

World Series of Poker 2008

Well, my WSOP 2008 has come to an end. I had a great time in Las Vegas and have only my wonderful wife to thank. It was an amazing experience and one which I'm already looking forward to repeating next year (though with better results).

Many of you have asked for a recap of the trip – some wanting more detail than others. So I thought I'd put it all down on paper and send it out.

Wednesday, June 25th

Cynthia dropped me off at the Pensacola airport to catch my Delta flight to Las Vegas at 9:25am. An uneventful flight landed me at McCarran airport at 2:45pm. Vegas now has a huge central car rental complex and it took me until about 5:30pm to pick up my bags, get the rental car, and check in at Binion's. With some advanced planning for 2009 I think I'll book the WSOP rate at the Rio and sign up for Dollar Express service.

I grabbed the buffet at the Fremont and drove over to the Rio. The WSOP event takes place in their convention center. Since the \$50K H.O.R.S.E. event was taking place that day all of the pros were there. The valet was full of sporty Bentley's, Aston Martin's, and Ferrari's. The car with the plates reading "NL BABY" had to belong to Scotty Nguyen. By the way he eventually won the \$50K H.O.R.S.E. event.

I saw just about every pro over the 6 days I was there. The list included: Doyle Brunson, Phil Hellmuth, Johnny Chan, Amarillo Slim, Scotty Nguyen, Chris "Jesus" Ferguson, Huck Seed, Greg Raymer, Joe Hachem, Jennifer Harmon, Ted Forest, Daniel Negreanu, Andy Bloch, Hoyt Corkins, Kathy Liebert, Alan Cunningham, Freddy Deeb, JT Cloutier, Eli Elezra, Men "The Master" Nguyen, Erick Lindgren, Barry Greenstein, Phil Ivey, Howard Lederer, Marcel Lusk, Sam Grizzle, Michael "The Grinder" Mizrachi, Humberto Brenes, Paul "X22" Magriel, David Benyamine, Mike "The Mouth" Matusow, Billy Gazes, Bill Chen, Lyle Berman, Mel Judah, David Sklansky, and Gabe Kaplan.

Aside from the WSOP tournaments there are a number of cash game tables set up in the Amazon Room with \$2/\$5 No-Limit Hold'em with a \$500 max buy-in being the cheapest. I sat down with my \$500 and lost it all in the first 3 hours. I rebought and by 3am I cashed out down only \$78 for the night. Some of the hands:

- My nut flush was beaten by a straight flush.
- On a flop of Q-Q-A my Q-9 was beaten by Q-A (same guy as above too).

I registered for Friday's \$2,000 NLH (event #48) and was assigned Table 1, Seat 3 in the Brasilia Room.

Thursday, June 26th

Up at 8:30am I visited Spinetti's. They're a casino chip dealer. I found 8 chips I needed for my collection. Next to Spinetti's is the Gambler's General Store which carries just about every gambling products you can imagine from tables to roulette markers to blackjack shoes. Both interesting store to look through the next time you're in Las Vegas.

The Golden Nugget was holding their Grand Poker Series tournament. I learned that several casinos held small buy-in tournaments during the World Series. I decided I'd enter their \$235 buy-in event as a warm up. The field of 81 players started with 8,000 in chips with 40 minute levels. I played with a guy from Montana who runs a poker room there. He gave me a T-Shirt and said I could call him and he'd send me

a \$1 chip. I then busted him out of the tournament when I hit an Ace on the river. I played from noon until 6:30pm when I busted out in 24th place. I did manage to pocket a few tournament chips which I'll trade or sell (Sold the 4-chip set for \$122.)



Went back to the Rio at 8pm after another buffet at the Fremont. Better run on cards tonight. Cashed out ahead \$441 at 12:30am. Picked up a WSOP hat and T-shirt at the logo store at the Rio.

Friday, June 27th

Up at 9am and off to my first WSOP event.



They drew 2,316 players and pay the top 198 spots. That's a pretty big field. Here's the Brasilia Room at the Rio with my table right up front. This room held 65 tables of 10 players – I'd eventually outlast them all.



