

**Flop:** A♠ Q♠ 8♠ (pot: 300,000)

Phil bets 200,000, and I call.

**Turn:** A♠ (pot: 700,000)

Phil checks, and I check behind.

**River:** J♠ (pot: 700,000)

Phil bets 400,000. I raise to 1,950,000, and Phil shoves. I call the other half of my stack, and get shown A♥ A♦ to bust in third place.

(Editor's Note: Ivey finished runner-up in this tournament, but would win another \$50,000 short deck event the

next day, and then take fifth in the \$100,000 short deck finale two days later.)

### What Was I Thinking?

Phil had been shoving a lot as the chip leader. Short deck is a game where chip leaders can play very aggressively, and Wai Kin and I only had 70 antes. That being said, it is three-handed, so there is less dead money in the pot than six- or seven-handed. From a stack-to-pot ratio perspective, we are about as deep as having 40 big blinds in no-limit hold'em.

But equities run *a lot* closer in short deck than even a game like pot-limit Omaha, which makes shoving much more attractive. Phil's limp was slightly concerning to me. If you're shoving a ton and suddenly limp, it raises alarm bells. However, it didn't affect my preflop decision-making, as in short deck you almost never bluff-raise suited hands from the button, so I checked.

I flopped a hand with a lot of equity, but one that runs hot and cold. I am not an equity favorite against hands that would stack off, and I don't want to play a massive pot against the chip leader three-handed. I'd rather play in position and see if I can make my hand.

On the turn, I wasn't sure if I could get Phil to fold a better hand than mine, so I checked back with my pair and the nut flush draw. I may have chosen to bluff with weaker flush draws that had less showdown value like 10♣ 6♣.

On the river, Phil can value bet as thin as a straight for this size, so raising any flush is mandatory for me. I figured a roughly pot-sized raise that risked slightly less than half my stack was an appropriate amount.

When I got shoved on, I was very concerned that I was beat. But I was getting such a good price and thought I might

beat some value bets, so I called.

### What Did I Get Wrong?

If you had a short deck ICM calculator, I suspect Ivey would never open limp first in. He would shove a bunch, and he would raise first in with A-K suited and A-A (and bluffs) and call a shove. An ICM calculator says I need to call the river if I have ~36% equity, so let's go through the exercise of figuring out if Phil is value shoving worse or possibly even bluffing?

I think it's unlikely Phil is bluffing. It's a very hard spot to bluff. He almost always takes an aggressive action preflop or on the turn with an ace, so it's unlikely he's value-betting trips and then bluffing with it over a raise. A jack should have enough showdown on the river that he doesn't really want to bluff with it. 10-10 and 9-9 would often be all-in preflop, and he can't have the K♣ blocker when I have it in my hand.

Let me be clear. Phil Ivey is one of, if not the greatest poker player of all time, but even he would have trouble finding an appropriate hand to bluff here.

So that leads to the follow up question, can I beat worse for value?

This is short deck, so there are only six possible flushes he could have — 10-9, 10-7, 10-6, 9-7, 9-6, and 7-6. 10-9 suited is a short deck powerhouse; it has 39% equity all in preflop vs A-A, so he'd shove it for sure. 9-7, 9-6, and 7-6 all have gutshots on the flop (A-6-7-8-9 is a straight in short deck), and he'd likely continue playing aggressively with them on the turn.

That leaves exactly 10-7 or 10-6, which might just call the river or bet the turn, but could plausibly play this way. I think Ivey would almost always play A-A like this if he

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.

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wasn't playing raise first in preflop, which means I need Phil to shove around 0.55 combos of worse hands to give me the 36% that would make my call breakeven.

However, being a short stack in a short deck tournament sucks, and being a big stack is very good. So ICM is undervaluing the expected value of gambling for a big stack, which means I can make calls which ICM would declare negative EV.

I definitely think I could have folded a worse flush on the river, but ultimately I think my hand was just too good and the odds I was getting were just too enticing. If I could bet at even money than Phil Ivey had quads, I might have done it, but that extra 15% chance he didn't was too enticing to pass up.

## Grade

I still don't know how I feel about this hand. It really does feel like Phil should have quads much of the time, and it's his most likely individual combo by a lot. However, there is a very large difference between it being his most likely individual combo and him having it two-thirds of the time.

