

2010 WSOP Trip Report

For each of the last 2 years I created a trip report detailing some of my play during the World Series of Poker. They always seem to get positive feedback, especially from other poker players, so I thought I'd try and write this one from Las Vegas at the end of play each day. This year I'm booked for 19 nights at the Gold Coast Casino – a small, inexpensive casino next to the Rio where the 2010 WSOP is held. This ended up being 21 pages and covering four dozen cash game and tournament hands. Hope you enjoy it.

Day 1: Sunday June 6th

Cynthia decided that the 15 nights we spent in 2009 were too long for her, so she's staying home busying herself with several projects around the house which include refinishing an old bookcase, framing some 300 of the casino chips in my collection, building a PVC frame with netting around our fig tree to keep it safe from the birds and squirrels, assembling a 10' x 12' pergola from Lowes in our backyard (with help from her brother, David), fixing a sprinkler head (which I ran over with the lawnmower yesterday), tending to her garden, making various greeting cards for friends and relatives, and on and on. I don't know where she gets the energy.

I flew out of Pensacola on Delta via Atlanta at 9:30am and arrived in Las Vegas at 2:45pm, grabbed my Dollar Rental Car, and checked in at the Gold Coast – small room, nice king bed, tiny bathroom, but at least the AC is cranking as it's forecasted to reach 110°. After unpacking I headed to Vons, the local grocery store chain, to stock up on Diet Coke, fruit, juice, and snacks. I grabbed a quick couple slices at NY Pizza & Pasta on Sahara and then back to the Gold Coast to unload. Then it was off to the Rio to check out the WSOP set up for 2010. The Amazon room still has the ESPN feature table and secondary table, but the rest of the room is dedicated to tournament play. The Pavilion room looks to be at least 50% bigger than the Amazon room and is set up with 257 tables. Two-thirds of the room is set up with more tournament tables and the remainder is split evenly between cash game tables and satellite/sit-n-go tables. The 5pm tournament was Event #15, the \$10,000 Seven Card Stud Hi-Low Split Championship. It was filled with plenty of pros. Chris "Jesus" Ferguson, Tom "Durrrr" Dwan, Josh Aria, and Steve Zolotow were all at one table with multiple recognizable faces at most others. Phil Ivey and Norman Chad were seated at the same table which was interesting to see.

Hand #1

After checking out the WSOP layout I went to the cash game area which had plenty of open seating for a Sunday night at 8pm. I sat at one of the 2/5 No-Limit Hold'Em (NLHE) tables. The max buy-in in this game is \$500 and only a couple players had built up their stacks to more than that. Two seats were unoccupied, so we were playing 7-handed. I didn't like the looks of the table. All the players looked solid, no females, and no older guys. They were in the middle of a hand and the guy in Seat 4 was debating calling a \$120 all-in bet from Seat 5. He had a \$500 lammer in front of him, meaning that he'd given the chip runner \$500 and they were going to return with his chips. He called and was shown a better hand. My chip runner returned first and set five stacks of red \$5 chips in front of me. I was the big blind the next hand. A player in middle position raised to \$30 and I folded. No action. On my small blind the guy in Seat 1 straddled to \$10. It was folded to Seat 4 in the cut-off position who raised to \$30. It folded to me and I looked down to

see . I figured this guy might be on tilt after being felted; in fact his new chips still had not arrived, so I decided to flat call. The straddler in Seat 1 called and we were three to a flop of . It looked pretty safe, so I decided to check, planning to raise a continuation-bet from Seat 4. Seat 1 also checked and Seat 4 bet out \$70 into a pot of \$90. Since he had no chips in front of him I made a point of asking the dealer how much he bet, then thought about it as the chip runner delivered his chips. All I knew was that he owed Seat 5 \$120 from two hands ago, so he really only had \$380. He then put his \$30 pre-flop bet into the pot and \$70 more in front of him. After some time I pushed out \$70 (making the pot \$230) plus another \$180. Seat 1 folded and then Seat 9 pipes up saying that Seat 4 also owes him \$100. This leaves him with only \$180! He had about \$13 more in loose change in front of him and sighed as he pushed it all-in. I called the extra \$13 and the board ran out . Instead of waiting for him I flipped up my queens and he mucked his hand. With that he left the table. Had he not owed out \$220 from his rebuy I'm certain it would have all been mine. Oh well.

Two guys got up to wander around and, not wanting to play 4 handed, I got up to check out the satellite area. Not much going on there either, so, rather than sit back down at this tough looking table, I decided to rack up, check out the tournaments again, and head back to the room up a quick \$311. This will give me time to relax and unwind after the day's travels and be fresh tomorrow. No need to rush, I'm hear 18 more evenings.

Day 2: Monday June 7th

I started off the day by heading out to pick up some new \$1 chips which were released within the last few weeks. The first stop was the Tropicana followed by Circus Circus and then downtown to the Fitzgerald. I also stopped by Spinetti's, a store that sells gambling items including old casino chips. I had won a \$1 Las Vegas Inn chip from them off of eBay and told them I'd stop by to get it and have a look around. I grabbed some pizza on the way back to Mandalay Bay. Their poker room was dead, so I just grabbed a couple new \$1 chips and headed back to the Gold Coast. I had also sold a chip on eBay to a guy from Vegas. I offered him some other chips on my website and he picked out one more, so I called him and we made arrangements to meet in the lobby. He purchased a \$5 and a 50¢ Gregory Street chip from Black Hawk, Colorado, for \$37. He also said he wanted two more \$1 Colorado chips for \$31 and I told him I'd mail them. But as we parted I had the feeling that I packed those 2 chips somewhere. I found them later that evening, so I'll call him tomorrow to close that sale.



The Venetian is supposed to have one of the top poker rooms in Vegas, so I headed that way mid afternoon. Parking is always a nightmare at the Venetian/Palazzo. The poker room was jumping and I quickly got a seat at a new 1/2 NLHE table. The max buy-in is \$300. The tables only looked to have a couple soft spots, but I figured I'd give it a shot. Small losses mounted over the hours and by 7:30pm I was down \$200 with \$400 in front of me. The table was incredibly tight. The only hands worth mentioning all happened in my last two orbits. Here they go:

Hand #2

I'm in the under-the-gun with **K♦ Q♣**. Two players limp and Seat 8 makes it \$12 to go. Everyone calls and we see a flop of **K♣ 10♣ 8♦**. I'm first to act and figure I'll re-raise the original raiser, so it's checked around only to have him check it back. The turn is a **J♣**. I test the waters and lead out for \$25 into a \$50 pot. The first player moves all-in for \$26 more, followed by a fold and another all-in by the original raiser for \$37 more. I'm not thrilled but I'm getting good odds to call the extra \$37. The raiser shows **A♦ Q♣** for the Broadway straight. The river blanks and he scoops the pot.

Hand #3

I'm in the big blind with **A♦ 6♣** and check the multi-way pot. The flop comes **K♦ 10♥ J♦**. Since everyone limped pre-flop I fire \$10 at the pot and get one caller. The turn is the **8♦**. I fire \$25 only to have the guy raise to \$75. I call the extra \$50 hoping to hit my nut flush or straight. The river bricks with the **3♣**. I check, he shoves for \$145, and I muck.

Hand #4

I have **6♣ 7♥** in the small blind and call the extra \$1 with 5 players. I flop the joint as the board comes **3♥ 4♦ 5♣**. I check and the under-the-gun player leads out for \$10. It's folded back to me and I just call. The turn is the **K♦**. This time I lead out for \$30. He says, "You can't have **Ax Kx** since you didn't raise pre-flop" and he makes the call. The river is a meaningless **9♣**. As I move my hand to bet the guy flips up his **K♥ Q♣** claiming I had checked. I tell him I hadn't and bet \$75. Unfortunately, the dealer agrees with the guy and it's ruled a check. I turn over the nuts and rake in the pot saying, "Now why would I check the nuts?" but the hand is over.

