

Card Player THE POKER AUTHORITY

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PLUS

**2026 WSOP SCHEDULE
RELEASED - 100
BRACELET EVENTS**
.....

**BERNHARD BINDER:
MICROS TO MILLIONS
IN JUST FOUR YEARS**
.....

**JEAN-ROBERT
BELLANDE TAKES DOWN
ONYX HIGH ROLLER**



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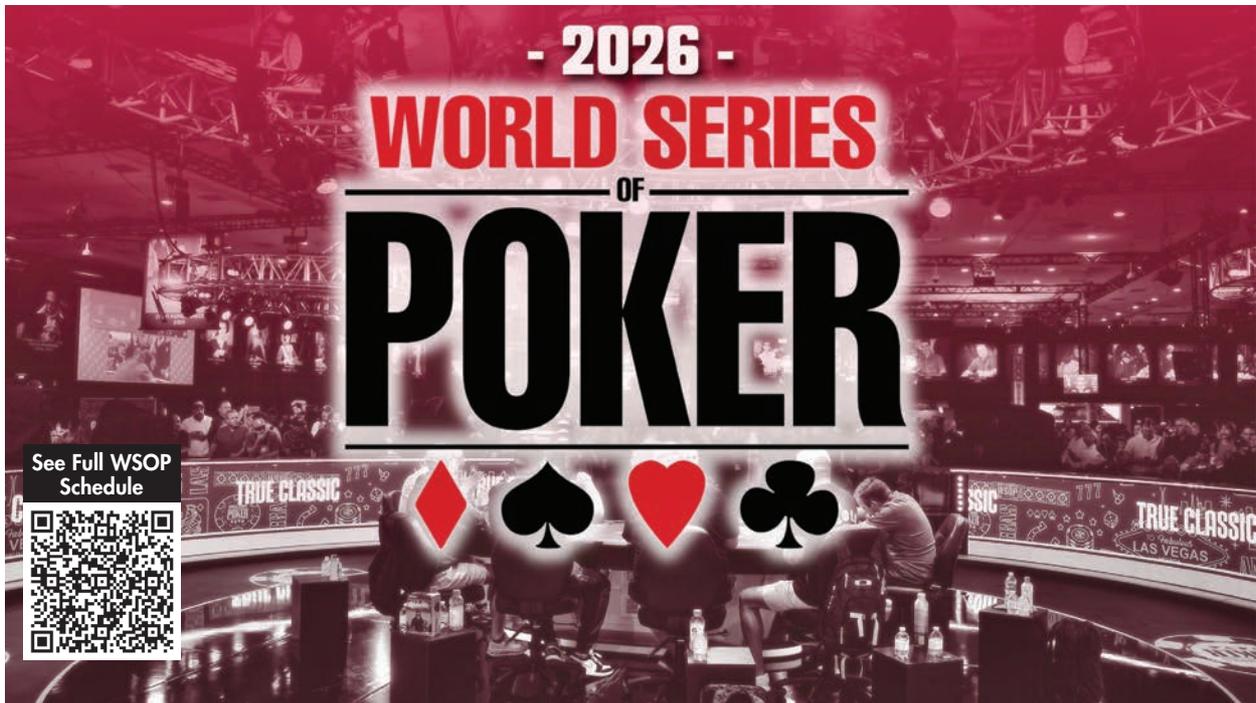


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WORLD SERIES OF POKER REVEALS FULL 2026 SCHEDULE OF 100 BRACELET EVENTS

57th Annual Summer Series Runs May 26 - July 15

By Erik Fast



The wait is over.

The full schedule for the 2026 *World Series of Poker* has finally been released, with 100 live bracelet events planned for the 57th annual running of the summer tournament series. There was some chatter of a decrease in the amount of bracelets to be awarded after 17-time bracelet winner Phil Hellmuth broached the subject last fall, but this year's total matches that of 2025.

The marquee festival of the global tournament circuit is once again slated to run at Horseshoe and Paris on the Las Vegas Strip, with action continuing from May 26 through July 15.

"As we saw in 2025, thousands of incredible stories are waiting to be told at the *World Series of Poker*," said *WSOP* CEO Ty Stewart. "We're more committed than ever to being poker's unquestioned biggest stage and to shining a brighter spotlight on our favorite game."

"Our favorite time of year is around the corner, and we cannot wait to once again welcome the poker world back to the Horseshoe Las Vegas and Paris Las Vegas," added *WSOP* Tournament Director and Senior Vice President Jack Effel. "This summer's *World Series of Poker* promises more action and more opportunities to play your favorite events than ever before, from the first 'Shuffle up and deal!' to the crowning of the main event champion."

The 2026 series marks the second *WSOP* in Las Vegas run by NSUS Group Inc., parent company of GGPoker, after Caesars Entertainment sold the rights for \$500 million back in 2024.



Delayed Main Event Final Table To Return In 2026?

This year's main event may see the return of a delayed final table, à la the 'November Nine' approach that was used from 2008 to 2016. That era saw the final nine set in the summer, with the winner not determined until the fall. The *WSOP* canned the model in 2017, opting instead to play out the final table in the days after it was set.

The exact length of the delay is not yet known, but the 2026 schedule shows the final table being set without a confirmed date for when the champion will be crowned. The main event will kick off on July 2 this year, with the final table of nine determined on July 13.

The 2025 *WSOP* main event was won by Michael Mizrachi, who was inducted into the Poker Hall of Fame on the spot after having come out on top in both the \$10,000 main event and the \$50,000 *Poker Players Championship* last summer.

'The Grinder' defeated a field of 9,735 entries to earn \$10

million and his eighth career bracelet. Four of his wins have come in the *PPC*, which he took down in 2010, 2012, 2018, and 2025.

2026 POY Race To Award \$1 Million In Prizes

Another update for this year is the addition of \$1 million in prizes to be awarded via the year-long points race, with the eventual winner to secure a \$100,000 *WSOP Paradise* package in addition to adding their name to the prestigious list of prior *WSOP* POY champions.

The POY race begins at the new-look *WSOP Europe*, which takes place in Prague from March 31 to April 12. The top 100 finishers at the end of the year will earn their share of the seven-figure prize pool put up by series organizers.

WSOP Live Streams Go In-House In 2026

This year's *WSOP* will feature free daily streaming coverage on the official *WSOP* YouTube channel from May 26 through the beginning of the main event. This daily broadcast is set to highlight an updated TV table from Paris Las Vegas, with expert commentary from top players and analysts, including Jeff Platt, who took a new role with the *WSOP* in January.

In a social media post, Platt confirmed, "Yes, we are moving the stage to Paris. And the stage... GUYS THE STAGE IS GOING TO BE AWESOME. And you'll get to see it every day from home, for free!"

Any Game, Any Stakes

There is something for everyone on the 2026 *WSOP*



schedule, with pretty much every major game and format represented and a wide range of price points to choose from.

A total of 32 of the 100 live events this summer will cost \$10,000 or more to enter, while 25 events are \$1,000 or less to play. The lowest buy-in event offered will be the \$300 *Gladiators of Poker* that kicks off on July 8.

The series will kick off with the \$550 *Mini Mystery Millions*, which has the potential to be one of the biggest fields in history after the \$1,000 edition drew nearly 20,000 last year.

On the other end of the spectrum sits the \$250,000 buy-in high roller that gets underway on June 13. The tournament is one of three six-figure buy-ins scheduled.

It would cost a player \$1,101,950 to fire a single bullet in every bracelet event this summer. \$800,000 of that total would come from the 13 high rollers, which cost \$25,000 or more to enter.

Other new events include a \$1,500 five-card pot-limit Omaha event on June 18, and a \$1,500 *Pick Your PLO* tournament on July 9.

WSOP Circuit Add On

For those who need even more poker after the series is over, tournament officials also announced a *WSOP Circuit* stop that will run immediately after the *WSOP* concludes, from July 14-25.

The *WSOP Circuit* series will feature a \$400 mini main event, a \$2,200 high roller, and a \$1,700 main event. ♠

Event	Buy-In	Event Description	Date	Start Time
1	\$550	Mini Mystery Millions	Tue, May 26	12 p.m.
2	\$5,000	Eight-Handed No-Limit Hold'em	Tue, May 26	2 p.m.
3	\$500	Industry Employees No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, May 27	12 p.m.
4	\$1,500	Omaha 8 or Better (7-Handed)	Wed, May 27	2 p.m.
5	\$5,000	Pot-Limit Omaha (8-Handed)	Thu, May 28	12 p.m.
6	\$1,500	Seven Card Stud	Thu, May 28	2 p.m.
7	\$25,000	Heads Up No-Limit Hold'em Championship	Fri, May 29	12 p.m.
8	\$1,500	Badugi	Fri, May 29	2 p.m.
9	\$10,000	Omaha 8 or Better Championship (7-Handed)	Sat, May 30	2 p.m.
10	\$600	Deepstack No-Limit Hold'em	Sun, May 31	10 a.m.
11	\$10,000	GGMillion\$ High Roller No-Limit Hold'em	Sun, May 31	12 p.m.
12	\$1,500	No-Limit 2-7 Lowball Draw (7-Handed)	Sun, May 31	2 p.m.
13	\$1,500	Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em	Mon, June 1	10 a.m.
14	\$1,500	Mixed PLO 8 or Better, Omaha 8 or Better, Big O	Mon, June 1	2 p.m.
15	\$600	Deepstack Pot-Limit Omaha (8-Handed)	Tue, June 2	10 a.m.
16	\$1,700	U.S. Circuit Championship No-Limit Hold'em	Tue, June 2	12 p.m.

17	\$10,000	No-Limit 2-7 Lowball Draw Championship	Tue, June 2	2 p.m.
18	\$1,500	Monster Stack No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, June 3	10 a.m.
19	\$25,000	High Roller No-Limit Hold'em (8-Handed)	Wed, June 3	12 p.m.
20	\$1,500	Dealer's Choice (7-Handed)	Wed, June 3	2 p.m.
21	\$1,500	Pot-Limit Omaha 8 or Better	Thu, June 4	2 p.m.
22	\$1,500	Big O	Fri, June 5	12 p.m.
23	\$10,000	Seven Card Stud Championship	Fri, June 5	2 p.m.
24	\$25,000	High Roller Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em	Sat, June 6	12 p.m.
25	\$500	Freezeout No-Limit Hold'em	Sun, June 7	10 a.m.
26	\$2,000	No-Limit Hold'em	Sun, June 7	12 p.m.
27	\$10,000	Dealer's Choice Championship (7-Handed)	Sun, June 7	2 p.m.
28	\$600	Deepstack Mixed NLH; PLO (8-Handed)	Mon, June 8	10 a.m.
29	\$50,000	High Roller No-Limit Hold'em (8-Handed)	Mon, June 8	12 p.m.
30	\$1,500	Limit Hold'em (7-Handed)	Mon, June 8	2 p.m.
31	\$1,500	Super Turbo Bounty NLH (\$500 Bounty)	Tue, June 9	10 a.m.
32	\$3,000	No-Limit Hold'em	Tue, June 9	12 p.m.
33	\$10,000	PLO 8 or Better Championship	Tue, June 9	2 p.m.
34	\$500	COLOSSUS No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, June 10	10 a.m.
35	\$1,500	Pot-Limit Omaha (8-Handed)	Wed, June 10	12 p.m.
36	\$100,000	High Roller No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, June 10	1 p.m.
37	\$1,500	H.O.R.S.E. (8-Handed)	Wed, June 10	2 p.m.
38	\$10,000	Limit Hold'em Championship (7-Handed)	Thu, June 11	2 p.m.
39	\$5,000	Seniors High Roller No-Limit Hold'em	Fri, June 12	12 p.m.
40	\$1,500	Razz	Fri, June 12	2 p.m.
41	\$250,000	Super High Roller No-Limit Hold'em	Sat, June 13	12 p.m.
42	\$10,000	Big O Championship	Sat, June 13	2 p.m.
43	\$800	Eight-Handed Deepstack No-Limit Hold'em	Sun, June 14	10 a.m.
44	\$10,000	Super Turbo Bounty NLH (\$3,000 Bounty)	Sun, June 14	12 p.m.
45	\$2,500	Mixed Omaha And Stud 8 or Better	Sun, June 14	2 p.m.
46	\$1,000	Seniors No-Limit Hold'em Championship	Mon, June 15	10 a.m.
47	\$25,000	High Roller Pot-Limit Omaha (8-Handed)	Mon, June 15	12 p.m.
48	\$10,000	Razz Championship	Mon, June 15	2 p.m.
49	\$2,500	Freezeout No-Limit Hold'em	Tue, June 16	2 p.m.
50	\$1,500	Millionaire Maker No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, June 17	10 a.m.
51	\$10,000	Mystery Bounty No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, June 17	12 p.m.
52	\$3,000	Nine-Game Mix (7-Handed)	Wed, June 17	2 p.m.
53	\$1,500	Five-Card Pot-Limit Omaha (8-Handed)	Thu, June 18	12 p.m.
54	\$10,000	H.O.R.S.E. Championship (8-Handed)	Thu, June 18	2 p.m.
55	\$50,000	High Roller Pot-Limit Omaha	Fri, June 19	12 p.m.
56	\$3,000	Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em	Fri, June 19	2 p.m.
57	\$1,000	Pot-Limit Omaha (8-Handed)	Sat, June 20	12 p.m.
58	\$1,500	Limit 2-7 Lowball Triple Draw (6-Handed)	Sat, June 20	2 p.m.

59	\$500	Salute To Warriors No-Limit Hold'em	Sun, June 21	10 a.m.
60	\$50,000	Poker Players Championship (7-Handed)	Sun, June 21	2 p.m.
61	\$1,000	Super Seniors No-Limit Hold'em	Mon, June 22	10 a.m.
62	\$2,500	No-Limit Hold'em	Mon, June 22	2 p.m.
63	\$1,000	Mystery Millions	Tue, June 23	10 a.m.
64	\$25,000	High Roller PLO/NLH Mixed (8-Handed)	Tue, June 23	12 p.m.
65	\$1,500	Freezeout No-Limit Hold'em	Tue, June 23	2 p.m.
66	\$1,000	Tag Team No-Limit Hold'em (per team)	Wed, June 24	12 p.m.
67	\$10,000	Limit 2-7 Lowball Triple Draw Championship	Wed, June 24	2 p.m.
68	\$1,000	Ladies No-Limit Hold'em Championship	Thu, June 25	12 p.m.
69	\$1,500	Seven Card Stud 8 or Better	Thu, June 25	2 p.m.
70	\$10,000	Pot-Limit Omaha Championship (8-Handed)	Fri, June 26	2 p.m.
71	\$2,500	Mixed Big Bet Event (6-Handed)	Sat, June 27	2 p.m.
72	\$1,000	Mini Main Event No-Limit Hold'em	Sun, June 28	10 a.m.
73	\$5,000	Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em	Sun, June 28	12 p.m.
74	\$1,500	Eight-Game Mixed (7-Handed)	Sun, June 28	2 p.m.
75	\$10,000	Seven Card Stud 8 or Better Championship	Mon, June 29	2 p.m.
76	\$100,000	High Roller Pot-Limit Omaha	Tue, June 30	12 p.m.
77	\$2,500	Mixed Triple Draw Lowball	Tue, June 30	2 p.m.
78	\$600	Deepstack Championship No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, July 1	10 a.m.
79	\$3,000	Freezeout No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, July 1	12 p.m.
80	\$10,000	Eight-Game Mixed Championship (7-Handed)	Wed, July 1	2 p.m.
81	\$800	Summer Celebration No-Limit Hold'em	Thu, July 2	10 a.m.
82	\$10,000	Main Event No-Limit Hold'em	Thu, July 2	11 a.m.
83	\$1,500	Double Board Bomb Pot PLO (8-Handed)	Thu, July 2	2 p.m.
84	\$5,000	Super Turbo Bounty NLH (\$1,500 Bounty)	Fri, July 3	2 p.m.
85	\$1,000	No-Limit Hold'em	Sat, July 4	10 a.m.
86	\$600	Ultra Stack No-limit Hold'em	Sun, July 5	10 a.m.
87	\$1,000	Mystery Bounty Pot-Limit Omaha	Tue, July 7	2 p.m.
88	\$300	Gladiators of Poker No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, July 8	10 a.m.
89	\$3,000	Mid-Stakes Championship No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, July 8	12 p.m.
90	\$50,000	High Roller No-Limit Hold'em (8-Handed)	Thu, July 9	1 p.m.
91	\$1,500	Pick Your PLO (8-Handed)	Thu, July 9	2 p.m.
92	\$3,000	T.O.R.S.E. (8-Handed)	Fri, July 10	2 p.m.
93	\$1,500	The Closer No-Limit Hold'em	Sat, July 11	12 p.m.
94	\$10,000	Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em Championship	Sat, July 11	2 p.m.
95	\$500	Summer Saver No-Limit Hold'em	Sun, July 12	10 a.m.
96	\$3,000	Six-Handed Pot-Limit Omaha	Sun, July 12	2 p.m.
97	\$25,000	High Roller H.O.R.S.E. (8-Handed)	Mon, July 13	2 p.m.
98	\$800	Deepstack No-Limit Hold'em	Tue, July 14	10 a.m.
99	\$5,000	Eight-Handed No-Limit Hold'em	Tue, July 14	2 p.m.
100	\$1,000	Super Turbo No-Limit Hold'em	Wed, July 15	10 a.m.

BLACKJACK RULE CHANGES MAY DOOM CALIFORNIA CARDROOMS

By Sean Chaffin

Changes are coming to California's gaming industry after the state approved new rules that will prohibit traditional blackjack in cardrooms.

The Office of Administrative Law approved the changes, which will have a major impact on a game played in nearly 75 cardrooms across the state.

Venues can no longer use the word "blackjack" or "21" in game titles. Additionally, third-party providers can't operate as the bank consecutively. This has traditionally been one of the main methods cardrooms used to operate these games.

The rules are also changing. Players will no longer receive an automatic win if dealt a blackjack. There is also no more "busting" by going over. Instead, a winner is determined by being the closest to the "target point count" compared to the player-dealer, the player acting as the house. Additional player-dealers must be given the right to back the game every 40 minutes, or the game must end.

The rules take effect on April 1, and cardrooms have until May 31 to submit compliance plans.

Industry stakeholders expect the changes to drastically shift the current landscape. According to the California Gaming Association (CGA), the state's cardrooms employ more than 23,000 people, generate more than \$2 billion in annual economic activity, and contribute over \$300 million in federal, state, and local tax revenue every year.

The CGA says the changes could result in up to 50% of employees losing their jobs. The association noted that the Bureau of Gambling Control pushed for the new rules



without explanation or public input.