Short deck, especially in the money, can be tricky. I got the preflop, flop, and turn decisions right. I should have thought a little longer on the river, but I think my instinct when playing a game I'm less skilled at is to avoid making heroic plays that could spectacularly blow up.

I also didn't want to risk doing something like accidentally slowrolling a legend of the game, which is a silly thought to have when playing for such high stakes. (I've been nit-rolled and slowrolled dozens of times in my life and usually handle it adequately, so I am sure Phil Ivey could do the same.)

My technical analysis was sound and the hand was well played, but I think I got some of the soft things wrong that could have allowed me to make one of the greatest folds of all time to the GOAT.

I'm going to give myself a B. ♠



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.

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

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# TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 WPT Seminole Hard Rock 'n' Roll Poker Open  
\$3,500 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 39%  
After Flop: 9%  
After Turn: 18%



Joel Gola  
29,700,000 Chips



Aram Zobian  
12,000,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 62%  
After Flop: 91%  
After Turn: 82%

## PREFLOP

With three players remaining and blinds of 150,000-300,000 with a big blind ante of 300,000, Joel Gola raised to 800,000 from the button. Aram Zobian called from the big blind.

FLOP



Zobian checked, Gola bet 800,000, and Zobian called.

TURN



Both players checked.

RIVER



Zobian bet 2,000,000, and Gola called.

## COMMENTARY:

With three players remaining in the WPT Seminole Hard Rock 'n' Roll Poker Open, Aram Zobian had by far the shortest stack. But he had 40 big blinds to work with, so the players were quite deep. He defended a suited queen against Joel Gola's button open. The Q-3-2 texture called for a flop strategy heavy on continuation-betting. Gola's unpaired hand, which nonetheless had a backdoor flush draw and overcards to two of the flop cards, fit nicely into a betting range. Zobian made an appropriate call, as stronger Q-x could raise and get it in, but an eight was too risky of a kicker to play that way. Zobian could have led when the trey paired on the turn. Leading when the middle and bottom cards pair is a common mechanic in many big-blind defense hands. They'll usually have more of these cards in their range, and the preflop raiser often doesn't have a lot of incentive to bet these medium-strength pairs. Zobian decided to check, and Gola missed a clear double-barreling opportunity. The worst flush draws are generally the best ones to bluff since they benefit the most from ending the hand, and Gola was almost as low in his range as he could get in that sense. Having a big chip lead also meant he could afford the hit if barreling didn't work out. On the river, Zobian had a clear bet, as his hand should almost always be best and could get value from weaker pairs and perhaps some ace-high hands. He went with a large size, and Gola snap-called. The solver is actually indifferent between calling and turning 7-5 into an all-in bluff, as a pair of sevens will lose to a pair of queens pretty often in this line. Gola didn't seem to consider that option and bled away some of his chips with the payoff.

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

# SPICE UP YOUR HOME GAME: STUD LOWBALL VARIANTS

By Kevin Haney

The most well-known stud lowball variant is **Razz**, a straight-forward game where the object is to make the best ace-to-five low and neither straights nor flushes count against you. It's a simple game to learn, but overall, not as simple as many would think as tremendous skill is required to play it at an elite level.

Thirty years ago, Razz was considered a dying game, but it got a second chance at life when H.O.R.S.E. (Hold'em; Omaha Eight or Better; Razz; Stud; Stud Eight or Better) rotations became popular in the late 1990s as high-stakes players looked to defend themselves against specialists. These days it seems to have an "it's kind of lame but it's cool" vibe about it.

Over the years attendance numbers in the \$1,500 *WSOP* razz events have steadily grown, and now usually garner around the same number of entrants as a \$1,500 limit hold'em event. However, it's not a very popular game in either home games or the low- or medium-stakes mixed cash games where the most favored stud lowball variants are **Razz-deucey** and **Razz-dacey**.

Razz-deucey is a split-pot game where the object is to make the best deuce-to-seven low and the best badugi. Straights and flushes count against you, and aces are high making 2-3-4-5 the most powerful badugi.

Razz-dacey is a split-pot game where the object is to make

the best ace-to-five low and the best badugi. However, aces are low in this variation, making A-2-3-4 the nuts in badugi.