Hand #5

I'm in the big blind with **A♣ 9♣**. Several players limp and I raise to \$12 and 3 players call. The flop comes **8♣ 6♣ 5♣**. I make a continuation bet of \$25. Seat 6 moves all-in for another \$174 it's folded around to me. The guy in Seat 6 is a young, solid player. I know he's noticed that I raise a lot from the blinds when there are a lot of limpers. He probably figures I have 2 over cards and wants to run me off the pot. I figure I've got the gut shot, backdoor clubs, and my ace just may be good – plus I have a good feeling about this hand. I stack up the chips and after about a minute of deliberation make the call figuring I'll either go home down \$500 or jump back up in chips. He tables **J♥ J♣**, not exactly what I wanted to see. The turn brings a promising **K♣** giving me 9 more outs for the flush. The river is the **A♥** and before I even turn over my hand he knows that card beat him. He rebuys for \$300.

Hand #6

Very next hand. Seat 6 and Seat 8 (same guys from previous hands) limp and I decide to limp in the small blind with **10♣ 10♦**. Four to the flop of **10♣ 5♦ 3♣**. I know Seat 6 is still a bit on tilt from the previous hand so I lead out for \$10. Only Seat 6 and Seat 8 call. The turn is a **7♥**. I lead out for \$20 and again both players call. The river is the **7♦**, filling me up. I splash \$80 into the pot. Seat 6 doesn't like it but makes the call as Seat 8 mucks. Seat 6 shown me **6♦ 4♦** for the turned straight. He doesn't like seeing my pocket tens and I rake in the pot.

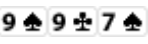
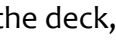
I played until it was by big blind then racked up \$673 and cashed out. It was a lot of work, and some crazy hands to get ahead \$73, but every little bit counts. I ate at *Ping Pang Pong* back at the Gold Coast and called it a day.

Day 3: Tuesday June 8th

After checking my e-mail at *Panera Bread* I grabbed the Fremont lunch buffet and walked across the street to play in the Golden Nugget's \$235 NLHE tournament. You started with 12,000 in tournament chips, making it a deep-stacked event which should play more like a cash game at the start. Not the case with these guys. After about a third of the field busted I joined them when I made aces on the flop only to have my opponent make a set of king. After that I headed to the Rio. Lots of pros are going deep in this year's WSOP events. All the excitement was about Durrer making a final table and coming in 2nd. He was multi-tabling 2 events dashing back and forth from the Pavilion to the Amazon rooms. Word is he's got several million in bracelet bets. There's also a new video technology where a small dome camera device is suspended above the table and catches all the players. Viewers on-line can "control" their view of the action and pan around the table seamlessly. One such table had Phil Helmuth, Chris Ferguson, Shannon Elizabeth, and a couple other named pros.

Ok, over to the 2/5 NLHE action at the Rio. Just not catching any of my draws. No flushes or straights at all today. Very frustrating. My starting stack of \$500 needs to be replenished often and I'm into the game for \$1,000 with only \$339 in front of me when the following hand occurs. This is an example of how not to play aces:

Hand #7

I'm in Seat 1 in the big blind. Seat 3 opens the pot for \$20 and is called by Seat 4, Seat 5, and the button. I look down to see  and only raise to \$55. All 4 players add the additional \$35 and the pot's now \$277 (less the \$5 rake). The flop comes . I check, Seat 3 checks, Seat 4 bets \$90, the young Frenchman in Seat 5 calls, the button folds, I call, and Seat 3 folds. Now we're 3-way with a pot of \$542 to see a turn of the . I have only \$194 behind and know I'm not going anywhere. Although I suspect I'm beat I figure what the hell and shove all-in. Seat 4 calls, only to have our Frenchman re-raise all-in to cover Seat 4. Seat 4 folds and we're heads-up for \$1,124. The Frenchman flopped the boat and shows . Seat 4 said he folded . The river brings the prettiest card in the deck, the , and I rake the pot as the Frenchman departs in a huff. C'est la vie. I rack up and head back to the Gold Coast.

After some dim sum at *Orchids Garden* I decide to check out Caesars Palace. My fortune cookie is of little help as it reads: "Try a new hat for a change in looks. Be creative." The poker room is dead with only two 2/5 and two 1/3 tables, so it's back to the Rio. I run into Jon Holly, a guy I know who I play poker with at Ebro, FL. We chat for a bit and I head to the cash game area where I'm seated at a new 2/5 NLHE table around 10:30pm and it's lively, led mostly by a young Englishman who is running over the table by hitting every hand. He's got towering stacks of almost \$4,000 in front of him. At about 4:00am I'm into the game for \$900 with a stack of about \$550.

Hand #8

I'm under-the-gun and raise to \$30 with $\text{A}\clubsuit\text{2}\clubsuit$ and pick up 2 callers. Before the flop Seat 3 asks how much I'm playing and I tell him about \$550. He has the same. The flop comes $\text{K}\clubsuit\text{10}\clubsuit\text{8}\clubsuit$. With the nut flush draw I put in a continuation-bet of \$110. Seat 3 moves all-in, the other player folds, and I insta-call for my remaining \$435 making the pot \$1,174. Seat 3 tables $\text{K}\heartsuit\text{10}\heartsuit$ for top two. The board runs out $\text{9}\clubsuit\text{9}\clubsuit$ and I win a nice pot after finally hitting a flush. I call it a night and lock up the win. Variance was a bitch today for my opponents.

Day 4: Wednesday June 9th

Back at the Rio before 1:00pm and at a newly opened 2/5 NLHE table with my \$500 starting stack. Good table to start. A few hands of interest:

Hand #9

I'm in Seat 1 in the big blind. Seat 3 raises to \$20 and is called by Seats 4 & 6. I have $\text{6}\clubsuit\text{2}\heartsuit$ and decide to call the extra \$15. The flop brings $\text{2}\clubsuit\text{4}\heartsuit\text{5}\clubsuit$. I check and it's checked around. The turn is a $\text{2}\heartsuit$. It's checked around to Seat 6 who makes it \$60. I call and we're now heads-up to the river which brings the $\text{2}\clubsuit$. I lead for \$120 hoping he's got a big pair, or possibly a 5, but he folds and I win the pot.

Hand #10

I'm in the big blind again. Seat 3 opens for \$20 and I call with $\text{A}\heartsuit\text{Q}\clubsuit$. We're heads-up to a flop of $\text{Q}\heartsuit\text{10}\heartsuit\text{9}\clubsuit$. I check and she bets \$50. I raise to \$100 and she calls. The turn is a $\text{4}\heartsuit$. I lead for \$180 and she moves all-in for a total of \$332. I call. The river is a $\text{K}\clubsuit$ and she tables $\text{A}\heartsuit\text{A}\clubsuit$ to double up. Ouch.

Hand #11

I raise to \$20 under-the-gun with $\text{A}\clubsuit\text{8}\clubsuit$ and am called by a new player at the table in middle position. The flop brings $\text{8}\heartsuit\text{3}\heartsuit\text{4}\clubsuit$. I lead for \$50 and am raised another \$70. I call and we get a turn of $\text{6}\heartsuit$. I check-call another \$125. We check down the $\text{2}\heartsuit$ river and I'm shown $\text{J}\heartsuit\text{J}\heartsuit$ and lose a nice pot.

Hand #12

Another big blind hand, this time with $\text{Q}\heartsuit\text{8}\heartsuit$. There are 5 callers to a flop of $\text{Q}\heartsuit\text{8}\heartsuit\text{7}\heartsuit$. I check to the under-the-gun player, a new arrival at the table who looks 21 years old and aggressive. He starts the hand with \$500. He bets \$30 and it's folded around to me. I make it \$110 and he shoves all-in. I call. He tables $\text{A}\heartsuit\text{4}\heartsuit$ for the flush draw. The board runs out $\text{9}\clubsuit\text{2}\heartsuit$ and I stack him.

During play the guy who was going to buy those two \$1 Colorado chips stops by and picks them up. I cash out and check out the day's tournaments. There are 136 of the original 794 players left in the \$5k NLHE event. I watch Antonio Esfandiari in a 3-way flop of $\text{Q}\heartsuit\text{2}\heartsuit\text{3}\clubsuit$. He's facing a 15,000 bet and calls. The player behind him moves all in for 100k+. The initial bettor folds and Antonio calls. He's got a set of deuces against his opponent's pocket tens. The board blanks out and he doubles up. Must be nice to be Antonio.