"Attorney General [Rob] Bonta and the bureau have unilaterally implemented extreme regulatory changes that will harm thousands of working families and the dozens of California communities that depend on cardroom taxes," CGA President Kyle Kirkland told *Courthouse News Service*. "By the bureau's own simplistic economic assessment, these unnecessary regulations will eliminate over half of all cardroom jobs and force many communities to cut police, fire, parks, senior, and food programs when the long-standing tax base disappears."

The new rules will severely limit action, as many players would not want to take the financial risk of potentially paying the whole table while acting as banker. Furthermore, there's less incentive for third parties to back the games since their expected earnings just dropped.

The new rules come after California's tribal gaming operators have pushed to abolish cardroom blackjack and other games entirely. Under California's legal landscape, tribes have exclusivity over slot machines and house-backed table games. ♠

WYNN MACAU CLOSES POKER ROOM

By Sean Chaffin

Wynn Macau closed the property's poker room in late January, dropping the number of rooms now open in China's gambling mecca to three.

It's the third poker room to close in the last two years, as poker has seen a downward trend on the island. Poker rooms at MGM Macau and Grand Lisboa Palace closed in 2025, according to GGR Asia.

The three casinos in Macau that continue to offer poker are Venetian Macao, MGM Cotai, and Wynn Palace Cotai.

Poker action contracted significantly during the COVID pandemic, and was slow to recover in the years that followed. There had been signs of a rebound in 2025, though.

The closing of the poker room at Wynn Macau happened despite poker bringing in \$121 million, the highest total since 2008, and an increase of 10.4% year, according to the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ).

However, the game has seen some inconsistency through the years and COVID took a major toll on the industry. The island brought in just \$55.4 million in poker revenue in 2019, and it dropped to just \$4.3 million in 2020.



Following the pandemic, tournament poker didn't return to the former Portuguese colony until 2024. The *World Poker Tour* scheduled a series on the island the same year, but was forced to cancel the event.

"A number of industry commentators has speculated that Macau's barring – under the present regulatory system that came in with the new concessions – on its casino operators sharing revenue with third parties, had created a hurdle for poker brands aspiring to hold events in Macau," *GGR Asia* reported. ♠



NEVADA CASINOS SUFFER SLUGGISH SUPER BOWL BETTING

By Sean Chaffin

Super Bowl LX saw the Seattle Seahawks defeat the New England Patriots 29-13, and while Seahawks fans were enthusiastic about the win, Nevada casinos suffered from weak betting numbers across the board.

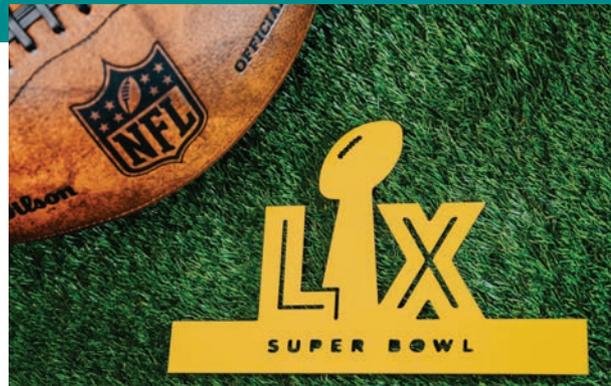
The Nevada Gaming Control Board reported that \$133.8 million was wagered on the game, the lowest since 2016's handle of \$132.5 million. Casinos collected 7.4% of that in wins, a steep drop from last year's 14.6%.

Although it's the second-highest hold percentage over the last five years, Silver State books collected \$9.9 million in revenue, the lowest amount in a decade. In other words, bettors still lost a ton on the game, but much less to the sportsbooks than in recent years.

The drop in betting could be attributed to the growth of prediction markets, which continue offering sports event contracts. It seems likely that other states also felt the effects of the platforms.

In recent months, major sportsbooks like DraftKings and FanDuel have jumped into the prediction market industry. DraftKings Predicts reported large amounts of trading volume on the Super Bowl. Overall, DraftKings Sportsbook reported more than \$8 billion in potential payouts on the game.

State gaming regulators continue to push back against prediction markets, arguing that the platforms are simply a form of sports betting. Kalshi CEO Tarek Mansour recently noted that his company is already regulated at the federal level by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and not by state gaming authorities. That has led to numerous



lawsuits and cease-and-desist letters from state regulators over the last year.

Rival prediction market Polymarket lost a lawsuit brought by the Nevada Gaming Control Board in February. The ruling forced the company to exit the market.

Along with competition from prediction markets, the recent drop in Las Vegas tourism also may have affected Super Bowl betting numbers. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority reported that visitor volume dropped 9.2% in December to 3.1 million.

The game's outcome also ended Drake's sports betting endeavors. The Canadian rapper wagered \$1 million on the Patriots to win the game. But just days after the Seahawks hoisted the Lombardi trophy, Drake said he was going to stop betting on sports and just stick with other gambling games. He also lost \$1.6 million on a UFC fight, \$1 million on the World Cup, and \$600,000 on the NBA Finals. ♠

Former MLB Outfielder Yasiel Puig Found Guilty In Illegal Sports Betting Case

By Sean Chaffin

A jury in federal court found former Los Angeles Dodgers and Cincinnati Reds outfielder Yasiel Puig guilty of lying to federal prosecutors about betting with an illegal sports wagering operation.

At the end of the 13-day trial, the federal court convicted the 35-year-old on one count of obstruction of justice and one count of making false statements. A judge will sentence Puig in May. He faces up to 10 years in prison for obstruction and up to five years for making false statements.

Puig's betting activities involved underground bookie Wayne Nix. Nix pleaded guilty in 2022 to conspiracy to operate an illegal sports gambling business and filing a false tax return. His attempts to launder money in Las Vegas casinos led to the former president of MGM Grand receiving a year of probation.

From July to September of 2019, Puig placed 899 additional bets on tennis, football, and basketball to an intermediary, a baseball coach named Donny Kadokawa. Many bets were placed at MLB ballparks just before and after games he played in. He eventually ran up a gambling debt of almost \$1 million to Nix and never paid that off.

"In January 2022, federal investigators interviewed Puig



in the presence of his lawyers," the US Attorney's Office for the Central District of California said.

"During the interview, despite being warned that lying to federal agents is a crime, Puig lied several times. During the interview, he falsely stated that he 'only' knew Donny Kadokawa from baseball and that he never discussed gambling with him, when in fact Puig discussed sports betting with Kadokawa hundreds of times on the telephone and via text message." ♠

BERNHARD BINDER'S METEORIC RISE

From Micros To Millions In Just Four Years

By Tim Fiorvanti



On Dec. 12, *Card Player* columnist and high-stakes tournament pro Sam Greenwood posted to Twitter/X, asking who were the next breakout players on the circuit.

“When people list the best poker players in the world, the players who are picked are players [that are already] running hot. I want people to call their shot. Who are the great poker talents that are currently in poor form, that will have great results in 2026?”

Mario Mosböck, a three-time *Triton* champion, pointed to fellow Austrian and relative unknown Bernhard Binder. While Mosböck had confidence, he couldn't have known that his prediction would come true even before the calendar switched over to 2026.

Just a week later, Binder found himself as the last man standing in the *World Series of Poker Paradise* \$25,000 super main event. He earned \$10 million, his first bracelet, and one of the biggest titles in poker.

It was a transformative year for the 27-year-old, to say the least. In addition to the life-changing score in The Bahamas, Binder took down the online *GGMillion\$* main event in February for \$1,834,484. Later that month, he made his high roller debut at the *Triton* series in Jeju.

For a player who started out at micro stakes in 2021, Binder's trajectory has been meteoric. And while he can't be considered a breakout player anymore, he certainly looks like a good candidate for more incredible results in the years to come.

Card Player spoke with Binder about his poker origin story, his massive *WSOP Paradise* victory, and the drama he experienced at the final table over his CoinPoker sponsorship patch.

Tim Fiorvanti: You've only been playing tournament poker for a few years. Can you talk about how poker became a part of your life, and how your career began?

Bernhard Binder: I started playing tournament poker four years ago. Before that, I was playing a little bit of cash, and a little bit of spins, but only for a few months. I got into poker because my best friend Samuel Mullur was already a pro. I think a lot of people are familiar with him. (Editor's note: Mullur has \$12 million in cashes and a *WSOP* bracelet.)

And yeah, I started at the very bottom. Started playing micro stakes. I can't remember the time period exactly, but I think after half a year or so, I reached mid-stakes. And then in my second year of playing, I reached high-stakes, having never played in a stable. I just grinded up on my own, with help from just a few friends.

I reached super high stakes in year three. My first *Triton* stop was in Jeju, [in 2025], but before that, I had already played super high stakes online.

Tim Fiorvanti: Was there a particular tournament or stretch of results prior to winning the *GGMillion\$* event that stands out as particularly important?

Bernhard Binder: I'd say multiple big scores helped boost



my career. I can remember all the way back when I won a \$25 tournament on a Sunday early on, which was for \$6,000. That was huge back then, because I could move up in stakes after I won that. There's always some progress. It's tournament poker. Whenever you have a big score, it makes a big difference.

Tim Fiorvanti: You posted your first career live result in 2023. Was live poker a consideration when you started to play online seriously?

Bernhard Binder: Not at all. When I started playing poker, I didn't think about live poker at all. I was just trying to see if [online poker] would even work for me. I was not planning that far ahead.

I think in general, before you can really play live poker, you should play at least a little bit of online. You have to build a bankroll because live tournaments carry much higher buy-ins. Of course, you can play and be staked, but I'm not a big fan of selling the majority of my action if I don't have to.

When the results started coming in, I then looked at live poker. I was lucky enough to be able to play *Triton* events early in my career, because I got a staking offer. I think in those *Triton* tournaments, most players are staked, simply because the buy-ins are so incredibly high.

It's awesome to play *Tritons*, obviously. It's the biggest stage in poker. But I think you get used to the buy-ins



pretty quickly.

It's similar to what I experienced online. You play your first \$100 tournament, and you play your first \$1,000 tournament. The first \$5,000, the first \$10,000 buy-in. Sure, all of these steps feel special, but you get used to it very quickly.

I mean, \$100,000 is crazy money, but if you do it a few times, you get used to it. It's what you have to do, and it is the place you want to be, among the biggest tournament poker players in the world.



Tim Fiorvanti: There were a lot of tournament options in December. What made you choose *WSOP Paradise*?

Bernhard Binder: I mean, The Bahamas stop is one of the biggest opportunities of the year, so the decision to go there was not really a decision. You're going to do it. You also have a few *Triton* tournaments there, which is also quite nice, even though it is smaller than a typical *Triton* schedule.

The super main event is a special tournament. Even though it is a big buy-in, you still have so many runners because it's heavily promoted, with a lot of satellites. The tournament is just really cool to play.

Tim Fiorvanti: What was it like to play a long-structured live event, which is something you hadn't had a lot of experience with prior to this tournament?

Bernhard Binder: Yeah, my online experience and this specific tournament are not very comparable. It's a five-day event, with multiple day ones, so the tournament basically goes on forever. It's more intense, definitely. And bagging day 3 and beyond... online or with *Tritons*, you very rarely have three-day events.

Mentally, it's a different challenge. I would still say I'm a much better online poker player than live, just because I have a lot more experience in it. But I still managed to win this one.

Tim Fiorvanti: How much attention did your big win get you?

Bernhard Binder: While I don't really mind the attention, I also don't seek it out. I got messages from people I haven't heard from in 10 years. I grew up in a small village in Austria, and people from the village who I don't even know, or barely know, contacted me and congratulated me.

Tim Fiorvanti: You decided to represent online poker site CoinPoker during the broadcast but were later told by staff that you had to take the patch off. Was that a significant distraction for you, especially when you were playing for such a massive payout?

Bernhard Binder: Yeah, to be honest, it was annoying. I think *Triton* has a rule that the sponsorship patch can't be too big, but the small sizes are okay, something like that.

But *WSOP*, they told me it's their rules, they can prohibit any type of sponsorship if they want to. So basically, there was no room for me to discuss anything. Sure, it was annoying in the moment, but you have to just accept it and try not think about it. It's more important to stay focused.

Tim Fiorvanti: The final table was quite entertaining from a viewer's perspective, but obviously, your experience is much different than ours. The first thing that comes to mind was the big hand you played against Belarmino De Souza during five-handed play.

On a board of $K♥ 9♦ 2♦ Q♠$, you bet with $J♥ 10♥$ and Jean-Noel Thorel snap-folded $Q♥ 2♥$ for two pair. De Souza called with $J♦ 10♦$, and you were able to get him to fold when the $Q♠$ paired the board. Thorel would have made a full house, but instead of losing the pot or only getting half, you scooped the whole thing.

Bernhard Binder: While I was playing in the moment, I didn't think that it was that crazy of a hand. I mean, of course, it was a big part of my run, but it wasn't so unusual given [I only knew my cards]. When the live stream caught up, and I saw what the other players had, then I realized it was an insane hand.

Tim Fiorvanti: Thorel's fold potentially had a lot of unexpected consequences, particularly for De Souza who could

“When I started playing poker [four years ago], I didn’t think about live poker at all. I was just trying to see if [online poker] would even work for me. I was not planning that far ahead.”





have potentially gotten it all in on the turn, or at least felt pot-committed enough to go with it on the river.

Bernhard Binder: Honestly, I'm like 99% sure Thorel misread his hand. He thought he had just naked queen. I don't know how the hand plays out if he realized he had two pair. [The other straight] could have raised again, and I might have reraised, and then he might have folded his two pair anyway.

It was not the best river for my hand, because the board paired, and I didn't have the nuts anymore, but I still had a really strong hand. I went all in for value. Getting the same hand to fold was really fortunate for me.

Tim Fiorvanti: How long before you found out their hands?

Bernhard Binder: I had a big rail, and some of them did watch the stream. But even when there were breaks, I was telling them to only tell me stuff that can help me, not just random stuff. They were trying to help me with the most important stuff. Getting a break is important, because it's

really exhausting to play so many days in a row. You need that break. But yeah, I think that one, someone told me rather quickly.

Tim Fiorvanti: Those chips helped you to get to heads-up play with Thorel. Can you talk about the match for the bracelet with an extra \$4 million on the line?

Bernhard Binder: It took forever. I can't even remember how long it was, but it was really long, actually. (Editor's note: It lasted about three hours.)

I was a little bit surprised how hard JNT fought, considering his age (78), how he was able to focus for that amount of time and still play decently. I thought he also played good strategies, often raising the button 3x or 4x, pushing the variance a little bit.

If I was his coach, I would have told him to do that, so maybe he got coaching. I thought he played pretty well. It was a really exhausting match, and in the end, I managed to win it. ♠

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YURI DZIVIELEVSKI SAILS TO SUPER HIGH ROLLER BOWL MIXED GAMES TITLE

Brazilian High Roller Talks \$2 Million Week In Las Vegas

By Tim Fiorvanti



Yuri Dzivielevski completed one of the most incredible streaks in mixed game tournament history with a victory in the \$100,000 buy-in *Super High Roller Bowl Mixed Games*. The 34-year-old secured the \$1.3 million first-place prize to cap off a stretch in which, in rapid succession, he won a \$15,000 event and finished second twice on his way to earning *PGT Mixed Games* player of the series honors. (pg. 28)

In total, Dzivielevski pocketed \$2,045,350 in the span of a single week inside the PokerGO Studio. The Brazilian poker pro now has nearly \$13.1 million in career earnings, placing him second on his nation's all-time money list. Only Joao Simao (\$17.4 million) has accrued more on the circuit.

"It's hard to explain how happy I am and how big it is for me," said Dzivielevski. "I mean, of course, I gave it my best, but the cards were just coming. Winning the *Super High Roller Bowl* was unbelievable. Finishing this week this way is just something that I could never imagine."

Dzivielevski's win represents the second-largest live

result of his career. His top score came two months prior, via a third-place finish in the \$150,000 buy-in *Triton* event during *World Series of Poker Paradise*, which was worth \$1,409,000. This latest win is the largest career mixed game cash for the five-time *WSOP* bracelet winner, surpassing his 2022 *WSOP* \$50,000 *Poker Players Championship* runner-up finish for \$895,614.

This signature victory for Dzivielevski came against a field of 38 entries, a significant increase from the 29-entry turnout for the 10-game *Super High Roller Bowl* mixed games format in 2025, where he took third. The second-ever *Super High Roller Bowl Mixed Games* event generated a total prize pool of \$3,799,998, as a field of some of the best all-around tournament poker players in the world tested their mettle.

"I've dedicated basically half of my life to poker," Dzivielevski said. "Good things and bad things happen to everyone. Like during [the 2025] *WSOP*, I had basically the worst run of my life, completely opposite of this run right

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Chad Eveslage



Heads-up Play



Benny Glaser



Robert Wells and Jared Bleznick

now. But it's just part of variance. I've played for such a long time, and in 15 years, I've been through all types of runs. The worst runs in the world, and the best runs in the world. I think we just need to be like sailboats.

"When the good wind comes, you just have to take advantage of it."

A Long, Drawn-Out Battle

No matter how strong the winds at Dzivielevski's back were in the lead-up to the *Super High Roller Bowl Mixed Games* final table, there was a lot of work left to be done to close it out.

With only seven players walking out of the PokerGO Studio with a payout in this event, the list of players who participated and walked away empty-handed was a who's who of the poker world. Phil Hellmuth took advantage of the late registration window, which remained open until the start of day 2, but his run remained short. Daniel Negreanu was also an early day 2 casualty, as was fellow seven-time bracelet winner Brian Rast. Gus Hansen, Scott Seiver, Chino Rheem, Chris Brewer, and defending *Card Player* Player of the Year Jesse Lonis were just a few more of the heavy hitters who couldn't make a run in this tournament.

Jason Mercier, the six-time *WSOP* bracelet winner, got perilously close to the money. He soft bubbled in ninth place, in an Omaha eight-or-better pot, when his low wrap

draw missed in a multi-way pot to Dzivielevski's two-pair. That left eight players, and Michael Mizrachi stood on the edge of the abyss as the short stack.

Mizrachi, fresh off a 2025 in which he rewrote the record books by winning both the *WSOP* main event and his fourth \$50,000 *Poker Players Championship*, had also taken advantage of the long late registration window. He quickly built his stack early on day 2, but by the time the true bubble rolled around, his stack was running on fumes.

Mizrachi fought hard, but he was ultimately out the door right after Mercier. He got his last chips in ahead, holding $A\heartsuit 10\clubsuit 5\heartsuit 2\diamondsuit$ against Jared Bleznick's $K\clubsuit 6\diamondsuit 5\heartsuit 3\clubsuit$ on a $J\diamondsuit 8\heartsuit 7\spadesuit$ flop in Omaha eight-or-better. After the $8\diamondsuit$ turn, his ace-high was still in front, he had the better flush draw and the nut low draw. Bleznick didn't have many outs to scoop, but the $9\spadesuit$ river was one of them, and in making the nine-high straight, Mizrachi was officially the bubble boy.