Here are some of the hand highlights. Here's what \$2,000 buys you. We started with 4,000 in chips:



Level 1 & 2

- I get A-2 in the small blind and call a player's raise to 150. Flop come A-2-x and I bust his A-K.
- Flopped a set of 7s and got paid off.
- Raised 250 with A-A and got 4 callers to a flop of K-Q-J rainbow. I bet 1,200 on the flop and 1,700 on the turn before checking down the river to win the pot.
- My stack is at 16,125 at the end of level 2.

Level 3 & 4

- My A-K held up when I flopped an Ace and rivered a King.
- Several of my bluffs were picked off.
- Card dead. Lost with A-Q to A-K.
- Down to 15,100 chips at the end of level 4. The field is cut from 2,316 to 1,050 in just 4 hours.

Level 5 & 6

- Had several small raises picked off.
- Lost 6,000 with K-8 to the button holding Q-J when a Q hit the turn.
- Went all-in two times in a row with 3000-4000 in chips and won uncontested.
- Picked up J-J the 3rd time and again pushed all-in. Called by a guy with pocket 4s who then flopped a set. Down to only 750 in chips now.
- Pushed all-in with A-2 and got 6 callers. Flop of 6-4-2 didn't hold up to a guy's pocket 7s.
- Busted out 15 minutes into level 6 in better than 750th place.

I was able to outlast the following professionals in this event: TJ Cloutier, David "DevilFish" Ulliott, Andy Black, Joe Sebok, Amir Vahedi, Jeff Madsen, Chris "Jesus" Ferguson, Gavin Smith, Evelyn Ng, Beth Shak, Howard Lederer, David Williams, John Juanda, and Joe Hacham.

The WSOP event staff came around during the tournament to take photos of the players. Follow this link to see me in event #48 (be sure to cut-n-paste all of it in your web browser):

- http://www.printroom.com/ViewGalleryPhoto.asp?evgroupid=0&userid=worldseriesofpoker&gallery_id=1151354&image_id=14
- http://www.printroom.com/ViewGalleryPhoto.asp?evgroupid=0&userid=worldseriesofpoker&gallery_id=1151395&image_id=26

I had dinner at the Rio's Carnival buffet before going back to the cash games. Terrible cards. Dropped \$900 and was back in the hotel by midnight.

Saturday, June 28th

I registered for event #49, \$1,500 NLH. The field was capped at 2,718 players with the top 270 cashing. We started with 3,000 chips. Again, I'm in the Brasilia Room, Table 13, seat 3. Having outlasted the room the previous day I was pretty confident I'd beat them all again. Follow this link to see photos from this event:

- http://www.printroom.com/ViewGalleryPhoto.asp?evgroupid=0&userid=worldseriesofpoker&gallery_id=1152845&image_id=13
- http://www.printroom.com/ViewGalleryPhoto.asp?evgroupid=0&userid=worldseriesofpoker&gallery_id=1152905&image_id=15

Here's a recap of the hands:

Level 1 & 2

- Called a 150 raise with A-9. Flop came J-J-T. The raiser bet and I called. A blank on the turn. I check to the raiser who bets. I push all-in for 2,700. The guy goes into the tank for 3 minutes before folding J-Q face up. I rake the pot.

- I'm up to 5,000 in chips by the end of level 2 and the field is down to 1,860 players.

Level 3 & 4

- I pick up A-A and get reraised. I push all-in and get called by a guy with K-K. My hand holds up and I double up to 15,000.
- I'm actually ahead of several pros, including Amarillo Slim!

1. Justin Bonomo	14,000	WORLD SERIES POKER  PRESENTED BY  * Event 49 * No-Limit Hold'em Day 1  POKERnews  BLUFF The Thrill of Poker
2. Greg Mueller	10,000	
3. Nickolay Evdakov	8,400	
4. Angie Tran	8,200	
5. Ut Nguyen	6,000	
6. Thomas 'Amarillo Slim' Preston	6,000	
7. Juha Helppi	5,700	
8. Allen Kessler	5,500	
9. Anna Wroblewski	5,000	
10. Eugene Todd	4,900	
11. Beth Shak	4,900	
12. Shannon Shorr	4,900	
13. Danny Wong	4,800	

WELCOME TO 2008 WORLD SERIES OF POKER!