Both games are usually played as 'super' meaning everyone gets four down cards and must discard two before fourth street. (Otherwise their hand is automatically dead.) They can also be played as Pineapple (three cards down and discard one) or just plain old two down.

In Razz-deucey, the A♠ is the automatic bring-in card while in Razz-dacey it is the K♠.

New players understandably get confused at the name Razz-deucey because Razz makes them think they want to make an ace-to-five low, and there's also no mention of a badugi being involved. When attempting to clarify the rules, it often hits home when telling them it's Badeucey spread stud style.

So perhaps it should be called Super Stud Badeucey? And then Razz-dacey could go back to being referred as Super Razz-dugi, the name it was often referred to back in the days before deuce-to-seven Razz became popular.

Recently I almost played an entire round of Razz-deucey while everyone else was playing Razz-dacey. It's easy to miss it on the plaque, especially when most of the time the game of choice is Razz-deucey, but was fortunate to win the few pots I played before realizing my error.

## TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2025 WPT Seminole Hard Rock 'n' Roll Poker Open  
\$3,500 No-Limit Hold'em Main Event



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 62%  
After Flop: 10%  
After Turn: 0%

Joel Gola  
29,000,000 Chips



Kevin Nee  
21,725,000 Chips



Winning Percentage  
Before Flop: 36%  
After Flop: 90%  
After Turn: 100%

### PREFLOP

With three players remaining and blinds of 200,000-400,000 with a big blind ante of 400,000, Joel Gola raised to 800,000 from the small blind. Kevin Nee called from the big blind.

FLOP



Gola bet 900,000, and Nee called.

TURN



Gola bet 3,500,000, and Nee called.

RIVER



Gola bet 9,000,000, and Nee called.

### COMMENTARY:

With three players still left in the *WPT Seminole Hard Rock 'n' Roll Poker Open*, Aram Zobian was the short stack with 26 big blinds. Kevin Nee had 54 big blinds, and Joel Gola had the lead with 73 big blinds. That meant Nee had to tread cautiously in any heads-up pot against Gola, but he had a mandatory defend in the big blind when Gola raised small from the small blind. Making it only two blinds doesn't accomplish much when playing deep-stacked, since the big blind can't really fold getting a great price and isn't under any immediate danger with tons of chips behind. Suited cards are the best ones to limp in with as well, so Gola made a small mistake with his preflop sizing and hand selection. He decided to keep the pressure on despite flopping nothing, and Nee played it slow with a call. He could certainly have raised, but in good position for a \$100,000 pay jump, he had incentive to play small-ball. Gola turned nothing but kept blasting. While Nee was under a lot of pressure to wait out Zobian, Gola should still have confined his bluffs to mostly straight draws, since he'd have so many on this board. Nee continued to give Gola rope, but he found himself looking at a rather unfortunate river that counterfeited his two pair, along with a big bet from Gola. If he had any idea how out of line Gola was getting, he'd have snap-called, but to that point, Gola had been pretty buttoned up. Nee's hand did have decent blocker properties, but the small blind could take this line with a ton of top pairs. In the end, Nee went with his hand, and it proved to be the turning point in the final table. He took the chip lead and went on to win, while Gola had to settle for \$395,000 and second place.

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

## POKER STRATEGY

When playing these games as 'super' it's important to start out with three rainbow cards most of the time. In Razz-deucey you want to see a three to an eight or better, but nines hold value as well, especially if the worst card is hidden. For example, a hand such as (2♠ 9♦) 3♥ is probably superior to (6♥ 7♠) 8♣.

We don't always need three unsuited cards to play, especially when there's a chance to win the antes without a contest, or we are up against a single opponent who may be weak. Be careful of falling into the trap of playing with a high card up, like (2♣ 4♠) Q♦ in multi-way pots, just because you have two good cards underneath and three to a badugi. Anyone starting out with three low rainbow cards has an approximate 50/50 shot of making at least a jack badugi by the river.

Dead cards matter a lot in this game and most paramount is how many of your premium badugi cards look to be available. For example, if you hold (2♣ 4♠) 5♦ you don't want to see the 3♥, 6♥, 7♥ or the 8♥ on board or fall to your opponents during the hand. There are only four of them to track, so we should always know exactly how many are left as it will frequently determine your best course of action.