Slow And Steady

Dzivielevski and Benny Glaser returned for day 3 of the *Super High Roller Bowl Mixed Games* in first and second chip position, respectively, just as they had been heading into the previous day.

The final table also featured Poker Hall of Famer Nick Schulman, defending *Super High Roller Mixed Games* champion Chad Eveslage, and Bleznick, the 2023 *Super*



“I’ve played for such a long time, and in 15 years, I’ve been through all types of runs. I think we just need to be like sailboats. When the good wind comes, you just have to take advantage of it.”

High Roller Bowl Pot-Limit Omaha winner.

Schulman started the day as one of three short stacks at the table and dodged some impossible spots, including a moment where he somehow found a fold with pocket jacks and very few chips in no-limit hold’em. He was right, as Eveslage had been dealt pocket kings.

There was no reward for Schulman’s brilliant deduction, though. Schulman was eventually forced all-in in the big blind, with five players seeing a flop in Omaha eight-or-better. The recent Poker Hall of Fame inductee was drawing dead by the turn as Glaser made an eight-five low and Dzivielevski rivered quad tens, sending Schulman out in seventh place for \$155,000. The min-cash was bittersweet, but a better result than the year prior when Schulman was

eliminated on the bubble.

Six-handed play continued for hours. Bleznick battled back from the brink on several different occasions, but an expensive round of stud eight-or-better left him with just a few chips heading into PLO. The sports card fanatic soon flopped top pair and a flush draw with $A\spadesuit K\spadesuit 7\heartsuit 5\heartsuit$ on a $K\heartsuit Q\heartsuit 4\heartsuit$ board. He was up against Dzivielevski’s $K\heartsuit Q\clubsuit 10\heartsuit 3\heartsuit$, with two pair staying ahead on the $2\clubsuit$ turn.

Bleznick needed an ace or a heart, but the $Q\heartsuit$ river further improved Dzivielevski to a full house. Bleznick took home \$225,000 for sixth place, giving him \$10.3 million for his career.

Taking Control

Another extended stalemate eventually saw Tobias

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Leknes on the brink. The Norwegian mixed-game specialist battled with Glaser in a deuce-to-seven triple draw hand, and Leknes made a 9-8 low on the second draw. Glaser made an 8-7 low on that same draw, however, and all but 50,000 of Leknes' chips went in. Leknes correctly broke his low to draw for an 8-6, but missed and decided to save his last chips.

Leknes tripled up on the next hand, but Robert Wells ultimately cut off the comeback, making a 6-4 low in Razz to eliminate Leknes in fifth place for \$300,000.

Dzivielevski added to his advantage during four-handed play, building a stack of three times as many chips as the closest competition. After another long stretch without an elimination, he brought down the hammer. In a hand of no-limit deuce-to-seven single draw, Dzivielevski opened on the button with $Q♥ 5♥ 4♦ 3♦ 2♣$. Wells, who picked up $10♠ 8♥ 7♣ 6♣ 2♦$ in the small blind, shoved for 20 big blinds.

Wells patted his 10-8, and Dzivielevski pitched his queen to draw to a wheel. If Wells' hand had held, he would've essentially pulled even with Dzivielevski in the counts. However, Dzivielevski caught the $9♥$, and his low sent Wells to the rail in fourth place for \$415,000.

Wells, a Welsh pro who won his first *WSOP* bracelet in 2025 in a nine-game mixed event, is a player Dzivielevski noted as a close friend.

"The way I [stay sharp] is that I play online a lot, and then discuss hands with my friends, especially Rob. He's a very important part of this process, so I'm glad I met him on my way."

This was a new high score for Wells, topping the \$228,115 that came with the aforementioned victory last summer.

Bringing Down The Hammer

It took less than 30 minutes in real time, with multiple quick breaks included, for Dzivielevski to take out two of the most accomplished mixed game tournament players in the world and close out the win.

A short-stacked Glaser got the last of his chips in good against a pot-committed Dzivielevski in limit hold'em. Glaser's $A♠ 6♣$ held against Dzivielevski's $10♣ 5♣$ through a $J♦ 3♣ 2♦$ flop, but Dzivielevski turned the world with the $4♣$. Glaser paired his ace on the $A♦$ river, but that gave Dzivielevski a winning wheel.

Glaser settled for \$570,000 as the third-place finisher, the third-largest score of his storied career. The eight-time bracelet winner, who finished fifth in this event last year, now has \$11 million in career earnings.

Two badugi hands were all it took to bring the tournament to a close. On the pivotal deal, Dzivielevski looked down at $6♦ 5♦ 2♣ A♠$. Eveslage received $4♥ 3♥ 3♣ A♣$. Multiple bets went in before the first draw, and Dzivielevski immediately spiked his gin card, the $6♥$, to make a six badugi.

Eveslage bricked his two-card draw, but still got the last of his chips in. He drew two cards on each of the last two draws and failed to improve either time. Dzivielevski closed out his week for the ages by knocking off the defending *Super High Roller Bowl Mixed Games* champion in second place.

Eveslage earned \$835,000 as the runner-up in his impressive bid for back-to-back victories. The two-time *World Poker Tour* champion, four-time bracelet winner, and recent winner of the *PGT Championship* now has more

than \$13.1 million in lifetime earnings.

Dzivielevski banked 480 *Card Player* Player of the Year points for this win. He now has 1,560 total points after his mixed-game spree in Las Vegas, enough to put him in fourth place in the 2026 POY race standings presented by CoinPoker. Additionally, Dzivielevski added 400 PGT points to his total towards the season-long leaderboard, giving him 934 points for a healthy 403-point advantage over the nearest competitor in Andrew Lichtenberger with 531 points.

A Decade In The Making

Even before this remarkable week, Dzivielevski earned a reputation as one of the strongest mixed game tournament players in the world. All five of his bracelets came in non-hold'em events, with Dzivielevski narrowly missing out on a sixth in the \$50,000 *Poker Players Championship* in 2022.

With the deep well of mixed game accomplishments, it's impressive to note that Dzivielevski didn't commit himself beyond no-limit hold'em until just over a decade ago.

"In 2014, I had an amazing year playing online in no-limit hold'em tournaments," recalled Dzivielevski. "I had the biggest score of my life. I got second in the *World Championship of Online Poker* main event for \$700,000, which was an insane sum for me. I mean, it's still insane. At that point, I just wanted to be challenged and try something new. And because I didn't need to think about the money, I could try something new."

"I started playing PLO a little bit, and [at that point] I could stay for six months without winning, and that would be okay, because of the big score. I think if it never happened that way, I would probably still be playing just no-limit hold'em tournaments."

The gamble paid off, and continues to do so. While Dzivielevski still posts big results in no-limit hold'em, he wouldn't have his current standing in the poker world without his multitude of mixed game accomplishments. Dzivielevski's work paid off in this career-defining week that culminated in the *Super High Roller Bowl* title.

In the aftermath of his win, the hunger and desire that drove Dzivielevski to become a world-class player bubbled to the surface. He hopes that he might be able to inspire a new generation to follow in his footsteps.

"I'm extremely grateful when I can show people that poker can change their lives," said Dzivielevski. "Because that's what happened to me. I became a professional poker player not because I wanted to, but because of my family's financial situation. I could give them a very good life."

"I'm super happy to be an inspiration, whether it's for another young Brazilian, or any of the poker lovers out there." ♠

Final Table Results

Place	Player	Payout	POY Points	PGT Points
1	Yuri Dzivielevski	\$1,300,000	480	400
2	Chad Eveslage	\$835,000	400	251
3	Benny Glaser	\$570,000	320	171
4	Robert Wells	\$415,000	240	125
5	Tobias Leknes	\$300,000	200	90
6	Jared Bleznick	\$225,000	160	68
7	Nick Schulman	\$155,000	120	47



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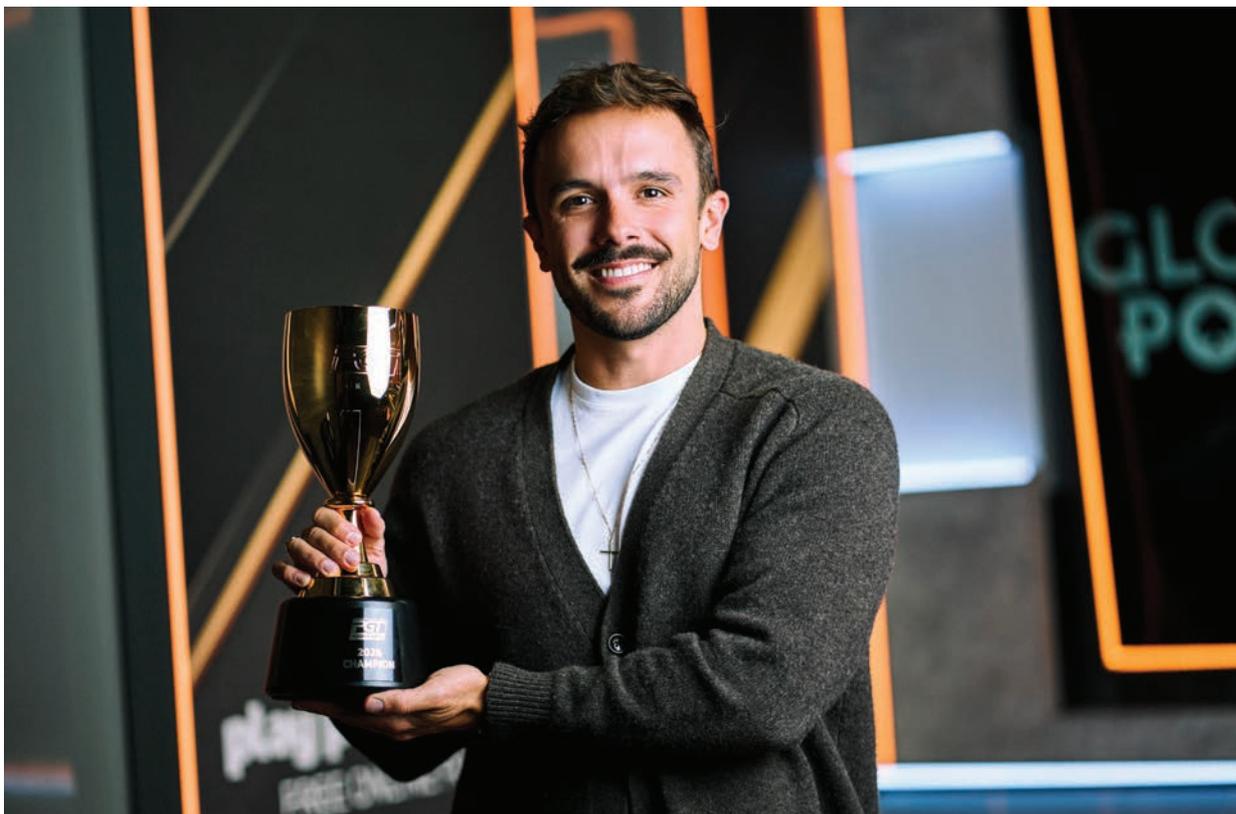
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YURI DZIVIELEVSKI CROWNED PGT MIXED GAMES SERIES CHAMPION AFTER RED-HOT FINISH

By Erik Fast and Tim Fiorvanti



Just three days before winning the *Super High Roller Bowl Mixed Games* title, **Yuri Dzivielevski** went on a late-series heater at the 2026 *PokerGO Tour Mixed Games* festival. The 34-year-old strung together back-to-back-to-back top-two finishes in the final three events, including one outright win, to seal the series championship.

Dzivielevski had not recorded a cash during the first four events of the seven-tournament schedule, but still accumulated a total of \$745,350 and 534 *PGT* points to ultimately hoist the *PGT* Gold Cup.

The first winner of the series was no stranger to success at this festival. Two-time *PGT Mixed Games* series champion **Chino Rheem** took down the \$5,300 H.O.R.S.E. title, securing his ninth career trophy inside the PokerGO Studio.

The 45-year-old topped 101 entries to lock up the first-place prize of \$112,100, defeating Dylan Linde after the pair made a heads-up deal. The score grew the 2019 *PokerStars Caribbean Adventure* main event winner and three-time *World Poker Tour* champion's lifetime haul to nearly \$19.3 million. Rheem went on to cash twice more, finishing seventh in the final standings for the series that he won in both 2025 and 2023.

While Rheem has posed for more than his fair share of winner photos at this venue, **Justin Liberto** did so for the first time after taking down event no. 2. Liberto earned his first career *PGT* title as the \$5,300 eight-game champion, along with \$127,400 in prize money.

The 37-year-old, whose previous best live results largely came in no-limit hold'em events, defeated mixed games expert and

five-time *World Series of Poker* bracelet winner Calvin Anderson heads-up to close out the tournament. Liberto ultimately wound up in sixth place in the series-long points race, adding \$120,000 for a fifth-place showing in the \$25,000 buy-in finale to go with his early win.

Liberto is approaching \$7.3 million in career earnings after this triumph. His top score remains the \$640,711 first-place prize in the 2015 *WSOP* \$3,000 six-max event.

Ryan Hoenig emerged victorious from a field of 83 entries in the \$10,000 T.O.R.S.E. event, securing \$232,400 and his second career *PGT* title. The win follows a bracelet victory last summer in the *WSOP* dealer's choice event for \$354,444.

Hoenig now boasts nearly \$1.8 million in career tournament earnings, with his four largest scores all coming in non-no-limit hold'em events. He had also made the final table in event no. 2. His back-to-back runs were enough to place him fifth in the points race by the festival's end.

Nick Schulman was added to the Poker Hall of Fame in 2025, roughly a month after winning his seventh bracelet. The *WPT* champion and current *High Stakes Poker* commentator is far from done racking up the accolades, though.

Schulman's latest addition to his lengthy résumé saw him defeat a field of 84 entries in the \$10,000 eight-game event, banking \$235,200 and his eighth career *PGT* title. The 41-year-old pro now has more than \$25.8 million in career earnings to his name after also final-tabling the *SHRB Mixed Games* event that directly followed this series.

Dzivielevski's run to series champion began with his win in



event no. 5, the \$15,000 big bet mix. He overcame a field of 53 entries to walk away with \$262,350 and his first career *PGT* title.

The very next day, the Brazilian high roller came incredibly close to a second win. He navigated his way through a field of 57 entries in the \$15,000 dealer's choice event, making it down to the final two. **Qinghai 'Jack' Pan** ultimately won the heads-up battle for that title, earning \$273,600 and his second career *PGT* title.

The win put the exclamation point on an impressive streak for Pan. The three-time bracelet winner strung together three podium finishes in four days, and would have been the series champion if it weren't for an improbable finish by Dzivielevski. His run began with a third-place showing in the \$10,000 T.O.R.S.E. event for \$107,900 and continued with a runner-up finish in the \$10,000 eight-game for another \$151,200.

Pan cashed for a total of \$532,700 across his three final-table appearances, accruing 478 *PGT* points to give him the lead heading into the final event of the series.

Poker Hall of Famer **Brian Rast** triumphed in the \$25,000

10-game championship. The seven-time bracelet winner beat out 64 entries to take home \$480,000. This was his third cash of the series, having also placed ninth in the \$5,000 H.O.R.S.E. and seventh in the \$5,000 eight-game. All told, Rast cashed for \$514,750 during the seven-event series, accumulating 340 *PGT* points along the way to finish third in the series standings.

Bracelet winner Philip Sternheimer, who was the runner-up in event no. 3, finished third for \$216,000. His 279 points were good for fourth on the final leaderboard.

Of course, Sternheimer was far from the only player to benefit from a strong showing in this final event. Dzivielevski survived to the final two, locking up \$312,000 and 187 *PGT* points to see him overtake Pan at the finish line for the series champion honors.

There was no rest for the Brazilian star, though, as he turned around and hopped into the \$100,000 buy-in *SHRB Mixed Games* the very next day. (pg. 22) He went on to win that event as well, adding \$1.3 million to bring his tally for the week to over \$2 million in earnings. ♠

TOURNAMENTS

PGT Mixed Games - Aria PokerGO Studio - Las Vegas, NV



Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$5,300 H.O.R.S.E. Feb. 3-4 Entries: 101 Prizepool: \$505,000	1 Chino Rheem	\$112,100	480
	2 Dylan Linde	\$100,000	400
	3 Alexander Livingston	\$58,075	320
	4 Matthew Vengrin	\$45,450	240
	5 Brian Breck	\$32,825	200
	6 Eli Elezra	\$25,250	160
	7 Chad Eveslage	\$20,200	120

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$5,300 8-Game Mix Feb. 4-5 Entries: 98 Prizepool: \$490,000	1 Justin Liberto	\$127,400	432
	2 Calvin Anderson	\$80,850	360
	3 Johannes Becker	\$58,800	288
	4 Maksim Pisarenko	\$44,100	216
	5 Benjamin Miner	\$34,300	180
	6 Ryan Hoenig	\$24,500	144
	7 Brian Rast	\$19,600	108

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$10,600 T.O.R.S.E. Feb. 5-6 Entries: 83 Prizepool: \$830,000	1 Ryan Hoenig	\$232,400	480
	2 Philip Sternheimer	\$149,400	400
	3 Qinghai Pan	\$107,900	320
	4 Koji Fujimoto	\$78,850	240
	5 Dylan Weisman	\$58,100	200
	6 Paul Houvener	\$41,500	160
	7 Dara Taherpour	\$33,200	120

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$10,600 8-Game Mix Feb. 6-7 Entries: 84 Prizepool: \$840,000	1 Nick Schulman	\$235,200	480
	2 Qinghai Pan	\$151,200	400
	3 Dzmitry Urbanovich	\$109,200	320
	4 Nicolas Milgrom	\$79,800	240
	5 Scott Seiver	\$58,800	200
	6 Walter Chambers	\$42,000	160
	7 Jesse Klein	\$33,600	120

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$15,800 Big Bet Mix Feb. 7-9 Entries: 53 Prizepool: \$795,000	1 Yuri Dzivielevski	\$262,350	360
	2 Patrick Leonard	\$166,950	300
	3 Talal Shakerchi	\$111,300	240
	4 Sam Soverel	\$79,500	180
	5 Matthew Wantman	\$63,600	150
	6 Jose Barbero	\$47,700	120
	7 Cary Katz	\$31,800	90

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$15,800 Dealer's Choice Feb. 9-10 Entries: 57 Prizepool: \$855,000	1 Qinghai Pan	\$273,600	360
	2 Yuri Dzivielevski	\$171,000	300
	3 Chad Eveslage	\$119,700	240
	4 Bryn Kenney	\$85,500	180
	5 Johannes Becker	\$64,125	150
	6 John Monnette	\$47,025	120
	7 Dylan Weisman	\$34,200	90

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$26,000 10-Game Mix Feb. 10-11 Entries: 64 Prizepool: \$1,600,000	1 Brian Rast	\$480,000	504
	2 Yuri Dzivielevski	\$312,000	420
	3 Philip Sternheimer	\$216,000	336
	4 Ryan Miller	\$160,000	252
	5 Justin Liberto	\$120,000	210
	6 Ariel Mantel	\$88,000	168
	7 Matthew Wantman	\$64,000	126



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NOSEBLEED TOURNAMENTS RETURN TO CYPRUS FOR LATEST ONYX HIGH ROLLER SERIES

By Erik Fast



While the mixed game elite of the tournament scene gathered in Las Vegas, (pg. 28) the big-bet specialists at the top of the proverbial food chain made their way to Merit Royal Diamond Hotel & Spa in North Cyprus for the 2026 *Onyx Super High Roller Series*.