Annette Oberstad of Norway is at the adjoining table, and also on the cover of the latest issue of *Bluff* magazine. She turned 21 this year and it's her first WSOP in the States (she won the first WSOP Europe

Main Event at age 18). With her screen name of Annette_15 she started playing poker at 15 years of age. Her claim to fame is having won an on-line tournament with only having looked at her hole cards once. Anyway, there are big expectations for her this year.

On the way out to my Chevy Malibu from Dollar Rental Car I'm passed by Vanessa "Lady Maverick" Rousso in her bright yellow Lamborghini with its LDYMAV plates. In the valet lot are several impressive cars, including a pair of Aston Martins, one with a BG3 plate –belonging to Barry Greenstein. There was also a convertible Bentley, a Rolls Royce, and a Tesla. The Mercedes, Audis, and BMWs got secondary valet spots, except for the Mercedes V12 Bi Turbo. I'm just a little fish here hoping to stay alive.

After a little lunch it was back to the Rio for the evening's activities. I got on a tough 2/5 NLHE table and hovered just below even for several hours until taking a few hits with lower kickers. I probably stayed too late as the table dynamic changed with several late night players when the following two hands occurred:

Hand #13

A new player sits to my left with \$500. I limp with $10\clubsuit 9\clubsuit$ in early position and the new player raises to \$15. I call as do 2 others and we see a flop of $K\heartsuit Q\heartsuit J\clubsuit$. I check and the new player leads out for \$65. It's folded to me and I call. The turn is a $Q\heartsuit$. I go all-in for \$340. He comments that he doesn't think the queen helped me, and eventually calls. I table my straight and when the river $7\clubsuit$ hits the board he mucks.

Hand #14

An active player under-the-gun+2 raises to \$25 and I re-raise from the big blind to \$50 with $A\heartsuit A\clubsuit$ and get the call. The flop comes $8\spadesuit 7\heartsuit 3\clubsuit$. I lead out for \$75 and he calls. The turn is a $6\heartsuit$. I bet \$110 and again he calls. The river is a $9\heartsuit$. I check and he bets \$375. I don't like the river, but this guy's been all over the place, so I call. He shows me $10\heartsuit 10\clubsuit$ for the rivered straight. Just a poorly played hand on my part.

My two \$500 buy-ins are reduced to \$68 in chips, so I decide to call it a night and live to fight another day.

Day 5: Thursday June 10th

After a quick breakfast of a banana, some Fig Newtons, and a Diet Coke I'm back at the Rio and seated in a new 2/5 NLHE game by 1:00pm.

Hand #15

I grab a rack of \$5 chips from the cage as other players at the table make use of the chip runner. You basically give the runners your cash and they head to the cage for you. While they're gone they place 100 or 500 denomination lammers in front of you so the rest of the table knows how much you're playing. The dealer deals the first hand and I'm in the big blind with $A\clubsuit K\heartsuit$. The guy on my left limps into the pot as do 3 other players. Since no one has any chips yet I loan out two of my \$100 stacks as those players toss me their 100 denomination lammers. I raise to \$25 when the action gets back to me and 3 of the remaining 4 players call, making the pot about \$100. The flop comes $10\heartsuit 7\clubsuit 2\heartsuit$. I take two small stacks of five chips, plus the two 100 lammers and push in a bet of \$250. The guy on my left moves all-in and tosses in his 500 lammer (remember, he still hasn't received his chips from the runner yet). It's folded around to me and I

call. He asks me if I have aces and I say nothing – usually not a good sign for me. The turn is a **6♠** and when I see the **K♠** on the river I say I've got kings and table my hand. He mucks **Q♥Q♣** face up. He peels five \$100 bills off his roll and buys back the lammer just in time for the chip runner to return with his rack. Not a good way for him to start the session, but nice for me.

Hand #16

Just over 30 minutes and I'm in the big blind again and look down to find **A♠3♠**. The under-the-gun+2 player has been tight, playing very few hands, so I know when he does play it'll be for a raise with a strong hand. He's already lost all his chips to another player that caught runner-runner flush to beat him. He's rebought for \$500 and has tightened up even more. This hand he opens for a raise to \$20 and 3 other players call. I decide to call with my suited ace hoping for a flush as I know my ace probably isn't any good. The flop comes **A♦2♥3♦**. I momentarily think I have **A♠4♠** and lead out for \$50. The under-the-gun+2 player re-raises to \$170 and it's folded back around to me. Now I know he's got a big ace, so I re-check my cards before thinking about calling with a wheel draw. When I see it's the 3, and not the 4, giving me aces up, I declare all-in. He thinks for about 5 seconds before moving in his remaining \$310. I show him the bad news. The board runs out **9♥4♣** and he mucks as all his chips and \$100 bills are pushed my way. He leaves the game and I take a break to watch some of the WSOP tournament action in today's \$1,500 PLO event.

I'm back and now sitting with just over \$1,600 in a game where there are 3-4 locals. Not really what I'd call a soft table, so I rack up and am out of there before 3:00pm. That certainly made up for the 8 hours that ended so poorly last night. I head over to check out City Center and its Aria Casino. Striking architecture! All blue mirrored glass, angles, multiple towers, its own monorail, and two towers that lean away from one another like the towers in Bologna, Italy. Very upscale and modern. After that I'm getting hungry and can no longer resist the call of *Robert's Taco Shop*. They're all over Vegas, probably 20 locations, and have great burritos. My favorite is the chorizo with egg. They also have hot marinated carrot slices that are addictive and, if you eat enough of them, you'll swear your tongue is bleeding. After lunch a quick run to the Hard Rock Casino to satisfy my brother-in-law's request to bring him back "a cool chip". After looking through a rack of 100 chips I think he'll like what I found.



Day 6: Friday June 11th

This morning after checking e-mail at *Panera Bread* I decided to walk around the center Strip area and stopped in O'Shea's Casino to pick up one of their new \$1 chip to trade with a fellow collector. Not much has changed on that side of The Strip as O'Shea's, Harrah's, the Flamingo, and Casino Royale are filled with loud music and slots machines. I passed Dennis Phillips walking along with the crowd in his signature red St. Louis Cardinals baseball cap. I did see a new table game in O'Shea's called Casino Backgammon. It's a dice game with 2 big backgammon chips played on a mini craps table with a cloth that looks like half a backgammon board. It looked like there was a dealer and possibly the sales rep at the table explaining the game as 2 guys lost a few bucks each. I don't see this game catching on.

I walked down to the Venetian and the poker room was jumping as was their Deep Stacks tournament. Across the street TI looked about the same with no pirate theme inside anymore. The Mirage has removed

the white tiger display as well as those good luck mermaids that graced their entrance. The poker rooms at both properties were quite with only a couple 1/2 NLHE tables and just a list of interest for 2/5 NLHE.

Cynthia called me to say that our TV died earlier today. Why does something have to go wrong when I'm away? Waiting two weeks until I get home isn't an option, so I'm hoping she can either borrow an extra TV from someone, have a repairman fix it, or buy a small one that can be returned if need be. She sounded so downtrodden which left me feeling terrible that I couldn't be there to help her or at least give her a hug.

After grabbing a couple slices at *NY Pizza & Pasta* I was back at the Rio. Today's noon event was the \$1,000 NLHE Ladies tournament. Six guys were among the field of 1,054 runners. As the ladies disposed of each the entire room cheered. There were only 3 cheers while I was there, so 3 guys are still in the hunt. On-line pro Shaun Deeb is one of them and he's dressed in drag. Shannon Elizabeth looked to be one of the early chip leaders as she sat behind a nice stack of chips and texted on her Blackberry after every hand.