Also consider the fact that if someone who showed strength on third street has a 4♥ door card, they usually don't have one of the hearts you need underneath. It's possible to brick out a few times and call a fifth street bet against strong boards when your key cards are live that would give you a premium badugi and possible freeroll.

One big problem in all lowball stud variants is that a high card showing usually renders the holding unplayable. **Action Razz** attempts to remedy that flaw by implementing a qualifier where a hand must contain a jack, queen, or king, and any

qualifying hand beats a non-qualifier.

In other words, a king-low would beat an ace-to-five wheel lacking a paint. If no one can produce a qualifying hand at showdown, then the traditional lowest Razz holding takes the pot.

The highest card starting with the 10♠ brings in the action as it is considered the worst card to have. While it can be played as 'super,' it's advisable to play it with just two down cards, otherwise it's too easy to get a face card. And most of the fun in the game is trying to guess whether your opponent already has one of the key cards or still needs to collect some paint by the river.

It's worth clarifying that you only need the face card to qualify, it's not required to be part of your final five-card low. For example, (A-3)J-4-5-7(9), would be a qualified made seven, not a jack low. A-2-4 or other premium starting hands are still playable as they will obtain a paint card by seventh street around 70% of the time.

Action Razz isn't that widely known but the few times that we played it, it certainly lived up to its name and was a lot of fun. If your home game is populated with an adventurous and easy-going crew, it's certainly worth a try. ♠



Kevin Haney is a former actuary but left the corporate job to focus on his passions for poker and fitness. The certified personal trainer owned a gym in New Jersey, but has since moved to Las Vegas. He started playing the game back in 2003, and particularly enjoys taking new players interested in mixed games under his wing and quickly making them proficient in all variants. Learn more or just say hello with an email to [haneyk612@gmail.com](mailto:haneyk612@gmail.com).

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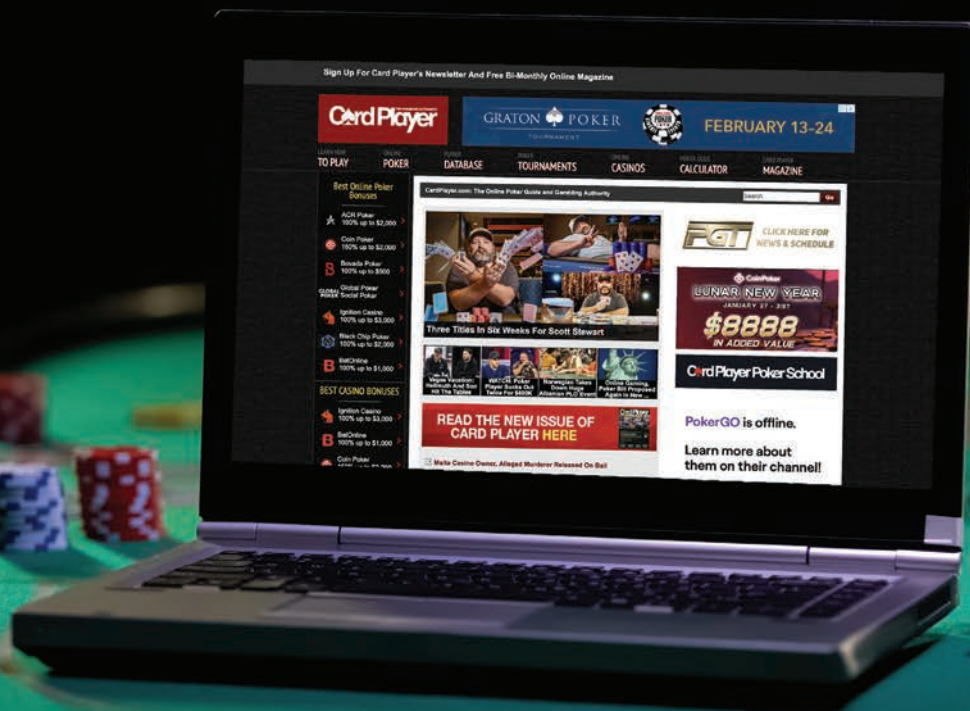
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DECEMBER	Dec. 24-Jan. 19	DeepStack Extravaganza NYE	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
JANUARY	Jan. 1-12	WSOP Circuit Las Vegas	Planet Hollywood ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Jan. 3-18	Winter Poker Open	Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa ■ Atlantic City, NJ
	Jan. 5-10	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. 7-19	WSOP Circuit Oklahoma	Choctaw Casino & Resort ■ Durant, OK
	Jan. 7-19	Beau Rivage Heater	Beau Rivage Resort & Casino ■ Biloxi, MS
	Jan. 7-March 1	L.A. Poker Classic	Commerce Casino ■ Commerce, CA
	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. 15-26	WSOP Circuit Northern California	Thunder Valley Casino & Resort ■ Lincoln, CA
	Jan. 19	Martin Luther King Jr. Tournament	Ocean's Eleven Casino ■ Oceanside, CA
	Jan. 19-Feb. 8	DeepStack Showdown	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Jan. 22-Feb. 2	WSOP Circuit Tunica	Horseshoe Casino & Hotel ■ Robinsonville, MS
	Jan. 26-31	PGT Kickoff Series	Aria PokerGO Studio ■ Las Vegas, NV
	Jan. 29-Feb. 1	Diamond Poker Championship	Talking Stick Resort ■ Scottsdale, AZ
	Jan. 29-Feb. 9	WSOP Circuit Florida	Harrah's ■ Pompano Beach, FL
FEBRUARY	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. 12-23	WSOP Circuit North Carolina	Harrah's ■ Cherokee, NC
	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
	Feb. 19-March 2	WSOP Circuit Baltimore	Horseshoe Casino ■ Baltimore, MD
MARCH	March 11-15	MSPT Festival Larchwood	Grand Falls Casino ■ Larchwood, IA
	March 12-23	WSOP Circuit New York	Turning Stone Casino & Resort ■ Verona, NY
	March 17-22	MSPT Festival Riverside	Riverside Casino & Resort ■ Riverside, IA