The no-limit hold'em and pot-limit Omaha extravaganza ran from Jan. 30 through Feb. 12, with more than \$30.3 million awarded across 14 events. The stakes ranged from \$10,000 up to \$100,000, with an average price tag of \$32,571 to enter.

The first event to finish was the largest, in terms of buy-in. **Jean-Robert Bellande** topped a field of 50 entries in the \$100,000 no-limit hold'em high roller championship to earn a career-best tournament payday of \$1,500,000.

The win was a surprise, as the regular fixture in some of the biggest games in the world had no intention of butting heads with the many tournament poker superstars who had also made their way to this series. Bellande ended up with a seat when the event's founder, Rob Yong, put him into the tournament.

"Rob's plane got delayed in Istanbul, and as a favor to the guys because he wasn't at the tournament on time, he decided, 'Okay, let me throw a fish in the game. I'll give them JRB since I'm not there.' So he put me in," Bellande told Merit Poker staff after coming out on top.

Yong did make it on time to late register, and after a run of his own, wound up playing Bellande for the title. He would settle for \$1,000,000 as the runner-up, plus whatever percentage he had of Bellande's win.

The two friends would play several wild hands down the stretch. See the tournament hand matchups on pg. 43 and pg. 44 for two of the highlights.

Another star of the series was **Alex Kulev**. The Bulgarian bracelet winner cashed three times throughout the series, coming away with two titles and one runner-up finish. All told, he accumulated just over \$581,000 during the festival.

Kulev's streak began with a victory in the \$10,000 buy-in kickoff. He bested a field of 207 entries in the \$2 million guaranteed affair to earn \$384,150. A handful of days after that triumph, he took down a \$25,000 bounty event. That tournament drew just eight entries, with Kulev overcoming Adrian Mateos heads-up in the end to earn \$54,600 from the main prize pool.

The very next day, Kulev finished second from just six entries in a \$50,000 no-limit event won by **Artur Martirosian**. The three-time bracelet winner from Russia pocketed \$151,664, while Kulev took home \$142,336 after the two struck a heads-up deal. Martirosian would also take fifth in the \$25,000 PLO event for another \$250,000 cash.

Matthias Eibinger and Johan 'YoH Viral' Guilbert both ended 2025 on a high note. The pair each secured their first bracelets at the *World Series of Poker Paradise* stop in December, with Eibinger winning a \$75,000 pot-limit Omaha high roller and Guilbert taking down a \$25,000 turbo.

Just over a month into the new year, the two squared off for another big title. Eibinger ultimately emerged victorious, earning \$1,250,000 as the champion of the \$50,000 no-limit hold'em *Grand Slam*. This was the fifth-largest score of the Austrian poker pro's career.

Guilbert secured \$870,000 as the runner-up. The French player and content creator now has nearly \$7.4 million in total earnings to his name, with this being the third-biggest payday on his résumé.



Alex Kulev



Matthias Eibinger



Ottomar Ladva



Nino Pansier

The next major event to wrap was the \$5 million guaranteed \$25,000 no-limit hold'em main event. It drew 207 entries, with Estonia's **Ottomar Ladva** hoisting the *Onyx* trophy in the end. The 28-year-old earned \$1,150,000 as the champion, a new top score for the fairly recent addition to the high-stakes scene.

Ladva only recorded his first live tournament cash in 2018, having started in strategy games as a serious chess player. He is a four-time national champion, having first earned the title back in 2010 at the age of 15.

Now, he is also the second-highest earning tournament poker player from his home country. He trails only Vladimir Korzinin, the high roller known to many as 'Gamblore,' who cashed for more than \$7.8 million across two massive scores at the 2024 *Triton Monte Carlo stop*.

In addition to the money and hardware, Ladva also earned 1,260 total *Card Player* Player of the Year points. That alone was enough to move him into 15th place in the 2026 POY race standings presented by CoinPoker.

The focus switched to pot-limit Omaha in the back half of the festival, starting with the \$2 million guaranteed \$10,000 PLO opener. **Artur Vyborov** triumphed over 232 entries to lock up the title and \$450,000. This was his biggest win yet.

Quan Zhou finished third in that event for \$225,000. That was one of five cashes he recorded during the series. The Chinese high roller also placed seventh in a \$50,000 no-limit hold'em event for \$210,000, and won a \$25,000 PLO bounty event on the final day for \$66,500. That victory brought his haul for the festival to \$650,500.

Zhou also finished 10th in the \$25,000 buy-in PLO main

event. That \$5 million guaranteed tournament finished with 199 entries. **Nino Pansier** was the champion, earning a career-best payday of \$1,125,000.

Pansier also went on a huge tear during the PLO section of the series, cashing four times for a total of \$1,549,200. In addition to his marquee seven-figure victory, he also finished fifth in a \$50,000 PLO event for \$340,000 and won a smaller \$10,000 turbo for \$62,200. The Dutch player accumulated 1,559 POY points along the way, enough to climb to fifth in the POY rankings.

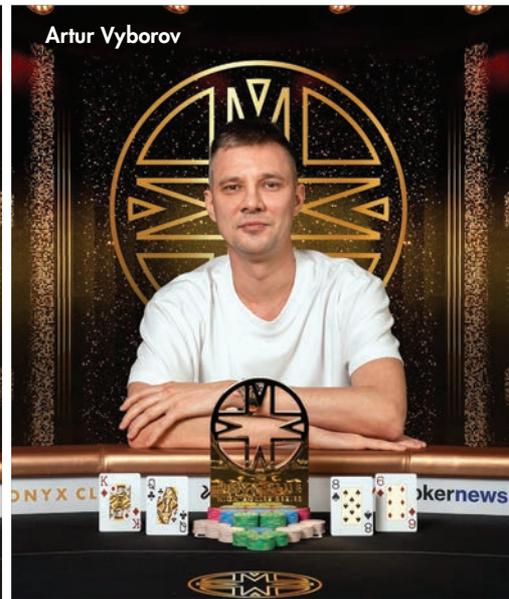
Prior to this series, Pansier's top score had been a win at the 2025 *EPT Malta* festival. He took down a €25,000 PLO high roller there for \$323,055. With his latest spree in Cyprus factored in, his recorded tournament earnings now sit at \$2.5 million.

The \$50,000 PLO event was won by **Cesar Garcia** of Spain. He was awarded \$1,200,000 after besting a field of 98 entries. This surpassed his previous top payday of \$447,739, which came in a win in a \$2,000 no-limit hold'em event at the 2016 *WSOP*.

UK PLO specialist **Gruffudd Pugh-Jones** was the runner-up to Garcia, earning \$840,000 for a new personal best. A few days after that close call, he took down a smaller \$50,000 buy-in PLO event, topping seven entries to earn \$218,400.

There were also two six-max turbo events on the schedule, one in each of the two featured games. The no-limit hold'em version was won by Austria's **Christopher Putz**, who topped 39 entries to win \$123,500. The pot-limit Omaha running attracted 57 entries, with **Mads Amot** securing \$163,800 as the last player standing. ♠

TOURNAMENTS



Onyx High Roller Series - Merit Casino - Kyrenia, Cyprus

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$10,400 NLH Jan. 30-Feb. 1 \$2,000,000 GTD Entries: 207 Prizepool: \$1,945,800	1 Alex Kulev	\$384,150	900
	2 Damir Gabdullin	\$315,850	750
	3 Fahredin Mustafafov	\$200,000	600
	4 Klemens Roiter	\$150,000	450
	5 Maksim Shornikau	\$107,000	375
	6 Aleksey Borovkov	\$80,000	300
	7 Gha Iakobishvili	\$63,000	225
	8 Ran Azor	\$53,000	150
	9 Maximilian Wieser	\$46,800	75

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$101,000 NLH Jan. 30-31 \$5,000,000 GTD Entries: 50 Prizepool: \$4,800,000	1 Jean-Robert Bellande	\$1,500,000	600
	2 Robert Yong	\$1,000,000	500
	3 Markkos Ladev	\$700,000	400
	4 Pieter Aerts	\$515,000	300
	5 Thomas Eychenne	\$375,000	250
	6 Emilien Pitavy	\$280,000	200
	7 Biao Ding	\$230,000	150
	8 Gha Iakobishvili	\$200,000	100

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$50,500 NLH Feb. 1-4 \$5,000,000 GTD Entries: 95 Prizepool: \$4,800,000	1 Matthias Eibinger	\$1,250,000	918
	2 Johan Guilbert	\$870,000	765
	3 Joseph Oren	\$575,000	612
	4 Tom Vogelsang	\$430,000	459
	5 Sergio Fernandez	\$340,000	383
	6 Igor Yaroshevskyy	\$265,000	306
	7 Quan Zhou	\$210,000	230
	8 Thomas Muehloecker	\$175,000	153
	9 Gha Iakobishvili	\$145,000	77

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$10,400 NLH 6-Max Feb. 1 Entries: 39 Prizepool: \$390,000	1 Christopher Putz	\$123,500	240
	2 Adrian Mateos	\$86,300	200
	3 Raoul Kanme	\$61,900	160
	4 Mikita Badziakouski	\$45,700	120
	5 Elias Gutierrez Hernandez	\$32,700	100
	6 Parahat Nurmuhammedov	\$24,300	80

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$25,500 NLH Feb. 3-6 \$5,000,000 GTD Entries: 207 Prizepool: \$4,968,000	1 Ottomar Ladva	\$1,150,000	1,260
	2 Geoffrey Mooney	\$717,000	1,050
	3 Mikalai Vaskaboinkau	\$490,000	840
	4 Kirill Shcherbakov	\$355,000	630
	5 Patrik Antonius	\$270,000	525
	6 Matthias Lipp	\$200,000	420
	7 Boris Kolev	\$160,000	315
	8 Daniil Kiselev	\$124,000	210
	9 Jessica Teusl	\$100,000	105

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$10,400 PLO Feb. 5-7 \$2,000,000 GTD Entries: 232 Prizepool: \$2,180,800	1 Artur Vyborov	\$450,000	960
	2 Aren Bezhanyan	\$312,000	800
	3 Quan Zhou	\$225,000	640
	4 Jeremy Trojand	\$160,000	480
	5 Laszlo Bujtas	\$115,000	400
	6 Thomas Eychenne	\$85,000	320
	7 Belarmino De Souza	\$67,000	240
	8 Joni Jouhkimainen	\$57,000	160
	9 Tom Vogelsang	\$48,800	80

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$50,000 NLH Feb. 5-6 Entries: 6 Prizepool: \$300,000	1 Artur Martirosian	\$151,664	
	2 Alex Kulev	\$142,336	

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$25,000 NLH KO Feb. 6 Entries: 8 Prizepool: \$192,000	1 Alex Kulev	\$54,600	
	2 Adrian Mateos	\$41,400	



TOURNAMENTS

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$50,500 PLO Feb. 7-10	1 Cesar Garcia	\$1,200,000	918
	2 Gruffudd Pugh Jones	\$840,000	765
\$5,000,000 GTD Entries: 98 Prizepool: \$4,800,000	3 Filip Aleksic	\$555,000	612
	4 Sean Rafael	\$430,000	459
	5 Nino Pansier	\$340,000	383
	6 Danielle Noja	\$265,000	306
	7 Espen Myrmo	\$210,000	230
	8 Laszlo Bujtas	\$160,000	153
	9 Robert Yong	\$160,000	77

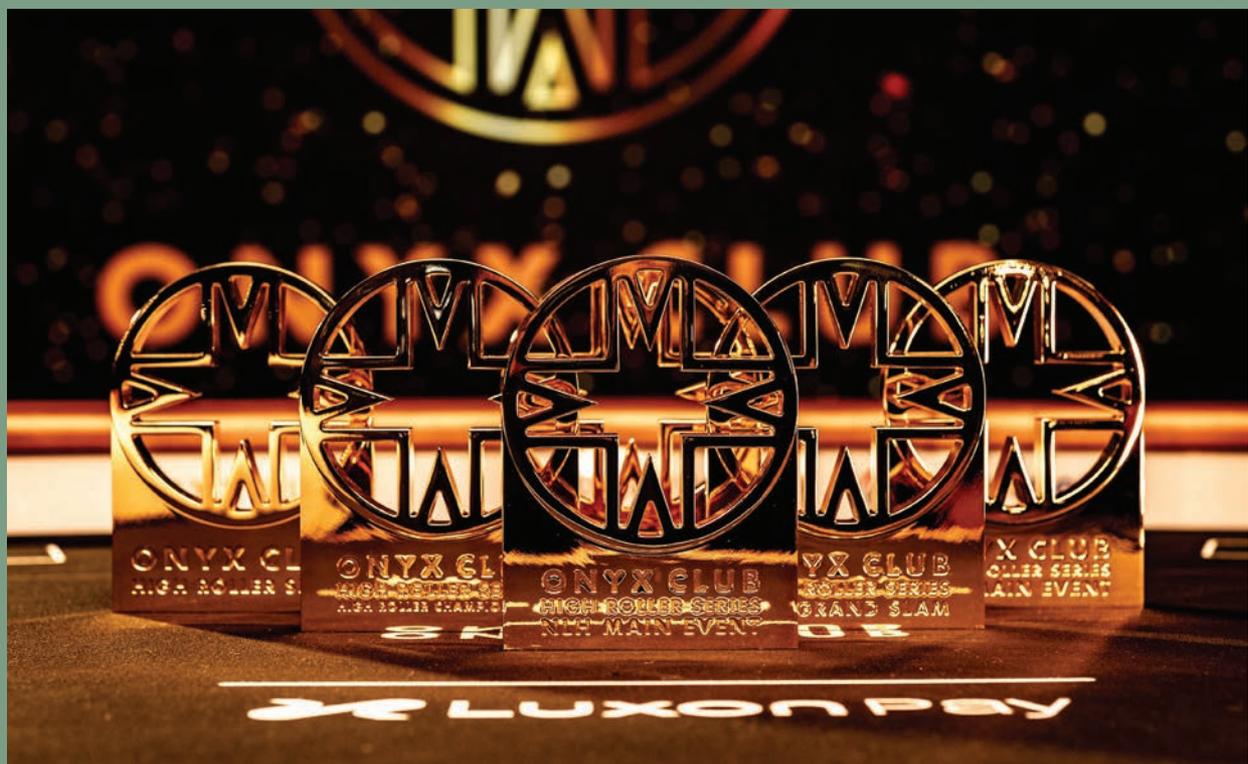
Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$25,500 PLO Feb. 9-12	1 Nino Pansier	\$1,125,000	1,176
	2 Justin Steinbrenner	\$710,000	980
\$5,000,000 GTD Entries: 199 Prizepool: \$4,800,000	3 Youness Barakat	\$483,000	784
	4 Espen Sandvik	\$340,000	588
	5 Artur Martirosian	\$250,000	490
	6 Lautaro Guerra	\$190,000	392
	7 Tomasz Krzesinski	\$143,000	294
	8 Bassel Alanaz	\$112,000	196
	9 Maksim Shuts	\$112,000	98

Event	Player	Payout	POY
\$10,400 PLO 6-Max Feb. 7	1 Mads Amot	\$163,800	300
	2 Youness Barakat	\$111,600	250
Entries: 57 Prizepool: \$547,200	3 Lucas Vandenbelt	\$81,400	200
	4 Carlo van Ravenswoud	\$54,100	150
	5 Krasimir Yankov	\$41,300	125
	6 Sean Rafael	\$30,500	100

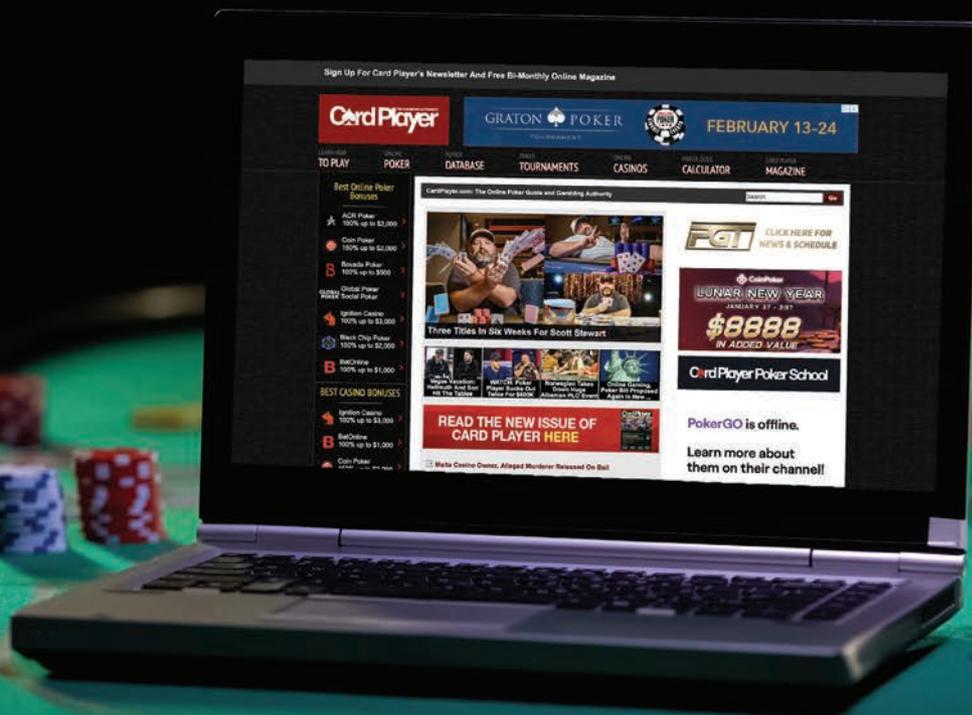
Event	Player	Payout
\$50,500 PLO Feb. 11-12	1 Gruffudd Pugh Jones	\$218,400
	2 Laszlo Bujtas	\$117,600
Entries: 7 Prizepool: \$336,000		

Event	Player	Payout
\$10,400 PLO Feb. 8	1 Nino Pansier	\$62,200
	2 Youness Barakat	\$43,100
	3 Aku Joentausta	\$29,100
Entries: 14 Prizepool: \$134,400		

Event	Player	Payout
\$25,500 PLO KO Feb. 12	1 Quan Zhou	\$66,500
	2 Biao Ding	\$46,000
	3 Cesar Garcia	\$31,500
Entries: 12 Prizepool: \$144,000		



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WILLIAM LI WINS RECORD-SETTING APT JEJU CLASSIC

By Tim Fiorvanti



William Li enjoyed a whirlwind trip to Jeju, South Korea, culminating in a victory in the *APT Jeju Classic* main event. Li's win, worth \$394,162, was notable for several reasons.