- I call the small stacks all-in bets twice, once with T-9s against 3-3 and again with A-Q against A-K and lose both times.
- More bad calls and bluffs. Down quickly to 1,000 but doubled when I rivered a K and my K-T beat Q-Q.
- Busted out when my 9-4 was beat by 2-2 on a board of 9-8-5-2. Out with just under 1,190 players remaining a minute before the end of level 4.

Professional J.C. Tran wins this event and gets the bracelet and \$631,170. Over the 2 days I did manage to pocket a few chips. I think I'll frame some of them with one of the WSOP pictures and sell the rest. (I sold two sets of 25 and 100 chips for \$120 each already.) With 2 WSOP events under my belt I opted not to register for Sunday's \$1,500 NLH event #52.

I hit the cash game at the Rio. Wild table. Someone raised to \$45 and 8 players saw the flop. I held 9-9 and the flop came 9-7-5. I pushed all-in and got 1 caller with 6-4. My set held up and I raked the pot of \$1,150. I cashed out up \$461. Went back to Binion's and played the \$1/\$2 NLH game. Lost \$718 with cold cards.

Sunday, June 29th

I went to the California Casino to pick up some of their new \$1 chips at the craps table. Won \$8 while standing there and then ate at omelet in the café before walking to the Golden Nugget to play in their \$125 tournament. Busted out early with my J-J ran into Q-Q.

Went to play craps (always a mistake) and dropped \$300 in short order. Decided to go to Caesars poker room and play \$2/\$5. Lost about \$800 before making a comeback. Cashed out up \$1,893 at 3am.

Lots of WSOP players there and everyone has a bad beat story. This one was one of the worst. The guy is in to Day 2 of the \$1,500 NLH event. They're down to 271 players and on the bubble (only the top 270 get paid). He knows not to play a hand and sit on his 30,000 in chips. In fact, the tournament short stack is at his table with only 200 in chips. He picks up A-K in the big blind and opts to call a small raise to 4,000 to see the flop which comes K-x-x. He's elated with top pair, top kicker. Unfortunately his opponent has pocket Kings and has him out chipped. He busts out on the bubble. The guy with 200 in chip makes the money and gets \$2,782.

Monday, June 30th

Went to the new Palazzo Casino (2nd tower of the Venetian). Nothing special there. They also had a deep stack tournament, but I was too late to enter. Had some noodle soup and headed back to Caesars poker room. Got the same table, same seat as the previous night. On one of the first hands I lost \$600. 5 players call \$5 before the big blind raises to \$25. Everyone calls with the button calling very reluctantly. I hold 2-2. It's a dream flop on A-T-2 with two hearts. Three players check to me. I lead out and bet \$50. The button raises to \$225. Now, I know he was reluctant to call the \$25 pre-flop raise, so he must have A-T and I've got him beat. Two folds then player 3 goes all-in for about \$350. Back to me. I push all-in and have the button covered. He calls his last \$330. The turn brings a Ten of hearts. Player 3 jumps up and turns over his flush, not knowing that he's already beaten and most likely 3rd best. A blank on the river and I half-heartedly turn up my small full house only to see exactly what I suspected – the button slams down A-T and scoops my pot. Oh well. That's poker.

A couple semi-pros sit down at the table. Bad sign. I'm in for \$3,500 but make a reasonable comeback before 3am and cash out down \$1,654 after hitting quad Aces.

Tuesday, July 1st

Up at 9:30am to catch my noon flight home where my wonderful wife is there to greet me at the airport.

For those of you doing the math throughout this journal I dropped \$3,960 in tournaments and \$748 in cash games for a total of \$4,808 which is slightly better than the \$5k I anticipated spending on WSOP events alone. Not great, but well worth it.

The \$10,000 Main Event starts today. The field is expected to eclipse last year's total of 6,358 players and generate a first place payout of over \$8.25M. The final table will be played on November 11th and shown on TV that same day. You can follow all of the action live at <http://www.worldseriesofpoker.com>.