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

**Air** - A bad hand with little to no value.

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

**Backdoor** - A draw needing two streets to complete.

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

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

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

**Blocker** - Holding one of your opponent's outs.

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

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

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

**Broadway** - A straight to the ace.

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

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

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

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

**Chop** - A split of the pot.

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

**Collusion** - Working with another player to cheat.

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

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

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

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

**Drawing Dead** - When your hand can no longer win.

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

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

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

**Equity** - The mathematical expected value of your hand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Gutshot** - An inside straight draw.

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

**Hollywood** - Exaggerating and overacting to sell strength or weakness.

**Horse** - A player financially backed by someone else.

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

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

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

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

**LAG** - A loose, aggressive player.

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

**Muck** - To fold.

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

**Nuts** - The best possible hand on a given board.

**Open** - To bet first.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Rainbow** - Three or four cards of different suits.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**TAG** - A tight, aggressive player.

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

**Tilt** - Frustration or anger that leads to poor play.

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

**VPIP** - The percentage of hands voluntarily played preflop.

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

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



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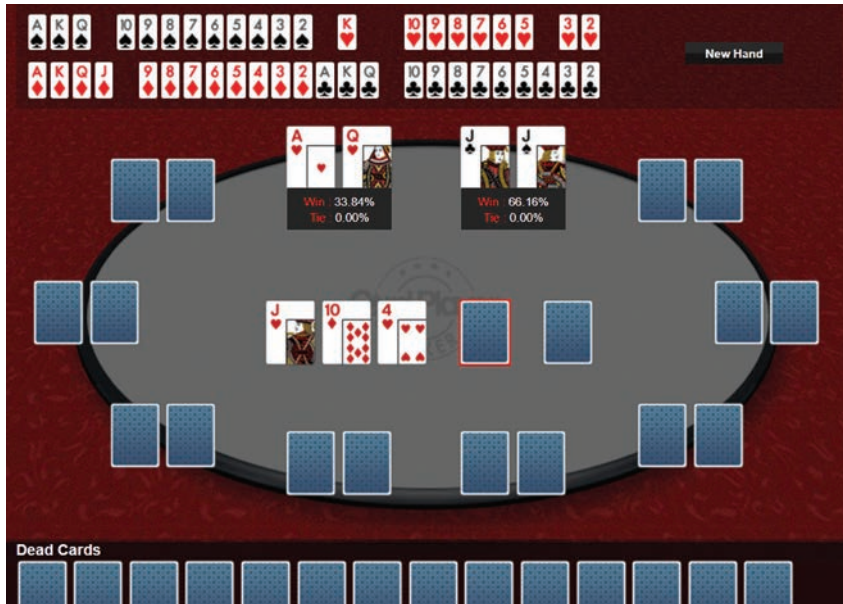
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## CALCULATING ODDS