The Red Deer, Alberta native multiplied his career-best live result by more than 10 times. It was a record that Li had set just days before this victory, finishing in third in a prelim event at the festival for \$38,651. And that score had already well outperformed his previous best cash of \$9,325.

After hoisting the *APT*'s signature gold lion trophy as the main event champion, Li celebrated the distance he'd traveled to find victory.

"This trophy represents a lot to me," Li said. "Over the past two years, I've played many tournaments. There were happy moments and frustrating ones, ups and downs along the way."

Beyond Li's personal accomplishments, the *APT* also set a significant record. The 1,718 entrants in the \$1,595 buy-in main event made for the largest live tournament field ever in South Korea. This broke the tour's own record, set in October 2025, when the *APT Jeju* main event drew 1,693 entries.

Li navigated five long days of poker to reach the *APT* promised land. He was one of the biggest stacks to bag on day 1A, but a rough second day saw him bag fewer chips than he started the day with. Li continued to survive and advance, though, all the way to a final table.

Among the final nine, Li started right in the middle of the pack with 20 big blinds and a dream. There were four Chinese players in the mix, two Japanese players, a Romanian, a Vietnamese player, and Li from Canada. Shintaro Sato ran the show for the first half of the final table, accumulating almost half the chips in play by the time the field was reduced to five.

Li finally started to make his move by eliminating Zu

Wang in fifth place, and he picked up a crucial double up after rivering a nine with $A\clubsuit 9\spadesuit$ against Christian Tabac Mihai's $A\spadesuit 8\spadesuit$, who had flopped an eight. Sato's pocket jacks then beat Zhang Lei's pocket tens, bouncing him in fourth place.

That decision created a butterfly effect that saw Li ascend to the championship. Sato picked off Mihai in third when his shove with $Q\clubsuit 3\clubsuit$ outflopped Mihai's $A\heartsuit K\clubsuit$. Li started at a disadvantage of more than 3:1 when heads-up play began, but a double on the very first hand, followed by a big hero call, gave him the lead and the title.

Ren Lin Shrugs Off Controversy, Takes POY Lead

The series featured nearly 100 events spanning 10 days. Ren 'Tony' Lin, pushing aside the controversy that hung around his neck following a real-time assistance online scandal, won his third and fourth live trophies of 2026 at this stop, making him an early POY frontrunner.

Lin had already started the year strong, taking down back-to-back titles at the debut of the *King Poker Cup Series* in South Korea in mid-January. He earned \$600,700 as the main event champion and another \$70,000 for a triumph in a mixed no-limit hold'em and pot-limit Omaha high roller at that stop.

Then, just a couple of weeks later, he scored another pair of victories in rapid succession at this *APT* festival, which was also held inside the same venue, LES A Casino.

Lin first topped a field of 115 entries in a \$10,000 buy-in, earning \$275,220 and 600 POY points. Then, just two days later he overcame 49 entries in the \$25,000 *Superstar Challenge* to add another \$321,364 and 420 points.

With 2,028 total points, Lin has moved into first place in the 2026 standings. Lin is no stranger to success in the POY race. He finished fifth in the overall standings in 2023 and seventh the following year. This strong start to the new year has seen Lin's career haul grow to nearly \$19.1 million,



with 13 recorded victories and 275 in-the-money finishes. Five-time *World Series of Poker* bracelet winner **John Juanda** was among the many trophy winners of the festival, taking down a single-day turbo high roller.

Among the biggest winners was **Siyu Ji** of China. She emerged victorious in the *Zodiac Classic*, a \$2,500 buy-in event that drew 426 entries and netted her a career-best

\$172,027 payday. **Guang Zhou** also found the winner's circle, outlasting a field of 312 entrants in a \$3,120 buy-in tournament for a \$165,400 payday.

Rudy Edenata secured \$158,800 as the winner of the *APT* mini main event during the final days of the series, beating a field of 259 players. ♠

APT Jeju Classic - LES A Casino - Jeju, South Korea



Event	Player	Payout	POY
KRW 15,000,000 NLH Jan. 31-Feb. 1 KRW 500,000,000 GTD Entries: 115 Prizepool: \$1,103,880	1 Ren Lin	\$275,220	600
	2 Ryuta Nakai	\$185,960	500
	3 Quang Dinh Do	\$120,875	400
	4 Khoa Anh Ngo	\$100,090	300
	5 Guoliang Wei	\$80,730	250
	6 Ryan Plant	\$63,670	200
	7 Yosuke Miki	\$48,680	150
	8 Kento Nasu	\$36,645	100
	9 Paulius Plausinaitis	\$27,350	50

Event	Player	Payout	POY
KRW 2,300,000 NLH Feb. 1-7 KRW 2,200,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,718 Prizepool: \$2,307,319	1 William Li	\$394,162	1,080
	2 Shintaro Sato	\$220,272	900
	3 Cristian Tabac Mihai	\$154,034	720
	4 Zhang Lei	\$111,629	540
	5 Zu Wang	\$88,937	450
	6 Quang Nguyen	\$70,761	360
	7 Naohiro Arita	\$54,074	270
	8 Haohui Ma	\$38,162	180
	9 Yuefeng Pan	\$29,179	90

Event	Player	Payout	POY
KRW 4,500,000 NLH Feb. 2-3 Entries: 312 Prizepool: \$830,337	1 Guang Zhou	\$165,400	720
	2 Yuzhu Wang	\$109,956	600
	3 Chang Liu	\$80,424	480
	4 Robert Nemeskeri-Kiss	\$64,920	360
	5 Alexandru Papazian	\$50,898	300
	6 Shu Liu	\$38,522	240
	7 Jiahao Zhang	\$28,295	180
	8 Qiang Xu	\$20,788	120
	9 Weihong Liu	\$17,238	60

Event	Player	Payout	POY
KRW 35,000,000 NLH Feb. 2-3 Entries: 49 Prizepool: \$1,121,946	1 Ren Lin	\$321,364	420
	2 Minh Quang Nguyen	\$236,828	350
	3 Fendy Kosasih	\$158,445	280
	4 Khoa Anh Ngo	\$119,517	210
	5 Lester Edoc	\$85,041	175
	6 Paulius Plausinaitis	\$63,366	140
	7 Joseph Cheong	\$50,578	105
	8 Huu Nguyen	\$41,129	70
	9 Ryuta Nakai	\$35,571	35

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TOURNAMENTS



TOURNAMENTS



Event	Player	Payout	POY
KRW 3,500,000 NLH Feb. 3 Entries: 179 Prizepool: \$368,080	1 Peng Chen	\$85,568	468
	2 Hao Zhu	\$57,970	390
	3 William Li	\$38,651	312
	4 Methavee Taveekitvatee	\$31,654	234
	5 Andres Vasquez	\$25,398	195
	6 Iwamoto Goh	\$19,693	156
	7 Nang Nguyen	\$14,579	117
	8 Yu He	\$10,710	78
	9 Dylan Foster	\$8,541	39

Event	Player	Payout	POY
KRW 5,000,000 NLH Feb. 4-5 Entries: 174 Prizepool: \$511,146	1 Renji Mao	\$118,844	468
	2 Ryuta Nakai	\$80,505	390
	3 Nevan Chang	\$53,672	312
	4 Yifan Cao	\$43,955	234
	5 Hao Zhu	\$35,272	195
	6 Mengshi Tian	\$27,343	156
	7 Guodong Jiang	\$20,244	117
	8 Sho Homma	\$14,872	78
	9 Yuzhu Wang	\$11,859	39

Event	Player	Payout
KRW 2,000,000 NLH Feb. 5 Entries: 39 Prizepool: \$45,827	1 John Juanda	\$16,961
	2 Iwamoto Goh	\$11,682
	3 Wai Chiang	\$7,446
	4 Bei Shi	\$5,386
	5 Yingjie Chen	\$4,352

Event	Player	Payout	POY
KRW 3,600,000 NLH Feb. 5-6 KRW 500,000,000 GTD Entries: 426 Prizepool: \$897,126	1 Siyu Ji	\$172,027	1,080
	2 Yi Zhang	\$108,732	900
	3 Jingfeng Zhu	\$77,982	720
	4 Yuhan Liu	\$61,941	540
	5 Nicholas Wang	\$48,572	450
	6 Akshay Nasa	\$38,053	360
	7 Ya Liu	\$28,608	270
	8 Xu Pan	\$20,318	180
	9 Zhiyi Wang	\$16,218	90

Event	Player	Payout	POY
KRW 1,200,000 NLH Feb. 6-7 KRW 300,000,000 GTD Entries: 812 Prizepool: \$576,268	1 Emad Zarghami	\$100,247	456
	2 Bowen Xue	\$74,800	380
	3 Zhi Zhou	\$46,791	304
	4 Ka Ho Ip	\$35,238	228
	5 Jing Wang	\$27,785	190
	6 Shuang Bao	\$20,856	152
	7 Zi Zhao	\$14,844	114
	8 Matthew Chan	\$10,282	76
	9 Haibo Yang	\$8,133	38

Event	Player	Payout	POY
KRW 15,000,000 NLH Feb. 6 Entries: 47 Prizepool: \$441,768	1 Chung Cheung	\$139,154	300
	2 Chang Hwan Lee	\$100,504	250
	3 Toan Chan Truong	\$64,056	200
	4 Anonymous		
	5 Xixiang Luo	\$37,550	125
	6 Peng Chen	\$28,716	100
	7 Punnat Punsri	\$23,195	75

Event	Player	Payout	POY
KRW 5,000,000 NLH Feb. 7-8 KRW 700,000,000 GTD Entries: 259 Prizepool: \$755,846	1 Rudy Edenata	\$158,800	612
	2 Weiran Pu	\$106,923	510
	3 Chang Hwan Lee	\$75,385	408
	4 Chi Tran	\$61,118	306
	5 Jun Chen	\$48,355	255
	6 Jun Lin	\$36,720	204
	7 Haohui Ma	\$26,806	153
	8 Joseph Cheong	\$19,598	102
	9 Toan Chan Truong	\$16,218	51

Event	Player	Payout
KRW 7,000,000 NLH Feb. 8 Entries: 17 Prizepool: \$73,799	1 Jun Obara	\$35,420
	2 Ming Chen	\$23,616
	3 Hidenari Tomita	\$14,763



MAURICE HAWKINS TRIUMPHS TWICE IN TUNICA, GROWS RECORD RING COUNT TO 23

By Tim Fiorvanti

Maurice Hawkins captured two *World Series of Poker Circuit* titles in just over a week at the Horseshoe Tunica stop, extending his lead on the all-time rings leaderboard with 23. That put him three wins ahead of Ari Engel's 20.

Hawkins earned \$35,146 for taking down the \$400 buy-in, \$150,000 guaranteed mini main event. He beat out 625 entries to grow his count to 22 rings. He then outlasted a field of 127 in a single-day \$400 no-limit hold'em event to earn \$10,473 and yet another piece of gold jewelry. The double dip also locked up casino champion honors, which came with a seat into the 2026 *WSOP* main event in July.

Hawkins' success at the table is undeniable, though even in his brightest moments, he remains a controversial figure. His issues with backers have been well documented, and Hawkins was even targeted in an attack at the table in late 2025.

These two rings mark the fifth time Hawkins has won multiple rings in a single month, and the fourth instance of multiple wins in a single series. His second win, which came on his birthday, was his fourth overall at Horseshoe Tunica, tying it with his record of four wins at Harrah's Cherokee.

The Florida pro now has more than \$6.8 million in recorded tournament scores to his name after his successful showing in Mississippi. He now sits just outside the top 30 in the *Card Player* Player of the Year race, with six POY-qualified final tables so far in 2026.



Player	Payout	POY
1 Maurice Hawkins	\$35,146	336
2 William Stanford	\$23,408	280
3 Jermaine Coleman	\$16,249	224
4 Gerard Thorpe	\$11,507	168
5 Cullen Oldham	\$8,317	140
6 Joseph Brewer	\$6,138	112
7 Alexander Hoff	\$4,627	84
8 Benjamin Kramer	\$3,565	56
9 Jason Morris	\$2,808	28

© PokerStars / Manuel Kovsca

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2026 Onyx High Roller Series
\$100,000 No-Limit Hold'em



Pieter Aerts
10,805,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 58%
After Flop: 80%
After Turn: 89%



Emilien Pitavy
3,790,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 42%
After Flop: 20%
After Turn: 11%

PREFLOP

With six players remaining and blinds of 150,000-300,000 with a big blind ante of 300,000, Pieter Aerts raised to 600,000 from the cutoff, and Emilien Pitavy called from the big blind.

FLOP



Pitavy checked, and Aerts bet 500,000. Pitavy called.

TURN



Both players checked.

RIVER



Pitavy bet 800,000, and Aerts raised all-in. Pitavy called all-in for 1,890,000 more.

COMMENTARY:

The *Onyx High Roller Series* \$100,000 no-limit hold'em main event drew 50 entries and paid eight places, so the remaining six players to start this hand were in the money for \$280,000. They were playing for \$1.5 million up top, and the top-heavy payout structure incentivized the players to focus on laddering, meaning the ICM implications were magnified a bit. Since three players also had fewer than 25 blinds, that pressure ratcheted up even further when this hand was dealt. Even essentially tied for the shortest stack, Emilien Pitavy had to err on the side of caution against Pieter Aerts. Still, Q-9 was too strong to fold preflop for one more blind. On the flop, Aerts had a pure continuation-bet. The A-Q-8 texture strongly favored his range, while the big blind was missing many strong A-X holdings, since those hands would most likely be shoved preflop. Aerts did good work on the turn finding the check back, as he would be playing some checks with his range, and the weakest A-X hands fit best there. The river card was quite good for Pitavy, but the ICM pressure was so heavy that he was actually supposed to bet only his best Q-X hands, which should have been Q-J in this case. Against the shove, Q-J was indifferent, with the solver actually preferring a fold. So, unless he thought Aerts was bluffing too aggressively, Pitavy was a bit too gung-ho in this hand on the river and wound up busting in sixth place as a result.

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

XIAOSHENG ZHENG VICTORIOUS IN WPT CAMBODIA CHAMPIONSHIP

By Tim Fiorvanti

Xiaosheng Zheng outlasted a field of 425 entrants in the *WPT Cambodia Championship* event at NagaWorld Integrated Resort in Phnom Penh, earning \$244,500.

Zheng defeated Michael O'Neill heads up in the \$3,500 buy-in tournament to add his name to the Mike Sexton *WPT Champions Cup*. The final two did an ICM chop before the start of their match, and O'Neill actually walked away with the larger payout of \$249,700 despite finishing second.

This was Zheng's second significant result at this venue. In 2024, the Chinese player finished second in a special *WPT Cambodia* passport event for \$118,130.

It took two starting flights and four more days of combined-field action to decide a winner in this event. Chengcai Pan started the final table with the slightest lead, followed closely by Pang Kok Yong. Yong lost a big pot right off the bat, bluffing a chunk of his stack to Zheng in the early moments of the final table. That pot put Zheng ahead for the first time, and started a rapid tumble for Yong, who went on to finish sixth for \$63,000. Earlier in the series, he had placed third in the *WPT Prime Cambodia* event for another \$76,000.

Bracelet winner Julien Sitbon (5th - \$83,000), Pan (4th - \$110,000), and Kunal Patni (3rd - \$145,000) all eventually joined Yong on the rail. Zheng and O'Neill played over 100 more hands before O'Neill eventually ran A♦ J♣ into Zheng's pocket aces.



O'Neill's second-place prize represents the bulk of all his live career tournament earnings. The Irish player's previous best live result was for \$15,552.

Player	Payout	POY
1 Xiaosheng Zheng	\$244,500	1,080
2 Micheal O'Neill	\$249,700	900
3 Kunal Patni	\$145,000	720
4 Chengcai Pan	\$110,000	540
5 Julien Sitbon	\$83,000	450
6 Pang Kok Yong	\$63,000	360
7 Pedro Coloma	\$48,500	270
8 Alen Bakovic	\$38,000	180
9 David Wang	\$29,500	90

© MSPT

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2026 Onyx High Roller Series
\$100,000 No-Limit Hold'em



Rob Yong
16,635,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 12%
After Flop: 3%
After Turn: 0%

Jean-Robert Bellande
10,550,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 15%
After Flop: 4%
After Turn: (Folded)



Pieter Aerts
13,995,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 69%
After Flop: 91%
After Turn: 100%

PREFLOP

With five players remaining and blinds of 200,000-400,000 with a big blind ante of 400,000, Rob Yong raised to 800,000 from the cutoff. Pieter Aerts called from the button, and Jean-Robert Bellande called from the big blind.



Bellande checked, and Yong bet 1,100,000. Aerts called, and Bellande folded.



Yong bet 2,500,000, and Aerts called.



Yong bet 4,000,000, and Aerts folded.

COMMENTARY:

The five remaining players in the *Onyx High Roller Series* \$100,000 main event were in the money for \$375,000, and the ICM pressure was still high due to the top-heavy payouts. Pieter Aerts was feeling the heat as the second stack, with Rob Yong having opened on the leading stack. Therefore, pocket tens, normally a fine hand to three-bet and get in at 35 big blinds, was actually better off played as a call. Aerts correctly made the safer play, which also invited Jean-Robert Bellande along for a nice price. Yong flopped an overcard and a backdoor flush draw, and he decided to start betting. It wouldn't be an advisable play without the chip lead, but he had some good turn cards to keep betting, and he was likely to get more folds against the next two big stacks in the current chip distribution. Aerts had a nice hand to slow play, given that he'd be comfortable stacking off on most runouts and he had position. The turn completed the most obvious draw, and Yong kept the pressure on. Many players have an instinct to shut down without a diamond in these spots, but it's actually important to keep bluffing with some combos that don't contain a diamond. Otherwise, the player won't have any bluffs on the boards that run out with a four-flush. Aerts made the mandatory call, and that's exactly what transpired on the river. Yong understood the situation and followed through, putting Aerts in a tough spot. At that point, a set was not close to the top of his range, and having tens in his hand meant he was blocking only bluffs like A-10 and K-10. Reasonably, he folded, and Yong got to show a flashy bluff which put him further into the lead.