I got my name on the waiting list for 2/5 NLHE and was seated at what looked like a good table after only 15 minutes. I was dealt **A♦K♦** on the first hand, opened for a raise from the big blind, and took down the pot with a c-bet. I had **J♥J♣** on the very next hand and did the same. On the button I had **9♦9♥**, raised to \$25 and the big stack seated on my left decided to re-raise to \$55 to put me in my place. The flop came **Q♣4♦8♣** and check-called his \$80 bet. The turn was a **4♣** and we both checked. The river was a **Q♥**. I led out for \$55 and he called only to muck when he saw my nines. A few hands later he would get it all back, and then some, when I called his \$15 raise with **J♣9♣** (my favorite hand) and got a flop of **Q♣9♣7♦**. He bet \$50 and I called. The turn was the **3♣**. He bet \$105 and I called. The river was the **9♥**. He bet \$210 and I called only to be shown **A♣6♣** for the nut flush. I played solid after that, picking up small pots here and there while avoiding the two big stacks on my left. After about 90 minutes I was up \$573 as the table became shorthanded, so I racked up and watched some of the WSOP events. Daniel Negreanu was at a final table on the short stack and John Juanda was making a deep run in the \$10,000 2-7 Draw Lowball event. The \$1,500 NLHE Six Handed event was loaded with pros too. Joe Sebok and Phil Ivey were at the same table. Joe runs *Poker Road Radio* along with co-host Gavin Smith -- my favorite podcast.

It's only 7:45pm on a Friday night in Vegas and I'm back in the room at the Gold Coast. All this walking in the heat has me pretty tired. The Rio convention center area is huge and walking back and forth from the parking lots is draining. It certainly can't be that I'm getting old, can it? Tomorrow is WSOP event #24, a \$1,000 NLHE tournament that offers you're a choice of two starting days. The last few of these \$1,000 Donkaments saw small fields for the Saturday start and much larger ones for Sunday's start. The advantage of playing Sunday is that if you make it to the end of the day almost 90% of the field will be gone and you're approaching the money bubble. This means you can adjust your play on Sunday if the money is within reach. I think I'll see how I play in the cash games on Saturday before making a decision.

Day 7: Saturday June 12th

We pick up the action at the 1/3 NLHE game at the Rio...

Hand #17

I'm in the big blind with $\text{A}\heartsuit\text{8}\clubsuit$. The under-the-gun player raises to \$15 and 3 others call. I call the extra \$12 and see a flop of $\text{A}\clubsuit\text{8}\clubsuit\text{7}\heartsuit$. Nice for me. I check to the initial raiser who leads for \$30. Two players come along and I raise to \$200. The initial raiser folds but the under-the-gun+2 player only has \$45 behind and makes the call as we're heads-up. He says, "I need some help dealers." When the $\text{J}\heartsuit$ hits the turn he says, "There it is" and tables $\text{A}\heartsuit\text{J}\clubsuit$. The river blanks and I lose a nice size pot.

Hand #18

I'm in the big blind with $\text{A}\clubsuit\text{A}\heartsuit$. An early position player raises to \$8 and gets several calls before I re-raise to \$23. We're 4 to a flop of $\text{K}\heartsuit\text{J}\clubsuit\text{9}\heartsuit$. Not the best for me, but I lead out for \$60. It's folded to a middle position player who moves all-in for about \$300 more. The lady in the hi-jack position thinks long and hard before finally moving all-in over the top for about \$400 more. I can clearly see the initial raiser is breathing heavy and his heart is about to jump out of his chest. He's got a set. I fold my aces face up. The middle position player shows $\text{9}\heartsuit\text{9}\clubsuit$ and the lady shows $\text{A}\heartsuit\text{J}\heartsuit$. The flush doesn't come and the middle position player scoops a nice pot.

Hand #19

The player on my right raises to \$13 and I re-raise to \$25 with $\text{A}\heartsuit\text{K}\heartsuit$. It's folded around and he calls. The flop comes $\text{K}\heartsuit\text{9}\clubsuit\text{4}\clubsuit$. He quickly bets \$20 and I call. The turn is the $\text{A}\clubsuit$. He quickly bets \$25 and I call. The river is a $\text{10}\heartsuit$. He bets \$30 and I tell him I have a king. I think about it for a while then raise to \$80. He calls before I get my money into the pot and shows $\text{A}\heartsuit\text{9}\clubsuit$. I show him the bad news and take a nice pot.

After playing from about 1:00pm until midnight I'm up \$264 and head to *Roberto's Taco Shop* for a burrito before going to bed.

Day 8: Sunday June 13th

WSOP Event #24 - \$1,000 No-Limit Hold'em. This event has two starting days with Sunday as day 1B. Day 1A saw just over 1,400 runners with 258 remaining at the midway point of Level IX when they stopped for the night. Today's start has 1,900 runners. Players are spaced out to allow room for late registrations, so my table breaks before the first hand is dealt. I'm seated at Table 79, Seat 5. There are only 4 other players occupying the 10 seats as the first hand is dealt. We start with only 3,000 in tournament chips with blinds at 25/25 for Level I.



Hand #20

First hand: There's a small raise to 100 and two players see a flop of $\text{J}\heartsuit\text{6}\heartsuit\text{2}\clubsuit$. Player 1 bets 150 and gets called by the player in Seat 1. The turn is the $\text{8}\heartsuit$. Player 1 bets, Player 2 raises, Player 1 re-raises all-in, and Player 2 calls. Player 1 tables $\text{6}\clubsuit\text{6}\clubsuit$ for the flopped set. Player 2 tables $\text{8}\clubsuit\text{8}\heartsuit$ for the turned set. The river blanks and Seat 1 doubles up to 6,000 while the other player is out of the tournament on the very first hand.

Hand #21

Second hand: I'm dealt **A♥Q♥** from under-the-gun and raise to 75. It's folded around to the big blind who calls. The flop comes **A♦2♥7♥**, pretty nice for my hand. It's checked to me and I bet 150 and take down the pot.

Hand #22

Third hand: I'm dealt **7♣3♦** in the big blind and check when only the small blind calls. The flop comes **K♠5♥3♣**. The small blind bets 100 and I call. The turn is the **8♦** and we both check. The river is the **3♠** giving me trips. The small blind checks and I bet 200 and take down the pot.

Hand #23

Fourth hand: My small blind. It's folded to Seat 1, the player in the cut-off, who raises to 125. I find **A♦A♣** and smooth call and the big blind gets out of the way. The flop comes **8♥2♣3♣**. I lead for 200 and the cut-off pushes all-in. I say, "Another set?" and call. He tables **9♦9♠** and I double up to 7,050 as the board blanks. Great start and lots of action for Level I.

Level II increases the blinds to 25/50 and I find myself missing several big draws. I do manage to win a small pot with **Kx 10x** on a board of **4x Kx 8x 10x** but am down to 5,725 at the end of the level.

Hand #24

We start Level III with 50/100 blinds. I'm dealt **7♥7♦** in middle position and raise to 300 only to have the cut-off re-raise to 700. I call and we're heads-up to a flop of **5♠4♦2♣**. I check and the cut-off bets 1,000 with only 725 behind. I'm not getting away from the over pair and push all-in only to get called by **K♥K♣**. The board blanks and I lose a big pot unnecessarily.

Hand #25

The player in Seat 1 opens the pot for 300 from under-the-gun. I'm in Seat 5 with have **A♦A♣** and smooth call him again. One of the new players moved to our table is the stereotypical crazy Oriental guy from Southern California. He calls 300 from the small blind. The pot is 1,000. The flop is **K♥3♣8♣**. It's checked to me and I bet 700 only to have the Chinese guy move all-in. He has me covered. Seat 1 folds. I know that the Chinese guy has a flush draw and I look back at my hand to see that I at least have the ace blocker. I call. The under-the-gun player tables **J♣10♣**, exactly what I figured he had. The dealer wastes no time in turning the **5♣** to give him the flush. My only out is another club for the nut flush, but the river is the **8♦** and I'm out of the tournament as the tournament clock shows only 1,200 remaining of the 3,289 total runners. Maybe I'll try again next weekend.