Outs	Situation	After The Flop	After The Turn
21	Straight And Flush Draw, With Two Overcards	70%	45%
20		68%	43%
19		65%	41%
18	Straight And Flush Draw, With One Overcard	62%	39%
17		60%	37%
16		57%	35%
15	Straight And Flush Draw	54%	33%
14		51%	30%
13		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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## BAD TWO PAIR

By Jonathan Little

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



In a \$500 buy-in event, you have a stack of 20,000 at blinds of 200-400 with a 400 big blind ante. The first player folds and you look down at 5♠ 4♠ UTG+1.

**Question 1:** Should you fold, call, raise to 800, or raise to 1,400?

**Answer:** When you have 50 big blinds, suited connectors down to 5-4 suited are somewhat playable, assuming you do not expect to get three-bet too often.

Since most players tend to fold or call too often, raising is usually ideal. Make it two big blinds in order to allow you to reasonably stick around if you happen to get three-bet.

You raise to 800 and the cutoff three-bets to 1,900.

**Question 2:** Should you fold, call, four-bet to 4,700, or go all-in?

**Answer:** While your 5-4 suited is certainly behind at the moment, you are getting decent pot odds and implied odds. When considering four-bet bluffing, you would much prefer to have a suited ace or king, giving you a relevant blocker to your opponent's continuing range.

You call and the flop comes 8♣ 6♦ 5♥. You check with your entire range, although note that leading a decent amount of the time is best. The cutoff bets 1,400.

**Question 3:** Should you fold, call, raise to 3,800, or go all-in?

**Answer:** Pairs with draws should always consider raising, but since you could easily be way behind and your opponent will essentially never fold a better hand, it is best to call and see what develops.

You call and the turn is the 4♦ giving you two pair. You check and the cutoff checks behind. The river is the 9♥.

**Question 4:** Should you check, bet 2,000, bet 4,000, or bet 8,000?

**Answer:** Even though there is a four-card straight on the board, you should bet for value. It is quite possible your opponent has an overpair that will pay you off.

When choosing your size, bet a size that you think one pair can reasonably call. While it may be tempting to bet large to try to extract maximum value, most overpairs will fold to that bet, making a small bet the best play.

You bet 2,000 and your opponent quickly folds. ♠



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Overbetting In Deep Stacked Cash Games  
WSOP Circuit Win Review with Jonathan Little  
How to Study and 'Memorize' Preflop Ranges  
Analysis of Live Tournament Hands  
Exploiting Recreational Players Deep Stacked  
How to Make The Most of a Small Bankroll  
GGPoker SuperMillion\$ 1st Place Review  
\$2/\$5 Live Cash Game Hand Review  
\$1K NL Hand History Review

### **FREE DOWNLOADABLE E-BOOKS**

Strategies For Beating Small Stakes Tournaments  
Strategies For Beating Small Stakes Cash Games

### **FREE INTERACTIVE HAND QUIZZES**

WSOP \$10,000 Main Event Day 1  
WSOP \$3,000 6max - Playing In Position 3bet Pot  
\$525 WSOPc Online: Playing a Mid Pair in Position  
\$320 WSOPc 6MAX MTT: Exploitive Multiway Spot  
Playing Cautiously - \$5,000 Tournament  
3-Bet Pot \$5,000 Tournament  
Bellagio \$10,000 5-Diamond  
Wynn \$1,600  
\$2/\$5 NL  
\$2/\$5 NL

### **FREE COURSES**

Master The Fundamentals  
The 25 Biggest Leaks and How to Fix Them  
5 Day Preflop Challenge

**CardPlayer.PokerCoaching.com/Courses**