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)

ALEX FOXEN WINS MSPT POKER BOWL X

By Erik Fast

The NFL's Seattle Seahawks weren't the only big winners during the first weekend of February. Just as the Seahawks earned their second championship, high-stakes poker tournament pro Alex Foxen locked up his second career *Major Series of Poker: The Tour* title by taking down the 2026 *MSPT Poker Bowl X*.

The 35-year-old former Boston College tight end defeated a field of 740 entries in the \$1,600 buy-in, \$1,000,000 guaranteed event, earning \$165,235 for the win.

Foxen's first *MSPT* triumph came back in 2018, when he took down a \$5,000 buy-in event run by the tour. Both wins took place at Venetian Las Vegas. In 2018, he earned \$239,000 as the champion after striking a heads-up deal with then-girlfriend, now-wife, Kristen Foxen.

Foxen defeated Miquel Maines (\$122,698) heads-up, earning 912 POY points for the win. This was already his second title of the year, having taken down a \$10,000 turbo at the end of the *PokerGO Tour Last Chance* series to narrowly secure the *PGT* Player of the Year award. He now has \$56.6 million in earnings after his latest win, which was the 35th of his career.

The two title runs put Foxen in ninth place in the 2026 POY standings, which are presented by CoinPoker. It's a familiar spot for the high-stakes crusher, who has been one of the most consistent performers in the POY race for the better part of the last decade. In fact, he's placed in the top 10 every year since 2016, with a 19th-place showing in 2017



being the only exception. He's never won the award, but he's come incredibly close, finishing runner-up in 2019, third in 2018 and 2025, and fourth in 2021 and 2022.

Player	Payout	POY
1 Alex Foxen	\$165,235	912
2 Miquel Maimes	\$122,698	760
3 Joseph Serock	\$92,076	608
4 Justin Lapka	\$69,817	456
5 Nicholas Palma	\$53,495	380
6 Aaron Klausman	\$41,426	304
7 Hunter Cichy	\$32,422	228
8 Kenneth Kim	\$25,652	152
9 Daniel Sepiol	\$20,519	76

© WSOP

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2026 Onyx High Roller Series
\$100,000 No-Limit Hold'em



Jean-Robert Bellande
12,265,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 63%
After Flop: 78%
After Turn: 91%



Rob Yong
37,235,000 Chips



Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 37%
After Flop: 21%
After Turn: 9%

PREFLOP

With two players remaining and blinds of 200,000-500,000 with a big blind ante of 500,000, Jean-Robert Bellande raised to 1,000,000 on the button, and Rob Yong called from the big blind.

COMMENTARY:

Jean-Robert Bellande and Rob Yong were heads up in the *Onyx High Roller Series* \$100,000 main event and playing for a \$500,000 difference between the top two payouts. At about 24 big blinds with a full ante out there, the small blind strategy includes a lot of mixing, including some shoves. Against a limp, the big blind should also shove pretty often, especially with weaker A-X hands. All of that is to say that when the flop came down A-K-Q, both players were pretty deficient in top pair, though Bellande certainly had the stronger range after min-raising the button. Yong should have been all in preflop with most of his offsuit A-X. Bellande had a reasonable hand to check back on the flop, though he could have bet small for value. Yong decided to start bluffing the turn, and he had a decent hand for it. He blocked the nuts, could credibly bluff on a heart river, and would block low straights on some rivers as well. A bigger sizing would have been better, as the small size failed to put significant pressure on Bellande's pairs. Bellande had no reason to raise. A wheel card did hit the river, and Yong followed through with an all-in overbet. While this size isn't used much by the solver, it actually is a possibility, and a hand like 10-5 that blocks straights is a prime candidate. Bellande's hand was a good hero call candidate, especially combos without a heart in them, since those would be some of the turn bluffing hands used by Yong. Bellande called almost immediately, so he clearly wasn't in the mood to give Yong much credit, and he was rewarded with a double that squared up the chip stacks.



Both players checked.



Yong bet 1,000,000, and Bellande called.



Yong moved all-in. Bellande called all-in for 10,265,000.

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

MSPT STANDOUT UMUT OZTURK STRIKES AGAIN

By Tim Fiorvanti

Umut Ozturk's first-ever *MSPT* victory came in February 2023 in St. Louis. He finished the season with 17 total cashes and five top-10 showings, more than enough to earn *MSPT* Player of the Year honors.

In 2024, Ozturk posted 19 more cashes and three more final-table appearances. That was enough to make him the back-to-back *MSPT* POY winner.

There were three more close calls in 2025, and Ozturk ultimately finished second in the POY race, falling just short of a historic three-peat.

He broke through again in Cleveland in February, taking down the *MSPT Ohio Poker State Championship* for \$89,638. Ozturk outlasted a field of 801 entrants in the \$1,100 buy-in no-limit hold'em event at the JACK Cleveland Casino on his way to victory. The top 89 players split the \$775,470 prizepool.

The tournament concluded with a five-way ICM deal. Joseph Saltanovitz took home \$85,549 for second place, while Antonio Ndoja picked up \$79,087 for third, Ryan Rebman banked \$77,394 for fourth, and Haroldo Perez pocketed \$70,357 for fifth after the negotiation. For Saltanovitz, Ndoja, and Rebman, these were career-best cashes. Perez had previously pocketed \$101,704 for a second-place *MSPT* finish back in August 2025.

Since his first *MSPT* win, Ozturk has two second-place finishes, two thirds, three fourths, and two fifth-place results in *MSPT* main events. He now has nearly \$1.3 million in total tournament earnings to his name after this latest triumph,



nearly \$1 million of which has been won on the *MSPT*. Ozturk is currently in a virtual three-way tie for first-place on the tour's all-time rankings with Rob Wazwaz and Josh Reichard. ♠

Player	Payout	POY
1 Umut Ozturk	\$89,638	912
2 Joseph Saltanovitz	\$85,549	760
3 Antonio Ndoja	\$79,087	608
4 Ryan Rebman	\$77,394	456
5 Haroldo Perez	\$70,357	380
6 Dane Miller	\$29,500	304
7 Benjamin Skelley	\$22,692	228
8 Jon Lewis	\$17,397	152
9 Kris Davis	\$13,615	76

© MSPT

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CIRCUIT RESULTS

Nathanial Hutton



© PlayLive

Event	Player	Payout	POV
Melbourne Millions PlayLive	1 Nathanial Hutton	\$111,029	912
	2 David White	\$83,590	760
	3 Chi Truong	\$45,795	608
Melbourne, Australia	4 Shane Mann	\$32,518	456
	5 Daniel Francis	\$27,122	380
A\$1,500 NLH Jan. 18-Feb. 3	6 Damon Damon	\$22,578	304
A\$500,000 GTD Entries: 797 Prizepool: \$731,751	7 Alan Pham	\$18,815	228
	8 Hankun Zhao	\$14,413	152
	9 Jarred Graham	\$14,413	76

Luis Arceyut



© Costa Rica Festival

Event	Player	Payout	POV
Costa Rica Festival	1 Luis Arceyut	\$48,330	420
	2 Marek Ohnisko	\$30,450	350
	3 Paul Tacsan	\$22,140	280
Sheraton Hotel San Jose, Costa Rica	4 Roy Teresa	\$15,920	210
	5 Alvaro Molina	\$10,775	175
\$550 NLH Jan. 28-Feb. 1	6 Paul Cukier	\$7,630	140
\$200,000 GTD Entries: 504 Prizepool: \$238,610	7 Andrii Dorofieiev	\$5,850	105
	8 James Harvey	\$4,525	70
	9 Christopher Poulton	\$3,760	35

David Yount



© WSOP / Poker.org

Event	Player	Payout	POV
WSOP Circuit	1 David Yount	\$132,570	720
	2 Dustin Murphy	\$88,105	600
Horseshoe Robinsonville, MS	3 Donovan Dean	\$59,830	480
	4 David Moses	\$41,527	360
\$1,700 NLH Jan. 30-Feb. 2	5 Danny Griffith	\$29,475	300
	6 Marcus Paxton	\$21,404	240
\$500,000 GTD Entries: 433 Prizepool: \$655,995	7 Sokchheka Pho	\$15,911	180
	8 Jared Ingles	\$12,115	120
	9 Luther Tran	\$9,454	60

Jason Law



© Playground

Event	Player	Payout	POV
WPT Global Winter Classic	1 Jason Law	\$87,217	912
	2 Dan Scott	\$73,653	760
Playground Poker Kahnawake, Canada	3 Eric Afriat	\$60,860	608
	4 Daniel Watton	\$52,750	456
	5 Kevin Cook	\$29,200	380
C\$1,150 NHL Jan. 29-Feb. 1	6 Daune Fernandez	\$21,900	304
	7 Santiago Plante	\$18,250	228
C\$600,000 GTD Entries: 841 Prizepool: \$615,886	8 Francis Chevalier	\$14,600	152
	9 Aaron Parsons	\$10,950	76

All payouts in USD.

TOURNAMENTS



© Venetian

Event	Player	Payout	POV
DeepStack Venetian Las Vegas, NV \$800 NLH Jan. 29-Feb. 1 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 385 Prizepool: \$265,650	1 Victoria Livschitz	\$50,044	300
	2 Quang Ngo	\$35,531	250
	3 James Agate	\$25,622	200
	4 Scott Eskenazi	\$18,768	150
	5 Jessica Vierling	\$13,967	125
	6 Pavel Heger	\$10,563	100
	7 Sayan Mondal	\$8,121	75
	8 Manish Dhar	\$6,349	50
	9 Shundan Xiao	\$5,048	25



© WSOP / Poker.org

Event	Player	Payout	POV
WSOP Circuit Harrah's Pompano Beach, FL \$1,700 NLH Feb. 5-9 \$1,000,000 GTD Entries: 925 Prizepool: \$1,468,900	1 Zachary Fischer	\$233,384	912
	2 Nicholas Blumenthal	\$155,559	760
	3 Elliott Kampen	\$108,558	608
	4 Matthew Lambrecht	\$77,028	456
	5 Caio Sobral	\$55,588	380
	6 Jeffery Schneider	\$40,811	304
	7 Mukul Pahuja	\$30,491	228
	8 Kayla Clackum	\$23,191	152
	9 Howard Mash	\$17,961	76



© WSOP / Poker.org

Event	Player	Payout	POV
WSOP Circuit Harrah's Pompano Beach, FL \$600 NLH Jan. 29-Feb. 1 \$250,000 GTD Entries: 1,178 Prizepool: \$606,670	1 Dorian Rios	\$89,773	480
	2 Anastasija Zavorotnaja	\$59,826	400
	3 Matthew Yorra	\$41,701	320
	4 Richard Leger	\$29,635	240
	5 Jessica Cai	\$22,716	200
	6 Steven Karp	\$15,884	160
	7 Richard Davis	\$11,990	120
	8 Zyad Qasem	\$9,243	80
	9 Jorge Martinez	\$7,279	40



© Live! Casino

Event	Player	Payout	POV
Mid-Atlantic Poker Open Live! Casino Hanover, MD \$2,200 NLH Jan. 30-Feb. 1 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 331 Prizepool: \$648,098	1 Christian Harder	\$106,897	480
	2 Lara Eisenberg	\$97,813	400
	3 Justin Arnwine	\$88,043	320
	4 Brian Altman	\$49,415	240
	5 Joe McKeehen	\$37,200	200
	6 Russ Dunlevy	\$28,360	160
	7 Charles Goelz	\$21,900	120
	8 Nathan Bomey	\$17,100	80
	9 David Zielinski	\$13,575	40

TOURNAMENTS



Aram Ali

© Kings Resort

Event	Player	Payout
Italian Poker Sport	1 Aram Ali	\$242,463
	2 Daniele Sacchi	\$150,833
Kings Casino Rozvadov, Czech Republic	3 Antonio De Lucia	\$109,183
	4 Marian Uharcek	\$81,813
	5 Dalibor Dula	\$62,416
€380 NLH Jan. 30-Feb. 10 €1,500,000 GTD Entries: 5,258 Prizepool: \$2,014,224	6 Andrea Marchi	\$47,541
	7 Mauro Ortu	\$36,831
	8 Cengiz Schwalgun	\$28,858
	9 Michal Schuh	\$22,627



Donghai Huang

© Poker Dream

Event	Player	Payout	POV
Poker Dream	1 Donghai Huang	\$150,800	540
	2 Ritesh Khatwani	\$88,814	450
Resorts World Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	3 Chin Lim	\$62,452	360
	4 Jun Hao Wu	\$46,800	270
	5 Joel Chan	\$35,828	225
RM 2,400 NLH Feb. 3-9 RM 4,000,000 GTD Entries: 1,570 Prizepool: \$827,894	6 Taeil Kim	\$26,494	180
	7 Vladimir Martynov	\$20,202	135
	8 Patcharapon Yoskai	\$14,404	90
	9 Yi Fong	\$11,180	45



Andrey Kalgin

© WPT

Event	Player	Payout	POV
WPT & WPT Prime	1 Andrey Kalgin	\$154,170	960
	2 Joshua Figuerres	\$103,000	800
NagaWorld Phnom Penh, Cambodia	3 Pang Kok Yong	\$76,000	640
	4 Hwisoo Kim	\$58,000	480
	5 Tomas Dedinas	\$43,500	400
\$1,100 NLH Jan. 30-Feb. 3 \$750,000 GTD Entries: 1,095 Prizepool: \$1,062,150	6 Ilias Sagias	\$33,000	320
	7 Jan Leoncio	\$25,000	240
	8 Rindra Norodom	\$19,800	160
	9 Chak Chan	\$15,600	80



Yuan Xu

© Poker Dream

Event	Player	Payout	POV
Poker Dream	1 Yuan Xu	\$74,031	336
	2 Eugene Yujian Zhou	\$72,540	280
Resorts World Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	3 Yang Zhang	\$39,780	224
	4 Juyeol Lee	\$30,680	168
	5 Defeng Liu	\$24,440	140
RM 20,000 NLH Feb. 5-6 Entries: 73 Prizepool: \$311,671	6 Sean Ooi	\$18,980	112
	7 Zhen Tay	\$15,080	84
	8 Harry Halim	\$11,700	56
	9 Yang Ang	\$8,840	28

TOURNAMENTS



© Smart Poker Tour

Event	Player	Payout	POY
Smart Poker Tour Monte Casino Sofia, Bulgaria €1,000 NLH Feb. 4-8 €200,000 GTD Entries: 213 Prizepool: \$238,000	1 Miroslav Rizov	\$56,525	360
	2 Nikolay Dulichki	\$35,700	300
	3 Martin Tsankov	\$23,800	240
	4 Borislav Savov	\$17,017	180
	5 Petar Tzvetanov	\$12,376	150
	6 Paul Carr	\$9,877	120
	7 Ivan Uzunov	\$8,211	90
	8 Kiril Kochov	\$6,902	60
	9 Boris Velez	\$5,712	30



© bestbet Jacksonville

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
Blizzard on the Beach bestbet Jacksonville, FL \$400 NLH Feb. 5-8 \$200,000 GTD Entries: 967 Prizepool: \$314,275	1 Aaron Lucas	\$68,622	365
	2 Joseph Jordan	\$40,120	304
	3 Carson Nennstiel	\$24,341	243
	4 Donald Eckert	\$15,230	182
	5 Juan Tellez	\$10,451	152
	6 Joseph Frizzi	\$8,665	122
	7 Herbert Gartner	\$7,427	91
	8 Harold Park	\$6,189	61
	9 Adam Harrell	\$5,261	30



© PlayLive

Event	Player	Payout
Melbourne Mix PlayLive Melbourne, Australia A\$10,500 H.O.R.S.E. Feb. 4-5 Entries: 17 Prizepool: \$120,700	1 James Obst	\$48,280
	2 Yuanting Wang	\$30,175
	3 Ashish Gupta	\$24,140
	4 Bradley Maltz	\$18,105



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Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
Utrecht Poker Series Holland Casino Utrecht, Netherlands €790 NLH Feb. 5-8 Entries: 785 Prizepool: \$623,121	1 Marijn Degens	\$92,138	456
	2 Adam Salamov	\$60,972	380
	3 Albert Hoekendijk	\$43,498	304
	4 Marcel Vonk	\$33,460	228
	5 Sonke Lill	\$25,838	190
	6 Koen Bijsterveldt	\$20,014	152
	7 Hong Ma	\$15,552	114
	8 Gert-Jan Van der Linde	\$12,145	76
	9 Wouter De Graaf	\$9,480	38

TOURNAMENTS



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Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
Winamax Casino Admiral Sevilla, Spain €550 NLH Feb. 11-15 Entries: 822 Prizepool: \$413,384	1 Ramon Fernandez	\$70,800	456
	2 Manuel Cordero	\$48,380	380
	3 Pedro Perez	\$30,798	304
	4 Bruno Simoes	\$22,420	228
	5 David Algarra Vidana	\$16,520	190
	6 Sergei Kremensukov	\$11,800	152
	7 Igor Sousa	\$8,850	114
	8 Gonzalo Mencia	\$7,080	76
	9 Eloy Cordoba	\$5,900	38



© CAPT

Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
CAPT	1 Ole Schemion	\$118,000	384
	2 Soysal Ozkan	\$79,650	320
Casino Seefeld Triol, Austria €2,200 NLH Feb. 12-15 Entries: 236 Prizepool: \$556,979	3 Max Neugebauer	\$56,227	256
	4 Adrian Strobel	\$40,356	192
	5 Leonard Herrmann	\$29,736	160
	6 Max Broens	\$23,364	128
	7 Anonymous	NA	
	8 Thomas Lentrod	\$14,750	64



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Event	Player	Payout	(POY)
Potomac Poker Open	1 Edgar Propst	\$109,787	540
	2 Matthew Sherman	\$105,413	450
MGM National Harbor Oxon Hill, MD \$600 NLH Feb. 11-15 \$500,000 GTD Entries: 1,635 Prizepool: \$825,675	3 Liam Schmidt	\$85,839	360
	4 Cody Walker	\$39,847	270
	5 Jimmy Born	\$30,351	225
	6 Mukul Pahuja	\$23,658	180
	7 Valentin Lita	\$17,121	135
	8 Michael Vagnerini	\$14,399	90
	9 Christopher Mullooly	\$11,830	45



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Event	Player	Payout
Mixed Games SHRB Aria PokerGO Studio Las Vegas, NV \$5,300 8 Game Mix Feb. 13 Entries: 26 Prizepool: \$130,000	1 Maksim Pisarenko	\$58,500
	2 David Tarbet	\$36,400
	3 Ryan Hoenig	\$20,800
	4 Benjamin Miner	\$14,300

THE BEST WITHOUT A BRACELET



Rank	Player	Earnings	WSOP Final Tables	WSOP Earnings
1	Steve O'Dwyer	\$49,086,276	2	\$582,419
2	Christoph Vogelsang	\$47,749,767	10	\$10,353,466
3	Sean Winter	\$36,946,334	7	\$4,161,218
4	Ben Tollerene	\$32,439,847	5	\$8,101,149
5	Punnat Punsri	\$32,001,677	8	\$4,330,065
6	Patrik Antonius	\$31,867,015	5	\$1,824,685
7	Jean Noel Thorel	\$27,828,724	4	\$8,359,239
8	Aaron Zang	\$21,896,250	0	\$0
9	Sam Trickett	\$21,880,488	5	\$11,746,907
10	Jonathan Jaffe	\$21,129,146	9	\$6,449,483

With the 2026 *World Series of Poker* schedule now known, it is once again time to check in on the list of the most accomplished tournament poker players who have not yet won a *WSOP* gold bracelet.