Still dazed I sit at a 1/3 NLHE table and spewing off several hundred dollars before I stabilize. The last hand of the night, well after midnight, sees me losing the rest of my stack on a queen high board with **Kx Qx** to a guy with **Kx Kx**. Down \$800 I call it a night – amazingly I'm still ahead for the trip.

Day 9: Monday June 14th

After a quick lunch and a couple hours relaxing at the Rio pool, I sit at the 2/5 NLHE game around 4pm. No real hands worth reporting, but after playing even for most of the evening I get up around 2:00am down \$270 and now down for the trip.

Day 10: Tuesday June 15th

Good session and a good table – full of mostly old, predictable guys.

Hand #26

I'm under-the-gun+2 and raise to \$30 with **A♦ K♣**. It's folded around to a young player on the button, who I've marked as a good player, who re-raises to \$105. I figure it's a button move and re-raise to \$220. He thinks for a bit and moves all-in for \$500. I call and the flop comes **A♣ K♥ 10♠**. He tables **8♥ 8♠** and says he needs some help. The turn is the **Q♣** and the river is the **J♦** for Broadway on board and we chop the pot.

Hand #27

I'm in the cut-off with **K♠ K♣**. The under-the-gun player (loose aggressive Mexican) limps as does a middle position player. I raise to \$30. The small blind (solid tight guy with a big stack) calls as do the other two players and we're 4-way to a flop of **J♥ 9♣ 3♠**. The small blind leads out for \$35. The Mexican takes his time to call. I suspect he's hit the flop hard. The middle position player folds and I just call. The turn is the **3♥**. I figure that the small blind has a **Jx** and the Mexican may have flopped a set or 2-pair. The small blind leads out again for \$50 and the Mexican calls. I need to find out where the Mexican is and raise to \$150. The small blind calls the additional \$100 and the Mexican folds. The river is a **6♠**, a blank, but the small blind goes all-in and has me covered. What does he have? He called pre-flop, so he can't have **Jx 3x** or **9x 3x**. He also would have re-raised if he had aces or jacks. I can't figure he's got pocket sixes. He would have re-raised my turn raise if he had a full house, so the only hand that makes sense is **Ax Jx**. I have \$750 behind, so it's a big call, but by the way he played his hand he's got to have **Ax Jx**. After some thought I call and he tables **A♦ J♦**. I flip up my kings and rake in the largest pot of the trip thus far.

Hand #28

I'm under-the-gun with **K♥ Q♣** and limp in as does a player in middle position and the cut-off. The button raises to \$25 and we're four to a flop of **J♦ 3♦ 4♠**. It's checked around to the button who bets \$60. Smells like a continuation bet to take down the pot. I call as do the other 2 players. The turn is a **A♥**. I figure this is a perfect scare card for me, so I lead out for \$100 representing the ace. One of the middle position players calls as does the button. One of them must be on a draw and the other has the jack. The river is the **8♥** which doesn't complete any draw. I peel off four \$100 bills and toss them in the pot. The middle position player, one of the solid old guys, thinks for quite a while before folding. The button, who did most of the betting, thinks and thinks before tossing in his hand. The table wants to see my hand. I don't usually show, but I don't plan on running any more big bluffs and showing will help get my big hands paid off, so I table my king-high to the grunts of the guys who folded and the laughs of the guys who weren't in the pot.

After some time several of the tight old guys leave and are replaced with younger players, one who buys in for \$1,000, double the max buy-in, but asks if anyone objects. When no one says anything he plays on. It's no longer a soft table, so I rack up my red and green chips, stuff my \$100 bills in my pocket, and cash out up almost \$1,400 before heading back to the pool. I'm happy with my play this session.

Day 11: Wednesday June 16th

Another long day at the tables. Played poorly all day – winning small pots with big hands and losing big pots with small hands. The icing on the cake was the last hand of the evening. I've got \$700-\$800 and lead the betting on all streets. The river gives me the 2nd nuts only to give my opponent the nuts. He's got me covered and that's that. Down almost \$1,700 today. (Have you noticed that winning sessions get longer write-ups than losing ones? Funny how that works.)

Day 12: Thursday June 17th

A new day. I spoke with Cynthia on the drive to breakfast. She sounded down in the dumps – just one of those days. I decided to call the florist later in the day and have some flowers delivered to her – that should do the trick. After a good pancake and eggs breakfast at *Blueberry Hill Restaurant* I got a seat at a juicy 2/5 NLHE table at the Rio around noon. One guy at the table was 38 yrs old and the others were all older than me, so a fairly risk averse and predictable crowd.

Hand #29

A few hands into the session I pick **7♦ 7♣** in early position. The under-the-gun player raises to \$15 and I call as does the small blind and the three of us see a flop of **J♣ 7♥ 5♦**. The small blind only has about \$130 behind and moves all-in. The original pre-flop raises calls, leaving him about \$300 behind. I have him covered. I figure the small blind probably has **Ax Jx** and the original raiser has an over pair. I decide to move in then with my set of sevens and get a quick call. When the **5♥** hits the turn I table my full house. The river is of no help. The small blind muck and leaves the game while the other player tosses in his **Q♠ Q♥** face up into the muck.

Hand #30

I call with **J♦ 9♦** from the small blind after 3 limpers. The flop comes **5♦ 9♣ 5♠**. I bet \$20 and am called in one spot. The turn is the **9♥**. I bet another \$20 and he calls again. The river is the **5♣**. I bet another \$20 and am raised to \$120. I call only to see **5♥ 6♥**. Poorly played.

Hand #31

Three of the older players leave and are replaced by more aggressive younger guys – all on my left. I figure I'll play a few more hands when I pick up **A♠ J♣** in the big blind. Several limpers enter the pot and I raise to \$30 and get 2 callers. On a flop of **Q♣ 5♦ 2♦** and with just over \$100 in the pot I check as does the middle position player. The player in the cut-off, who suspects I was trying to steal pre-flop, bets \$50. I call to see the turn and the middle position player folds. The turn is the **2♣** giving me the nut flush draw. I decide to lead out for \$120 and after some thought the cut-off calls. If he's got a queen it must not be very big. The river is a **7♥** which doesn't complete the flush draw. Since the cut-off looked weak on the turn I lead out for \$250. Again he thinks about it and mumbles that I wouldn't play a queen like that. He folds

saying he had a small pair and the nut flush draw. Either way I scoop the pot and call it a day, up about \$650 for the session and \$200 for the trip.

I head to *Luv It Frozen Custard* which I found on TripAdvisor before coming to Vegas. They make 4 flavors daily and have packed pints and quarts to go in all other flavors. I tried a scoop of butter pecan and a scoop of blueberry. Both were great and only \$3.65 for 2 scoops. I'll have to add them to my list of places to return to.

Back at the Rio at 9:00pm and on the 2/5 NLHE list for table 239 that's full of older folks, including the oriental lady from earlier today. After checking out the WSOP tournaments and 10/25 NLHE game in the poker pit, my name is called and I take a seat with \$500. Almost immediately several people get up to leave. One of the new players was told this was a 1/3 NLHE game and loses his \$300 buy-in on the first hand when his flopped trip aces loses to a turned set of deuces. He re-buys and when he notices it's a 2/5 game announces he's going to leave when the big blind gets to him.

Hand #32

On his last hand I pick up  in position and open the pot for \$25. It's folded around to him and he back raises to \$55. I call and we see a flop of . He bets \$75 and I move all-in and have him covered. He started the hand with just under \$300 and quickly calls showing . The turn is the  and the river is the  and he doubles through me before departing the table.

Hand #33

As 1:00am draws near we've got 3-4 empty seats and one soft spot left at the table in the person of a Mexican guy two to my right. I'm just waiting to get into a pot with him when I'm dealt  under-the-gun and open for a raise to \$25. He calls and we see a flop of . I put in a continuation bet of \$25 and he calls – probably has a weak ace. The turn is the  , giving me the flush draw and gut shot straight draw. I quickly fire another \$25 and he calls. The river is my bingo card, the . I hesitate then bet \$75. He thinks about raising, but just calls the \$75 and shows me  after I show down the nuts.

That was what I needed to get ahead \$74 for the evening session and rack up as the table breaks.

Day 13: Friday June 18th

I'm up before 10:30am and a quick breakfast at *Blueberry Hill* before heading to the Rio. It's Senior's Day and the parking lot is jammed packed for event #34 the \$1,000 No-Limit Hold'em Senior Championship. A record 3,142 greyhairs fill both Amazon and Pavilion rooms to nit it up for today's event. This means few will be at the cash game tables, but with only a precious few available tables for cash games the list for 2/5 NLHE is long. Finally a table is freed up and I get a seat at a new game. It's an interesting mix of characters with a couple young players, most older, and one young blonde 30-something from Canada on my left looking to gamble it up. Even though she's on my left I'll be looking to get her chips. She teases the dealer by saying she loves to straddle from any position and commences to straddle her button – running the older guy in her big blind out of his seat in the process. She also tries to get the old guys to blush by asking them if they know the difference between jam and jelly (adult content, so ask me for the punch line in

person). She's aggressive and takes \$250 off one of the older guys. After a few orbits she's up to almost \$900 and I'm up to just over \$600 when the following hand occurs.

Hand #34

I'm under-the-gun with  and limp in for \$5. Miss Canada calls as do 4 others. The flop is  which is not too bad for my hand. I decide to take the initiative and lead for \$15. She's my only caller and we see a lovely turn of the  to complete my straight. I doubt she's holding the Broadway end, so I pause a few seconds trying to bet an amount she'll raise just in case the king hit her hand. I decide \$45 is about right. She does a little acting of her own and raises it to \$145. Again, I take some time and finally re-raise to \$345. She quickly calls. The river is a blank, a . I have about \$240 behind and want to size my bet so she'll call. I decide on \$140 and she moans as she announces call. When I table the straight she quietly mucks her hand. I figure she had  or even .

That put me up over \$600 in 60 minutes. Three of the old guys left the table by then and were replaced by locals, so I racked up, changed into pool attire, grabbed my book, and headed to the Rio pool for the afternoon. I'm reading *Cowboys Full* by James McManus which is a history of poker in the United States. I'd recommend it, especially if you like history. I think I'll call Cynthia while I'm poolside to see how she's doing.

As a side note the Rio produces dozens of limited edition \$5 chips in quantities of only 500 for a number of occasions. As I run across ones that I think would be of interest to the collecting community I've posted them on the forums for \$6.50 each and have sold several. Last night the table conversation got to talking about Las Vegas shows and I commented that my wife and I saw Danny Gans several years ago and he was terrible. One of the locals, who I've seen on the poker circuit in Biloxi, thought his show was good. I then commented that he must have played at the Rio because I think I saw a \$5 Rio chip with his picture on it. He said that Danny Gans only showcased at the Mirage, so it would make no sense for Harrahs, who own the Rio, to promote him a one of their chips. I say that I could swear that I saw him on a Rio chip – I had one in my stack earlier. He said that it must have been a \$5 Mirage chip as chips from other casinos sometime find their way into poker games across town. (In fact later that night I was watching the 10/25 NLHE game and \$1,000 Wynn chips were being used.) The guy was so confident he said he'd lay me 5-1 if I'd like to put up \$100. Now, I knew I was right, but how on earth would I prove it. Even if half of the 500 Danny Gans chips produced were still in circulation at the Rio finding one among the racks and racks of



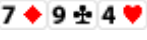
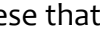
chips would be difficult. And if he suggested we just ask the cage... what if they answered incorrectly as most are hired temporarily to cover the WSOP? I told him I knew a lot about chips and to save his money as I was 100% correct. I guess we could have walked into the lounge, hopped on one of the Internet kiosks, and searched the Nevada Gaming Commission historical listing of chip approvals to find it, but no matter. During today's session Miss Canada has a \$5 Danny Gans chip sitting on top of her stack, so I buy it off her. On the table behind me is the guy from last night. I show him the chip and tell him I saved his \$500.

Another delicious dinner at *Ping Pang Pong* and I'm back to the Rio. The place is packed, so I add my name to the 2/5 NLHE list and check out the WSOP events in the Amazon room. Phil Ivey is in the \$2,500 Pot

Limit Hold'em/Pot Limit Omaha event which is down to the final 42 players and in the money. (Later that week he wins his 8th gold bracelet in the \$3,000 HORSE event.) Two final tables are also being played as well as \$5,000 No-Limit Hold'em Six Handed event where the final 27 players just made the money. The noon Senior's event is down to 1,000 players from their record 3,142 entrants. I head back to the cash game area as my name is called.

I'm in Seat 1 and just about everyone has more than \$500 chips. Tough looking table. Everyone has to post at the Rio for the WSOP, so I just wait until my big blind and watch the players. One of the smaller stacks in Seat 9 busts and we get a new player. When I finally get to my big blind someone raises and I fold. The guy in Seat 2 raises from the big blind and I fold again. I pick up  on the button, open for a raise to \$30 and get two callers only to fold when I miss the flop and Seat 3 leads out. I pick up  on the next hand, raise when it's folded to me in the cut-off, only to have Seat 2 re-raise me out of the pot. Not the best table image to cultivate in the first 4 hands. The old guy in Seat 6 gets back-to-back beats and decides to call it a night, so I move to Seat 6.

Hand #35

I pick up  on the button. Seat 2 opens for a raise to \$25 and Seat 4 re-raises to \$50. I call as does the old guy with the arrowhead card protectors in front of him in Seat 8. The flop comes . Seat 8 leads out for \$40 and Seat 4 re-raises to \$140. I fold and Seat 8 calls. The turn is a  and Seat 8 checks and calls a \$200 bet from Seat 4. The river is a  and Seat 8 checks again. Seat 4 tables  and the old guy in Seat 8 shows his flopped set with . It's dozens of hands like these that shrink your stack. My stack drops just below \$400, so I pull another \$100 bill out of my roll and add it to my stack.

Hand #36

Three players limp to me in the cut off and I can't resist raising to \$25  (they just look so pretty). The old guy in Seat 8 calls, Seat 1 calls, and now my antagonist in Seat 2 back raises to \$75. He's seen me fold my late position raises before knowing that I just want to pick up the blinds and limpers, so maybe he's doing it again. I call the extra \$50 as does Seat 8. We're three to a flop of . Not a terrible flop for me. Seat 8 checks and Seat 2 bets \$100. He obviously wouldn't do this with pocket jacks or a nine, so if I hit my flush I should beat his two pair. As he's counting out his chips I toss a \$100 bill into the pot and Seat 8 gets out of the way. The turn is the  giving me top pair with top kicker. Seat 2 bets another \$100. Can he have pocket queens? If so, then why bet only \$100 again? If he's got some other hand then \$100 is an odd bet. Players generally make the same bet on unimproved hands. I call the \$100. The river is interesting. It's the  putting three-of-a-kind on board. Now, if he has pocket aces or kings I'm beat, but if he was afraid that his aces or kings were beat by a nine on the turn then he's still beat. Seat 2 then moves all-in and he's got me covered. After some thought trying to piece the hand together I call my remaining \$215 and hear those sweet words, "good call" as he tables . I rake in a \$1,080 pot.

Once I was in for \$600 I thought I'd leave if I got ahead \$300. I'm ahead \$380 and decide to make it a short night. I played less than 60 minutes again – short day at the tables. While I'm standing at the cage to cash out I run into the guy from last night who wanted to make the bet on the Danny Gans chip. He tells me he would have made the bet yesterday even once I told him I was 100% sure the Rio produced that chip. He

also told me that after I left he found the Danny Gans chip in his stack. He must have won it off me. He then tells me he lost a \$500 prop bet once when he bet a guy he couldn't eat 10 cigarettes and not throw up for an hour. Interesting character. You meet all types. Two of the more "interesting" regulars in the cash game area are a tall blonde stripper with huge implants dressed in sexy tight outfits and stiletto heels that plays the 2/5 NLHE game, and the other can be described identically – tall, blonde, huge implants, sexy clothes, heels... only she's clearly a dude. I played once with the stripper and it was hard enough to concentrate, but sitting across from a guy who's showing lots of cleavage would be too much. Table change!