At this point, every player inside the top 15 on poker's all-time money list has hoisted the gold. The dreaded 'best without a bracelet' list begins with 16th-ranked **Steve O'Dwyer** with nearly \$49.1 million in recorded scores to his name. The *European Poker Tour Grand Final* winner seems unlikely to remove himself anytime soon, as he has not cashed in a bracelet event since 2018, with a deep run in the *WSOP Europe* €100,000 high roller. His last cash at the summer series in Las Vegas was another five years before that.

Christoph Vogelsang and his \$47,749,767 in career cashes put him second on the list. The German has had plenty of success in *WSOP* events, with more than \$10.3 million in earnings and 10 final-table finishes over the years. His closest call saw him finish second in the 2022 \$25,000 heads-up no-limit hold'em championship that was ultimately won by Dan Smith, who himself spent quite a while near the top

of this list before finally getting the monkey off his back.

Sean Winter rounds out the top three with more than \$36.9 million in lifetime cashes. While he has seven final tables at the *WSOP*, his success in bracelet events is comparatively limited. Just \$4.1 million of his overall earnings have come from cashes at the series, with his top result being the \$1 million he earned for a runner-up showing in a \$50,000 high roller back in 2018.

Matthias Eibinger had been inside the top 10 for a while, but finally removed his name last December with a win in a *Triton* \$75,000 pot-limit Omaha event at the *WSOP Paradise*. Eibinger's win made room for Jonathan Jaffe to join the top 10. The *World Poker Tour* champion has more than \$21.1 million in lifetime scores, with more than \$6.4 million of that coming from his successes in bracelet events.

The two most likely names to be crossed off in the near future are Ben Tollerene and Punnat Punsri, who both enjoyed career years in 2025 with numerous wins on the high roller circuit between them. Tollerene has cashed for more than \$21 million over the last two years, while Punsri has racked up \$27 million in the last three. ♠

Final Table Takedown: Justin Saliba Turns The Car Around At Hard Rock

By Craig Tapscott



Justin Saliba graduated from the University of Dayton with a degree in chemical engineering, but the former college soccer player had already fallen in love with poker and decided to pursue his dream in Las Vegas.

The 31-year-old has been on an incredible run over the last few years, going from a relatively anonymous online grinder to a feared competitor in some of the biggest tournaments around.

His streak started in 2021 when he took down the \$5,000 no-limit hold'em event at the *WSOP Online* series for \$253,800 and his first bracelet. Saliba added his second bracelet at the 2022 *WSOP Online* series, winning the \$10,000 high roller event for \$154,752.

Saliba had a third-place finish at the *Rock N Roll Poker Open* \$25,000 event for \$402,634, and a fifth-place showing at *The Return* \$5,000 event at Borgata for \$304,629. He then won the *PokerGO Cup* \$10,000 event in January of 2023 for \$195,000, and days later took second at the *Lucky Hearts Poker Open* \$25,000 event for another \$353,175.

In the summer, he banked \$690,000 in a \$60,000 *Triton London* high roller, and in 2023, he finished third in the *WPT Championship* \$25,000 high roller for another \$525,087. His biggest score came in 2024, when he finished runner-up in a \$50,000 *Triton Montenegro* high roller for \$1,188,000. Later that year, he picked up \$512,465 and \$499,097 after two big final tables at the *World Series of Poker*.

Last September, Saliba won the \$15,000 event at the *Poker*

Masters for \$301,000 and his second *PGT* trophy. Most recently, he found the winner's circle again in south Florida, banking \$236,925 in a \$10,000 *Lucky Hearts Poker Open* side event. He now has career earnings of over \$11 million.

Event: Lucky Hearts Poker Open NLH
Buy-In: \$10,000
Entrants: 72
Prize Pool: \$684,000
First-Place Prize: \$236,925

Craig Tapscott: Set this event up for us, Justin. I read that you weren't planning on entering this tournament.

JS: I had a rough start to the Florida series. I bubbled the \$25,000 event after firing a couple of shells. And then busted the main event as we were nearing the money in disappointing fashion.

After I busted, I didn't register the \$10,000 right away. I left the property, had lunch, and considered skipping the event and just playing an online Sunday session. But after eating, I turned the car back around and was ready for more live poker action.

CT: Was there a tipping point that changed your mind that day?

JS: My good friend Brock Wilson told me I was being soft, that it was a good tournament, and I could play online any other Sunday I wanted. (laughs) That fired me up a bit. I was ready

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to get back to the casino and hop in, ready to play my best and run deep.

Luckily, I played a fun hand in the first level, which gave me some nice momentum.

HAND NO. 1

Stacks: Justin Saliba – 40,000 (80 BB) Villain 1 – 40,000 (80 BB) Villain 2 – 40,000 (80 BB)
Blinds: 300-500 with a 500 big blind ante
Players: 9

Saliba raised from the lojack to 1,100 holding 5♠ 5♦. Villain 1 called from the cutoff. Villain 2 called from the big blind.

JS: Both of the villains are strong players. Preflop, this is a standard raise with 5-5 from the lojack. Pairs play pretty well at deep stacks, especially when they make sets.

Flop: K♠ 8♠ 5♠

Villain 2 in the big blind checked.

JS: Luckily, I made the set that I was looking for, but unfortunately, it's a monotone flop.

CT: What's the plan to proceed?

JS: I need to be a bit careful because the cutoff and the big blind both have a ton of potential flushes. With that said, I really want to push equity here. Letting the action just check through on the flop would allow both to realize their equity

for free.

I went for a small c-bet.

Saliba bet 1,100, and Villain 1 called. Villain 2 raised to 6,000.

JS: The cutoff called, which is great. But once the big blind went for a large raise, I was immediately concerned that I was behind and needed to get lucky.

I called, looking to boat up on the turn, but I ended up getting lucky in a different way.

Saliba called, and Villain 1 folded.

Turn: 4♠

Villain 2 bet 4,000.

CT: Please explain how you got lucky here.

JS: Because the 4♠ is a very interesting card. When Villain 2 raised this large on the flop, I could somewhat discount nut flushes. I felt like he was weighted more towards weaker flushes that wanted a bit more protection, or the nut blocker that had equity but was looking for more folds.

Once the 4♠ came and I faced a small bet, I thought that it was pretty likely that the opponent had a jack- or queen-high flush. After I called the flop, I could have so many A♠-X combos in my range. My perceived range could have A♠ 9x, A♠ 10x, A♠ Jx, A♠ Qx, and A♠ Ax.

So, when he went small, I thought that I could represent the nut flush nicely and decided to turn my hand into a bluff.

Saliba raised to 15,000.

CT: I'm catching on now.

JS: Typically, when you are bluffing, you want to have equity against your opponent's continuing range, but it's really hard to do that on four-flush boards.

Luckily, my hand unblocks all of the potential weak flushes, and if he called my raise, I still have 10 outs to improve to a boat.

More importantly, though, I felt like a raise puts his range of hands in an awful spot, and my story was believable.

Villain 2 folded. Saliba won the pot of 36,200.

JS: Luckily, he thought for a bit and folded, showing the J♠ 2♠ combo, and I was able to pick up a nice early pot to build some momentum in the tournament.

CT: How did the rest of the day go?

JS: I had very smooth sailing on day 1. I bagged over 5x starting stacks and would come into day 2 as the chip leader.

With many people busting out of the WPT main late on day 2, the late reg line was very long the next day. It ended up getting over 70 entries, with everyone's eyes on the top prize of \$237,000.

Day 2 started quite well, busting a few of the short stacks and continuing to climb. Once we reached the final 10 players, it became clear what my strategy needed to be.

CT: Don't hold back on me now. Please share.

JS: With a first-place prize of \$237,000 and a pool of \$684,000, the tournament was extremely top-heavy. So, my strategy nearing the bubble and in the money was to play hyper-aggressively.

Luckily, the hyper-aggressive plays worked out. I was able to use the chip lead to my advantage and put a lot of pressure



on other players. It helped that I was running hot in the all-ins when I needed to have a really smooth day 2.

CT: Did heads-up go as easily as the rest of the tournament?

JS: It was quite tough, actually. And although I began with a chip lead, we swung to even stacks quite quickly.

HAND NO. 2

Stacks: Justin Saliba – 6,000,000 (40 BB) Villain – 5,700,000 (38 BB)

Blinds: 75,000-150,000 with a 150,000 big blind ante

Players: 2

CT: Did you adjust your strategy plan when you got down to heads-up?

JS: No. I was sticking to my aggressive strategy. Heads-up in live poker leads you to play 100 percent of hands on the button, because you're really fighting for pots when there is a full big blind ante in there.

You've already posted half a big blind, so if you're not willing to play aggressively, you may get run over.

Saliba raised to 450,000 from the button holding 8♦ 5♠.

JS: 8-5 offsuit is a very bad Texas hold'em hand, but I felt like the larger raise size to three big blinds, and raising often was working well.

CT: What kind of response do you expect from your opponent here to that raise sizing?

JS: Against the raise, he needs to three-bet often and call a ton of very weak hands to properly defend his big blind. I think people have a hard time doing both of those things. Unfortunately, on this hand, he did three-bet.

Villain reraised to 900,000.

JS: He gave me a great price, three-betting to six big blinds. This means that I need to call three big blinds to win a total pot of 13 big blinds. And 8-5 offsuit has more than 23 percent equity against everything other than pocket eights through pocket aces.

So, even though I wasn't thrilled to play a bloated pot with an awful hand, I decided to call because I felt like I was going to be able to realize more than the required equity playing in position.

Saliba called.

Flop: Q♦ 9♥ 5♣

Villain bet 750,000.

JS: He quickly bet five big blinds. I took my time and...

Saliba called.

CT: What now? Besides hope and a prayer?

JS: I tried to figure out what his range looked like and how I would proceed across different turns.

In reality, the only cards I was going to be happy to see were an eight or five, but I was hoping after he three-bet and continuation bet, and I called twice, that perhaps we could play check-check on the turn a decent amount and try to get to showdown.

Turn: 8♥

JS: We nailed the key card, and within a couple of seconds, my opponent overbet jammed for about 4,000,000 chips. My hand was incredibly strong, and I could beat a ton of potential value hands that he could have, like K-K, A-A, A-Q,

K-Q, etc.

Although I do lose to some straights, I had a very easy call.

Saliba called, and Villain revealed K♦ 10♠.

JS: I had to fade the jack to take home the trophy.

River: 2♦

JS: Luckily, it bricked out, and after we counted the chip stacks to see that I covered him by a small margin, I was able to get my first win of the new year. I'm very glad that I drove back to the casino to play that one.

CT: I am sure you are. Can you share how you maintain a positive mindset and cope with the variance of tournament poker?

JS: Having a great support system is the biggest thing. If it's just yourself, grinding for money, I think that motivation dies quickly. But having a great group of friends and loved ones that you can lean on when things aren't going your way can help you stay resilient.

The variance can seem large in the short term, but constantly zooming out and just trying to play your best and improve each day makes the journey more fun and allows you to focus more on long-term goals.

Find Saliba on Twitter/X @Justin_Saliba and learn from him at PokerCoaching.com and PeakGTO.com. Get a FREE strategy bundle at PokerCoaching.com/CardPlayer. ♠

Do Your Reads Make Sense?

By Jonathan Little

I was recently told about a hand played by a recreational poker player in a \$500 buy-in live event. With blinds at 800-1,600 with a 1,600 big blind ante, an aggressive player raised to 3,200 out of his 32,000 effective stack from second position. A tight player called on the button. Our Hero had $7\clubsuit 7\spadesuit$ in the small blind and decided to three-bet to 10,000.

Hero should not three-bet to roughly 30% of his stack with any hand in his range because when he faces an all-in, he has to call off due to the excellent pot odds. Also, by three-betting small, he is almost certain to get called by both of his opponents due to their excellent pot odds, which is not what he wants from out of position with a hand that will usually flop poorly.

Instead, he should either go all-in when he expects his opponents to fold most of the time, or call when he expects his opponents to have strong ranges. Both plays are significantly better than three-betting to 10,000. Facing a raise and a call, three-betting small with a 20-big blind stack is almost never a viable option.

As expected, the big blind folded and the other two players called. The flop came $K\clubsuit J\heartsuit 7\spadesuit$, giving Hero a set. That is lucky!

The pot was 33,200 with 22,000 remaining stacks. Hero checked.



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Hero's check is fine, although betting a tiny amount like 6,000 or going all-in are perfectly viable options, depending on the opponents' tendencies.

The benefit of checking is it makes it much more difficult for the opponents to get away from any jack. Of course, if the opponents will check behind with their decent made hands like top or middle pair and never bluff

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with hands like A♥ 10♥ or 9♣ 8♣, Hero should probably go all-in for 67% pot.

The initial raiser thought for a minute before going all-in and the button quickly called. Hero thought for a while and then folded.

Not like that!!!

Hero told me that he was certain the tight player on the button had exactly K-K or J-J. While anything is possible, those two holdings are extremely unlikely because almost everyone three-bets both of these premium hands before the flop when facing a raise, and if they happened to slowplay them against the initial raiser, once three-bet by Hero and called by the initial raiser, most people would four-bet all-in due to the short stack depths remaining.

Hero was quite disappointed to see the initial raiser turn over K♠ Q♣, which beat the button's J♦ 8♦. Hero folded a hand that was almost a lock to win in a gigantic pot because he was confident in his reads.

It is vitally important to realize that your reads will often be completely incorrect. This is one of the many reasons why you should work hard to develop a fundamentally strong strategy so you know what to do when lots of money is on the line in all the common situations you will frequently encounter.

Even if Hero's reads were correct and both players had hands they thought were strong, those hands could easily be K-J, K-Q, K-10, or A-J.

By folding, Hero is saying that his opponents both play so poorly that he knows without a doubt that at least one of them has specifically K-K or J-J, which makes no sense when you consider the preflop action. Hero lost a huge amount of value by "trusting his reads," or more likely, being afraid to commit all his chips when there was a small chance he was beaten.

In this situation, letting go of a hand like K-Q would also be a substantial blunder, although again, that should have probably been pushed all-in preflop. When you have the top of your range and you play in a manner that induces bluffs (as was this case in this situation), folding is a significant mistake. ♠



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

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FIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAPS THAT SABOTAGE GOOD PLAYERS

By Alex Fitzgerald

Even the most skilled players can find their performance undermined not by lack of ability, but by hidden patterns in their own thinking. Understanding the psychological traps that quietly sabotage decision-making is often the missing key to unlocking consistent success.

'This Is The Best Hand I've Had In An hour!'

You hear people say this all the time, but it doesn't mean anything. Card distribution is always random. It's just how life works. Saying this sounds as nuts as...

"Why does this guy get to be so big?"

"Why does she get to have blonde hair?"

"Why does Canada get their own country?"

These are all just facts. They have nothing to do with anything else. We sound like insane people when we bring them up in this fashion.

So, this is the best hand you've had in an hour. So? If the best hand you had in an hour was Q♣ 5♠ under the gun, would that be worth playing? Well, no, because that hand is terrible.

Factually, that could have been the best hand you've had in an hour, but that fact doesn't help you. That's like trying to join the NBA by saying, "well, this is the tallest I've ever been."

'He Can't Have It Every Time!'

You also hear people say this, but it's a generalization that they're using to justify gambling.

Yes, someone can't have it every time. No, that doesn't mean you can necessarily call in this particular spot. There are many times where a person can be aggressive and there's nothing you can do about it.

If you have just called preflop instead of three-betting, then your opponent knows you likely don't have your premiums. They can keep firing at you post-flop.

If you can just called on a board with flush draws and straight draws, like 8♥ 6♥ 4♣, it's likely you would have raised



sets and two pairs to protect yourself from the bad turn cards. Your opponent could reasonably apply pressure on you with decent hands on the turn.

Your opponent doesn't need to have much in either of these scenarios to go after you. This isn't a case of them, 'having it every time.' This is a case of you obviously not having jack shit.

Most people who say, "he can't have it every time!" have just had to fold three times in situations like this where they obviously didn't have much and a double barrel or triple barrel could put a lot of pressure on them.

Those are specific situations. Those are completely different spots than, say, when someone raises you on the turn or river. Or when someone check-raises you large on the flop and bets huge on the turn. Or when someone raises you multi-way. Those are situations where people are a lot less likely to be bluffing.

If you project your anger on to someone because they called out your capped range a couple of times, then you're likely to run into a monster when they actually do have it. Keep patient and wait for the right moment.

'If I Do This, I'll Be Exploitable!'

No one is paying attention to you. Trust me.

One time, I went into a cardroom. Everyone got to know me. People learned I wrote books. I wondered if anyone was paying attention to my play.

I did not run a single bluff for three months. I wanted to see if anyone would notice. No one ever did.

I was playing maybe 12% of my starting hands and only triple barreling when I had it. No one folded. No one cared.

People are on their cell phones. People are watching sports. People are having fun looking at their own cards. They're not thinking about what you had when you overbet and no one got to see the hand.

'People Are Going To Start Noticing If I Always Do This.'

Again, no. No one will care.

There are multiple people I play against who never notice my betting strategy. It's been the same for years.

When I want a call? I bet 20% to 80% of the pot. On the river, if two or three of them are in the pot, I'll always bet 40% because I know they will all call when I bet that amount. They never fold. They always give me several times my money.

When I want them to fold? I triple barrel, overbet, or move all-in. They've never figured it out.

Every time that overbet goes in there, they still freak out. They assume it's some kind of set that is worried about a flush draw. They fold a mediocre top pair every time.

These guys aren't bad either. They do okay at the game. They make money from most players. They're just not paying attention. They're not forcing themselves to think critically about the game. They get into a pot with me or anyone else, play it, and forget about everything. That is how most people operate. They play poker like a video game.

'I Can't Just Leave Myself With This Many Chips.'