Day 14: Saturday June 19th

I get to *Blueberry Hill* just before noon and the place is packed, so I skip breakfast and head to the Rio. It's another \$1,000 No-Limit Hold'em Day 1A event and the Pavilion room is packed. I decide to relax a bit and play at what looks like a soft 1/3 NLHE table. I hand the chip runner \$300 and watch the action until it's my turn to post the \$3 big blind. We're 7-handed with mostly older guys nursing their stacks.

Hand #37

There's one limper and the small blind completes, so I check my big blind. The flop is ragged, so I lead for \$10 and take down the pot.

Hand #38

Same scenario – one limper, I call out of the small blind and the big blind raps the table. I lead at the flop and win the pot.

Hand #39

The button straddles for \$6 and I'm in the big blind with my favorite hand, . The small blind acts first and calls. I call as does the under-the-gun player. It's folded to the cut off who raises to \$18. The small blind folds and the under-the-gun player calls. We're three to a flop of . I haven't shown down a hand yet, so perhaps the cut-off thinks I've been stealing or maybe he raised with an over pair, so I lead into the \$60 pot for \$40. The under-the-gun player folds and the cut off thinks about it a while before mucking his hand. I scoop the pot.

Hand #40

I have  under-the-gun and call \$3. It's folded to the high-jack who limps in. The small blind now raises to \$10 and the big blind calls. I call and the high-jack calls and we're four to a flop of . The initial raiser in the small blind is first to act. His makes a move towards his chips then checks. I guess he didn't want to bluff at the pot with 3 players behind him. The big blind checks, I check and the high jack checks. The turn is the  which is a good bluff card for me. Again the blinds check, so I lead out for \$20 into a \$40 pot. I just need to get by the high-jack and only need to be correct 1/3 of the time. The high jack folds as do the blinds and I rake in another pot without a showdown.

Hand #41

I'm now under-the-gun+1 and limp in with $\text{K}\clubsuit 10\heartsuit$. The player on my left calls and the cut-off raises to \$13. I call as does the guy on my left. We're three to a flop of $\text{K}\heartsuit 8\spadesuit \text{J}\heartsuit$. I'm first to act and should probably bet into the raiser, but I decide to opt for a check-raise. It's checked to the cut-off who also checks. The turn is the $10\heartsuit$. Not a bad card for me, but there are straight and flush draws out there. With \$40 in the pot I decide to take a stab for \$30. The guy on my left calls and the cut-off folds. The river is a $\text{K}\heartsuit$ which fills me up. I'm not worried about straights and flushes now. I ponder a bit and sheepishly slide \$60 into the pot. I'm called immediately and shown $9\heartsuit 8\heartsuit$. What a flop and turn! Too bad he didn't bet 4th street. I win the pot and he calls it a day and departs.

That's pretty much how a session goes. You steal small pots here and there, try to open raise when you can, and wait on a big hand hoping to get called down. I'm up a quick \$175 and cash out.

I need to do a little shopping and remember a couple nice stores at Mandalay Bay. I get there but both are no longer in business. I use my GPS to find similar stores and pick up some specialty teas for Cynthia in the Chinatown section of Las Vegas where I stay for some BBQ pork stir fry with noodles. Aside from breakfast at *Blueberry Hill* I haven't used utensils at lunch or dinner for two weeks. It's been either pizza or burritos or Chinese with chopsticks. I head back to the room, grab my pool gear, and catch some rays. It's only 97° today – 3° below average.

Headed back to the Rio around 8:00pm and watched some of the tournament action. Gavin Smith was into the round of 32 in Day 2 of the \$10,000 Heads-Up NLHE Championship but trailing his opponent. The \$3,000 HORSE event had a 5pm start and many of the pros were present.

All of the 2/5 NLHE cash tables were full, so I sat at a 1/3 table. Could not catch any cards and finally got up and moved to a 2/5 table after losing \$430. The 2/5 table was tough, but had its soft spots. No hands worth mentioning, but by 3:00am when the game broke I was only down \$88 for the night. It's time to go to bed if I plan on playing in the \$1,000 NLHE event at noon.

Day 15: Sunday June 20th



In previous years I'd pocketed a few WSOP tournament chips and sold them on eBay. One guy from NJ bought a \$25 and \$100 tournament chip from me. They have no cash value and are just used in the WSOP. Prior to coming to Vegas this year he agreed to buy a \$500 and \$1,000 WSOP chip for \$600. When I wasn't able to pocket any last week I didn't know if I wanted to play today's event, so I e-mailed him offering to sell him my entire starting stack of 8 \$25 chips, 8 \$100 chips, 2 \$500 chips, and 1 \$1,000 chip for \$1,100, which would give me a \$100 profit. He agreed, but in order to do it I needed a starting table assignment at a table that would break quickly, so I could pocket the chips during the table move. I also need to have above starting chips at the break. As luck would have it my table draw was perhaps the 10th table to be broken. We started shorthanded with only 5 players for Event #36 Day 2.

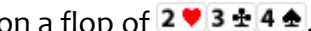


Hand #42

Level I begins with the blinds at 25/25. I pick up decent starting hands and steal a few blinds. I then pick up  in position and open for a raise to 100 and get one caller. The flop is . He checks and I bet 225 and get called. The turn is a . This time he leads out for 350 and I call. The river is a  and he checks. My 700 bet is enough to win the pot.

Later in Level I I pick up pocket jacks twice. Once I limp in a 3-way pot only to check down a board of  and lose to . The second time I open raise to 250 and win the blinds.

Hand #43

The under-the-gun player limps into the pot and it's folded around to me in the small blind. I check as does the big blind. I have  on a flop of . I lead out for 125 with two pair. The big blind folds and the limper calls. The turn is a . I bet 350 and get called again. The river is a  filling me up. I bet 700 and am called. I table my hand and scoop the biggest pot so far at our table.

Level II increases the blinds to 25/50. I just want to hold onto my chips until we break tables. After stealing a few pots we finally break with 28 minutes remaining in the 60-minute level. I rack up my chips and pocket the starting stack into my satchel as I walk across to table 55. I've now got 2,950 in chips – almost the 3,000 starting stack, so I'm on a free roll. I ramp up the aggression, mostly because I haven't eaten since yesterday's lunch and am hungry. I steal a few blinds and win a nice little pot with a c-bet. I'm up to 3,425 chips.

Hand #44

I pick up  in middle position, bet 175, and am called by the button. We're heads-up to a flop of . I bet 450 with top pair and am raised to 1,350. He has me covered. I shove all-in and get a crying call. He flips up  and is way ahead. The board runs out  and I hit the door.

I'm back at *Blueberry Hill* waiting for my lunch as I make a call to Cynthia and leave a Father's Day message for Dad. Before heading to the pool I grab some beverages from Walmart.

I did not play well in the late day cash game session. Several medium pots, and a few big ones, weren't pushed my way. After dropping two buy-ins I call it a night. I'm up less than \$350 after 15. With 4 days left I need to get in some serious playing time.

Day 16: Monday June 21st

I grab a burger at the *TGI Fridays* in the Gold Coast and watch the FIFA World Cup match as Spain buried Honduras 2-0. The Rio is always busy on Mondays and tables are full. I get on a dull 2/5 NLHE table before I decide to move over to a more active one. Lots of action, but when my aces don't hold up I have to rebuy. I stayed even most of the afternoon before cashing out down \$556. It's time to get some Italian food for dinner.

I come back later that evening and consider playing the 5/10 NLHE game which is uncapped. I tried it three times last year winning \$1,889 and \$430 before dumping \$6,600. During the day may be the best time to take a shot at the 5/10, so I get on the 2/5 list and soon have a seat. It's late and I'm playing too aggressively. I get stacked with **Ax Kx** on a king high rainbow flop with 3-way action when a player goes runner-runner for the nut straight without the king. Ouch. I then commence running another big slick hand into aces and then the notorious **Ax Qx** into queens. Four buy-ins later I call it a night at 2:30am. Double ouch.

Day 17: Tuesday June 22nd

I slept in late, grabbed another burger at *TGI Fridays*, did a little shopping, and then started my 2/5 NLHE session at the Rio at 7:00pm. Nine hours later I was down \$223 after getting felted early in back-to-back hands to start in a \$1,100 hole. By 4:00am I don't recall too many pivotal hands.

Day 18: Wednesday June 23rd

I played solid today. Made only one bad call and at the very end picked up a few hands too. Cash out \$700 winner. The \$10,000 HORSE Championship event started at 5:00pm today. I spoke with several of the pros and got them to sign *The Theory of Poker*, a book I got for my nephew's grammar school graduation, - including Main Event Champs Doyle Brunson, Greg "Fossil Man" Raymer, and Chris "Jesus" Ferguson, as well as poker legend Barry Greenstein and the on-line phenom from Edison, NJ, Tom "Durrrr" Dwan, who just last month racked up \$2.3M in winnings to bring his 2010 total to \$5.8M (only \$5,792,100 more than me).

Day 19: Thursday June 24th

I got up around 10:30am, checked my e-mail, and was at the Rio just after noon. I saw a new 2/5 NLHE table start and asked Daniel, the guy working the No Limit desk, to move me to that table when he had an open seat. He's seen me now for 3 weeks and knows me by name as well as which game I play, so he grabbed me a seat right away. The table looked juicy with 4 fish and 4 players I'd need to keep an eye on, including one loud table captain. The guy in Seat 6 looked particularly exploitable, so I was looking to play a big pot with him.

Hand #45

I limp in under-the-gun with **J♦ 9♥** and get 5 callers. I flop the joint – **10♠ 8♣ 7♦**. I'm first to act and lead for \$25. Only the old guy representing Team Yellow calls me. He started the hand with only \$200. The turn is the **5♠**. I bet \$75 and he moves all-in. I call and we get a **3♠** on the river. He flips up **9♠ 6♠** for the flopped low end of the straight, but rivers a flush. I muck and he leaves the game only to be replaced with his female equivalent.

Hand #46

I'm not in this hand, but it's noteworthy. After 4 limpers a solid player in the cut-off raises to \$35 and gets 4 callers. The flop comes **Q♦ J♣ 2♠**. One of the blinds opens for \$50. The guy on my right is next to act. He's a solid player as well. He takes some time and moves all-in for \$350. The old Oriental lady who replaced the guy from the last hand also moves all-in for her last \$145. Our fish in Seat 6 moves all-in over

the top of both players for about \$550. Now action is back to the guy in the cut off, our original pre-flop raiser. He thinks a bit and tosses **K♥K♦** face up in the muck. I just say, “Kings no good sir” and he agrees. The blind folds and with all the action complete the board runs out **8♠5♦**. Seat 6 tables **Q♥2♥** for two pair. The guy on my right shows me **K♠10♠** for the open ended straight draw and turned flush draw. The old lady says she also folded **Kx 10x** and the fish scoops a huge pot and now has me covered.

Hand #47

I’ve been playing well and have worked my stack back to \$835 by stealing a lot of pots pre-flop. The table suspects as much, but I’ve had to show down few hands, if any. The button straddles and I pick up **J♦J♥** from under-the-gun+1 and raise to \$35. I really don’t want any callers and am looking to pick up the pot right there. Our fish in Seat 6 thinks longer than usual and calls. Everyone else folds and we see a flop of **7♣7♦3♠**. With about \$80 in the pot I lead out for \$65. Again, our fish thinks for a bit before raising \$100 more. I haven’t seen him play tricky and doubt he could. There’s also no way he’s flopped trips or has pocket 7s or 3s, and since he suspects I’ve been stealing pre-flop there’s also no way he’s got a pocket pair bigger than jacks or he would have re-raised me pre-flop. He probably has pocket 8s, 9s, or 10s. I only have about \$700 behind. I take some time and raise \$350 on top of the \$165, leaving myself only \$285 behind. I know he can’t fold his over pair and he decides to commit himself and moves all-in. I call and the board runs out **9♥8♦**. He proudly tables **10♦10♥** and I show him the bad news. He doubles me up and leaves himself less than \$200 behind.

After a while the fish swim off and the guy to my right stacks the table captain by slow playing a flopped set of aces. With that I decide to look for an open seat elsewhere so I can play with what is now just over \$1,000 in chips and \$1,000 in bills. I find a seat at a table where this attractive Armenian woman is playing. She was at my table earlier and didn’t play well. Plus, there’s a few other gray-haired players at her table now. I get a great seat too – just to the left of the big stack (\$1,300) and two to her left. I recognize the big stack. We’ve player earlier this week and he’s a weak player. Unfortunately he also recognizes me and tags me as a strong player who just moved into a seat on his left and has him covered. We play two hands and he reaches for a couple racks. As is customary he asks if anyone wants any chips before he leaves. I tell him I was hoping to get them. He smiles and says he’s played with me before and I’m a strong player – that’s why he’s leaving. Not such a dumb guy after all.

Now someone else from the table changes sits into the empty seat on my left. I figure he just wanted to be next to the lady, but after a few hands I realize they’re husband and wife. I hate playing with couples, especially when seated next to one another. They always collude. Always. But they’re on my left, so I let it go and avoid pots with them. Eventually a couple of the older guys leave as it’s nearing dinner time. During the lull the table tightens up and the couple decides to leave. Good. A couple young military people join us as well as a few solid players. I steal a few pots here and there. I think the best starting hand I saw all day was the jacks. One of the Army guys two to my left stacks the foreign guy directly on my left, now he’s got \$1,000 in front of him and asked the chip runner to exchange a rack of red for a stack of green. No one plays with green \$25 chips at the 2/5 game, but he wants to impress us. Now he’s chirping away in his new role as table captain.

Hand #48

I'm in the big blind with . Mr. Army limps in only to see it raised to \$15 by the solid player on his left. Two more players call and I decide to see a flop as does Army. With \$75 in the pot the dealer flops . It's checked to the initial raiser who bets \$30 and then folded around to me. I've got bottom pair and a backdoor flush draw. With only 2 players left I decide to call. Army calls too. The turn is a . I check, Army checks, and so does the guys on his left. The river is a . I check. Army gets real quiet and slides a small stack of chips into the pot. As the guy on his left is thinking about it he asks Army how much he bet. Army says \$55. Now I can tell Army is bluffing. The player between us finally folds his hand. I can't raise here since if I'm right and he is bluffing he can't call anyway. Just in case he's bluffing with the best hand I call the \$55. As soon as my chips cross the line he says, "I missed" but continues to hold his cards. Now, normally the etiquette would be for me to table my hand, but I've seen this guy slow-roll twice now and don't want to table my bottom pair only for him to show me something like , so I tell him to show or muck. He mucks and I show him that I called him with bottom pair and then explain why I waited for him to muck. This shuts him up.

A couple hands later I see Kai. He's a very good player I've seen in Biloxi. He's a circuit player. In fact if I had made that Danny Gans bet our mutual acquaintance would have been Kai who I would have had hold the money. Kai was playing the 5/10 NLHE game at the table behind us when it broke. Army invites Kai to sit down with us and bring all his chips. Of course Kai agrees, especially since the open seat is on my immediate left. That's my cue to leave, so after Kai empties his racks I grab them and rack up myself. It's 7:30pm anyway and I can use some food. I'm up \$1,275 for the session and head to *Orchids Garden* for some dim sum.

Back from dinner and I think I'll call it a night. Cynthia folded and packed everything so compactly into my suitcase that it'll be a challenge getting it all back in there.

Day 20: Friday June 25th

I'm up at 9:00am, checked out and dropped off the rental car. Now I'm sitting at McCarran airport where they have free Wi-Fi. I should get back into Pensacola just before 9:00pm.

Another WSOP is in the books. I dropped \$235 + \$1,000 in two tournaments (not counting the free-roll) and won \$782 in cash games for a net loss of \$453. I had a lot of fun, learned a bit, and picked up some chips to add to my collection and trade. The weather was fantastic. I'm already looking forward to 2011.