You see people do this all the time in cash games and tournaments. People bring \$600 to the cardroom to play \$1-\$3. They buy-in for \$300 and lose it. They buy-in for another \$300 and lose a sizeable pot. They're left with \$114.

If they feel they're not playing well, they should get up and leave. But they'll never do that. That \$114 is going to be fired into the middle at some point as a desperate Hail Mary. It usually won't go well.

The same kind of thing happens in tournaments. People lose 70% of their chips and they give away the rest of them because they don't want to grind a short stack for hours. They have no idea how many tournaments they would have won if they had just bit down on their mouthpiece and toughened up.

Those chips you spew away add up. Don't give them away. Anyone can win when the deck is hitting them over the head. Real players can deal with bad streaks. Are you a real player?

Conclusion

Mastery is not only about refining skills, but also about recognizing and dismantling the mental habits that hold you back. By becoming aware of these five psychological traps, you give yourself the power to replace self-sabotage with clarity, confidence, and control. ♠



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

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EVALUATING WRAPS IN LOOSE, LOW-STAKES PLO GAMES

By Kevin Haney

Over the years the migration of players going from Texas hold'em to pot-limit Omaha has been slow but steady. One of the largest adjustments newer players face when now getting dealt four cards is identifying and properly valuing the big straight draws called wraps, defined as those having nine or more outs.

For example, if you hold $Q\heartsuit J\heartsuit 10\spadesuit 7\heartsuit$ and the flop is $K\diamondsuit 9\heartsuit 2\clubsuit$ you have what is referred to as an 'Inside Wrap' and it can make a king-high straight by pairing one of the nine remaining queens (3), jacks (3), and tens (3).

Or you could have $A\spadesuit J\heartsuit 10\diamondsuit 7\clubsuit$ on a $9\clubsuit 8\spadesuit 3\heartsuit$ board where you have 17 outs; the queens (4), jacks (3), tens (3), sevens (3), sixes (4) but only 11 of them, the queens (4), sevens (3), and sixes (4) make the nuts.

When learning PLO, it can be helpful to name the most common forms of wraps and visualize the corresponding total and nut outs. This particular form is what I refer to as the **Two Ahead, One Behind Wrap** (17 outs/11 nuts). And this specific hand would be an exact 50/50 proposition against $A\diamondsuit K\heartsuit 9\diamondsuit 9\spadesuit$ that flopped top set.

As you gain experience you will become more adept at calculating outs on the fly and recognize how important it is to hold cards that are ahead of the flop which increases your nut potential.

While it's exciting to potentially

flop draws that have so many nut outs, middling rundown holdings (i.e. four cards nine and lower) tend to be slightly overrated, especially in multi-way pots. The first problem is duplication, referring to the times that an opponent either shares the same outs with you or currently has the same hand along with redraws (or higher quality redraws) to a better holding.

Consider the following situation:

Board: $10\diamondsuit 7\clubsuit 6\heartsuit$

Hero: $9\spadesuit 8\spadesuit 6\clubsuit 5\diamondsuit$

Redraws: Backdoor Full House

Villain: $Q\diamondsuit J\clubsuit 9\clubsuit 8\heartsuit$

Redraws: Nines (2) and Eights (2), Backdoor Club Draw

Results: Split pot (72%), Villain wins (26%), Hero wins (2%)

Even though this will often be a chopped pot, this is a bad situation because when it isn't split your opponent is 13 more times likely to scoop, and that's assuming Hero gets to the river. After all, one of the paths towards making the full house is pairing either the nine or the eight, which gives Villain the jack-high straight. If stacks are deep and lacking a consequential redraw, Hero is forced to play cautiously when facing a pot-sized bet even when no immediate flush draw is present.

If you happen to be in Villain's shoes, having a redraw to a higher straight and a backdoor flush is typically enough of a freeroll to raise as it's even a favorite over $10\clubsuit 9\spadesuit 8\clubsuit$

$7\heartsuit$, a holding that flopped the nut straight along with top two pair. In fact, it's almost 1.3 times more likely to scoop, which is a more important metric to consider than the 53% equity it has.

And having the ability to raise is important for the times your opponent instead holds a set or two pair, where it's either reaping value or forcing your opponent to relinquish their equity.

Another reason why middling rundowns may be overvalued is that a medium straight is often not the nuts by the river. While the board pairing or making a flush or higher straight possible doesn't always give you a second-best hand, it can impede your ability to seek value or protect your holding against draws that haven't yet gotten there. Or you could end up getting bluffed off the best hand.

Due to the implications of duplication, and the board frequently changing the nuts, we usually desire 13 nut outs to feel good about our draw. A powerful draw to remember is the **Broadway Wrap** (13 outs/13 nuts), which occurs whenever you have an ace accompanied with two Broadway cards and flop the other Broadways e.g. $A\diamondsuit Q\heartsuit 10\diamondsuit 5\spadesuit$ where the flop comes $K\heartsuit J\spadesuit 3\clubsuit$. Here you have 13 nut outs; any of your nine pairing aces (3), queens (3), or tens (3) will make an ace-high straight, and the nines (4) will give you a king-high straight along with a redraw.

Another somewhat common 13 nut out draw is the **Three Ahead Wrap** (13 outs/13 nuts) such as when your hand contains Q-J-10 on a 9-8-2 rainbow board. Again, you'll make the nuts by pairing, but really desire to turn a seven to possibly freeroll someone holding just the J-10 combination.

Having 13 or more nut outs isn't required to call small bets or possibly pick up a pot as a semi-bluff. It's more of a conservative guideline when facing big wagers in multi-way pots or versus a single opponent pegged for having a strong hand such as a set or top two pair that probably won't be folding to further aggression.

With 13 nut outs you often have the correct odds to call on the turn, assuming that the board didn't pair. Consider the following hands where Hero has a Broadway wrap draw against an opponent holding top set:

Hero: A♣ J♣ 10♠ 5♦

Villain: K♣ K♦ 10♦ 8♥

Board 1: K♥ Q♠ 3♦ 2♣ (Hero has 40% equity)

Board 2: K♥ Q♠ 3♦ 2♦ (Hero has 30% equity)

If Villain bets the pot on the turn,

you are getting 2:1 on your money where you require around 33% equity. In the first case you have more than that immediately even though your opponent has one of the cards you need.

When he picks up a flush draw as shown on board 2, the odds are still adequate enough since you can often win a little money on the river when making the nut straight. And he doesn't always have the flush draw.

When the flop contains a flush draw, any wrap is severely devalued as it decreases your nut outs. However, always be aware of backdoor flush potential, especially if it's to the ace, e.g. A♣ J♣ 10♠ 5♦ on a K♥ Q♣ 3♥ flop. This possibility is worth around two outs and offers more implied odds than a front-door flush completing as an opponent will be less convinced that you have it.

We can conclude with a few final thoughts, a hand such as 8♠ 7♠ 5♣ 4♦ looks decent enough, but things have to almost go perfectly in order to play a big multi-way pot with it and have your opponent(s) in a dominated position. The smaller the cards are, the more perfect your rundown

needs to be, and this holding has a middle gap and is only single-suited.

Meanwhile dry big pairs (e.g. K♠ K♥ 7♠ 3♦) have gotten a bit of a bad rap (pun intended) since not all of the combinations are working together. While not a premium holding, it's probably better than a middling rundown since the times you flop top set you have often both the best hand and the best draw.

In loose, low-stakes games, the nuts (or near nuts) are often lurking and the type of hands that can build them and get paid off often contain large pairs, suited aces, and Broadway cards. ♠



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

TOURNAMENT HAND MATCHUP

2026 Onyx High Roller Series
\$100,000 No-Limit Hold'em



Rob Yong
20,770,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 40%
After Flop: 34%
After Turn: 25%



Jean-Robert Bellande
28,330,000 Chips

Winning Percentage
Before Flop: 60%
After Flop: 66%
After Turn: 75%



PREFLOP

With two players remaining and blinds of 300,000-600,000 with a big blind ante of 600,000, Rob Yong raised to 1,500,000 on the button, and Jean-Robert Bellande called from the big blind.

FLOP



Bellande checked, and Yong bet 2,000,000. Bellande called.

TURN



Bellande checked, and Yong bet 3,000,000. Bellande called.

RIVER



Bellande checked. Yong moved all-in for 14,270,000, and Bellande called.

COMMENTARY:

Heads-up in the *Onyx High Roller Series* \$100,000 main event, Rob Yong raised it up preflop, though he could have limped this hand as well if he was using any limps in his strategy. Jean-Robert Bellande had a hand that was best off calling, as K-J was a bit too weak to comfortably raise and play for stacks, but it also had too much equity to raise and fold. On the flop, Yong could have checked and taken a free card, but weak flush draws are generally best off being played aggressively. Bellande had a good enough hand to check-raise and get in, but he opted to call. Interestingly, that's actually the solver-preferred play holding specifically the K♦, as that particular card blocks some bluffs like K♦ 4♦. Given that Yong had shown he was willing to blast off with some brazen bluffs, Bellande might have figured there was more value in inducing than raising. True to form, Yong continued to barrel on a card that he was actually supposed to check, though it's hard to fault the bluff, considering many similar hands fall into the barreling range. Combo draws specifically, have enough river playability at this depth to see the final card, and they hate to see the opponent check-raise all in since they're sometimes dominated by better draws. The big problem for Yong was that if he was hoping to target a weaker pair on the river by representing the ace, it didn't come close to working, as Bellande beat him into the pot on the river shove. Against a player who was ready and willing to make thin calls like that, checking back the turn and re-evaluating on the river was certainly the play. For Bellande, another theoretically sound bluff-catching line completed the comeback and earned him the \$1.5 million win.

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

BORGATA TO PLAY HOST TO 30TH REC.GAMBLING EXCURSION (ATLARGE)

By Matt Matros

Have you ever busted from a poker tournament to the sound of applause? Believe it or not, it doesn't take a major final table or the main event bubble to experience this phenomenon. Let me tell you a little bit about ATLARGE.

In the early days of the Internet there existed things called 'newsgroups.' Think Discord or Slack, but with much plainer text and, if possible, it was even more niche.

In the '90s, poker was far from a mainstream activity. Most people hadn't even heard of Texas hold 'em. But if you found the right corner of the worldwide web, then you could also find a dedicated community whose love for the game was pure and unapologetic.

This community began hosting in-person gatherings in 1991, meeting up over the years in places like Connecticut, Atlantic City, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles. And these gatherings still happen today. The next ARGE event takes place at the Borgata Hotel & Casino from April 17-19.

This will be the 30th in-person edition of the Atlantic City Annual Rec.Gambling Excursion (ATLARGE), featuring three low buy-in tournaments (one mixed games, one no-limit hold'em, and one double-board PLO), lots of splashy cash games, and a chance to meet some of the OGs who have been there since the beginning.

One of those originals, Alan 'Uncle Al' Stuart, will regale you with the story of how he attended the first ATLARGE all the way back in 1996.

"I was on my way from New York to Wilmington, Delaware for business and decided to stop at Resorts [Casino] to play some poker," he recalls. "When I sat down, I noticed that most of the players were wearing name tags and had large stacks of white chips in front of them built in strange formations."

Just like that, Uncle Al was in the club, and he's been coming regularly ever since.

Another thing about those ATLARGE cash games — the tips are always flying. Every dealer is greeted with shouts of "incoming!" as they enter the box. The ARGers then throw a bunch of chips from those castles Al described at the new arrival, and continue to tip generously hand after hand.

"No one's better to the dealers than we are," ATLARGE organizer Stevan Goldman proudly says.

My favorite ATLARGE memory? It has to be when my good friend 'Action' Bob Hwang and I were playing limit hold'em with a mix of ARGers and non-ARGers... and neither of us were looking at our cards.

In one particular hand, Bob and I were the small and big blinds, and we'd made it to the turn with three or four other competitors while playing blind. And we weren't making a secret of our strategy. Everyone at the table knew we both had random cards.

You might imagine that one or more of our opponents would be excited to place a turn bet in this situation. Yet to our surprise... the turn checked around! Well, when the river hit, Bob immediately led out for a bet, and I instantly threw out two bets to raise. What happened next is even more shocking — all of our opponents folded! Bob and I somehow found ourselves in a situation where we each had



a 50% chance of turning a tidy profit on a hand we played without looking at our cards.

Who won? I'm sure I don't remember. (It was Bob.) But I do remember thinking that a positive EV play dropping serendipitously out of the sky was a perfect symbolic result for an ATLARGE hand.

ARGers believe first and foremost that poker is supposed to be fun. Generosity toward the dealers and near disdain for money are both very much in keeping with that ethos.

We would all rather win than lose, of course, but during ARGE events, winning is not the main focus. The people are the focus. Finding camaraderie and a bit of joy in a game that too often breeds bitterness, burnout, and bad juju is the focus.

Luckily the Borgata, under Director of Poker Operations Kellie deCelis, has become the ideal venue for us. They get what we're about, and we're so grateful for that. Not everyone does.

If you're looking to meet some new (or old) poker friends, try some new games in a low-stakes, low-pressure environment, and do it all in a cardroom that understands and caters to this unique community, then register for ATLARGE. I honestly don't know anyone who has ever regretted coming.

And if and when you bust from an ATLARGE tournament, your fellow tournament players will respectfully and enthusiastically applaud. ♠



Matt Matros is a three-time WSOP bracelet winner, the author of several poker books including *The Poker Brain*, and a longtime ARGE. You can contact him for private poker coaching at jacksup@mattmatros.com. Find more information on Rec.Gambling events at ARGE.org.

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SCHEDULES

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FEBRUARY	Feb. 16-March 22	Wynn Millions	Wynn ■ Las Vegas, NV	
	Feb. 25-March 31	DeepStack Showdown	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV	
MARCH	March 12-23	WSOP Circuit New York	Turning Stone Casino & Resort ■ Verona, NY	
	March 14-April 1	Triton Super High Roller Series Jeju	LES A Casino ■ Jeju-do, South Korea	
	March 17-22	MSPT Festival Riverside	Riverside Casino & Resort ■ Riverside, IA	
	March 19-30	WSOP Circuit Las Vegas	Horseshoe Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV	
	March 19-April 1	WPT Rolling Thunder	Thunder Valley Resort & Casino ■ Lincoln, CA	
	March 20-29	PGT PLO Series	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV	
	March 24-29	Missouri Poker State Championship	Ameristar Casino Resort & Spa ■ St. Charles, MO	
	March 26-April 6	Irish Open	Royal Dublin Society ■ Ballsbridge, Ireland	
	March 31-April 12	World Series of Poker Europe	Hilton Hotel ■ Prague, Czech Republic	
APRIL	April 1-May 17	DeepStack Extravaganza II	Venetian Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV	
	April 2-12	Spring Poker Round Up	Wildhorse Resort & Casino ■ Pendleton, OR	
	April 2-13	WSOP Circuit Illinois	Grand Victoria Casino ■ Elgin, IL	
	April 6-12	San Diego Classic	Ocean's 11 Casino ■ Oceanside, CA	
	April 7-19	7 Clans Poker Cup Series	Coushatta Casino & Resort ■ Kinder, LA	
	April 7-19	Minnesota Poker State Championship	Running Aces Card Room ■ Columbus, MN	
	April 8-28	WPT Seminole Hard Rock Poker Showdown	Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino ■ Hollywood, FL	
	April 16-27	WSOP Circuit Lake Tahoe	Caesars Republic Lake Tahoe ■ Lake Tahoe, NV	
	April 16-27	WSOP Circuit Mississippi	Horseshoe Casino & Hotel ■ Robinsonville, MS	
	April 21-26	MSPT East Chicago	Ameristar Casino & Hotel ■ East Chicago, IN	
	April 22-May 8	Spring Poker Open	Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa ■ Atlantic City, NJ	
	April 23-May 4	WSOP Circuit Texas	Texas Card House ■ Austin, TX	
	April 28-May 3	MSPT Festival Wisconsin	Potawatomi Hotel & Casino ■ Milwaukee, WI	
	April 30-May 10	European Poker Tour	Sporting Monte Carlo ■ Monte Carlo, Monaco	
	MAY	May 7-18	WSOP Circuit North Carolina	Harrah's ■ Cherokee, NC
		May 12-17	Michigan Poker State Championship	FireKeepers Casino ■ Battle Creek, MI
		May 14-25	WSOP Circuit New Orleans	Caesars ■ New Orleans, LA
		May 14-25	San Diego Showdown Series	Sycuan Resort & Casino ■ El Cajon, CA
May 26-July 15		World Series of Poker	Horseshoe Hotel & Casino ■ Las Vegas, NV	



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.

Feltd - 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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CALCULATING OUTS

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

HAND MATCHUPS

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

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FLOPPING A FLUSH DRAW

By Jonathan Little

Join more than 150,000 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.



On the first hand of a \$500 buy-in turbo tournament, you have 100,000 at 500-1,000. The cutoff raises to 2,500 and everyone folds to you in the big blind with K♦ 5♦.

Question 1: Should you fold, call, reraise to 9,000, or reraise to 18,000?

Answer: K-5 suited with 100 big blinds generally prefers to call, although you should mix in some three-bets with K-8 suited, K-7 suited, and K-6 suited every once in a while. If you think your opponent is raising too often or will fold too often to a three-bet, making it 9,000 would become an excellent option. That being said, this is the first hand of the tournament, so...

You call and the flop comes 6♦ 2♦ 2♠, giving you a flush draw. You check and the cutoff bets 6,500.

Question 2: Should you fold, call, raise to 17,000, or raise to 24,000?

Answer: When you flop a flush draw, both raising and calling are viable options.

In general, as your opponent uses a larger bet size, they are indicating they have a strong, polarized range. When they use a smaller bet, they are saying they are betting with a much wider range (perhaps their entire range).

For that reason, when facing a large bet, you should raise far less often compared to when facing a small bet. Calling is also nice because if your opponent has a worse hand, they may be inclined to give up, resulting in you winning the pot with only king-high.

You call. The turn brings a Q♦, giving you a flush.

Question 3: Should you check, bet 3,000, bet 9,000, or bet 19,000?

Answer: Even though you improved to a premium hand on the turn, you should check with your entire range because your opponent's range also contains plenty of flushes. The only time you should lead is when the turn gives you a strong equity advantage, which is not the case in this situation, even though your range contains some premium hands.

You check and your opponent checks behind. The river is the 9♣.

Question 4: Should you check, bet 3,000, bet 9,000, or bet 19,000?

Answer: Both betting and checking are reasonable options. While betting may seem like the obvious play because you have a flush, checking gives your opponent a chance to bluff with all their hands that cannot win at the showdown.

As your opponent will be more inclined to bluff or value bet thinly, you should be more inclined to check. If they will rarely bluff, or if they will be inclined to hero call down with many marginal made hands, you should be more inclined to bet using a large size.

You bet 19,000 and your opponent folds. ♠



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