

## 2011 WSOP Trip Report

This is my 4<sup>th</sup> year heading out to Las Vegas during the World Series of Poker. Just like last year I'll be in Vegas for 19 nights, staying downtown at Fitzgerald's this go around. I'll be writing bits and pieces of this trip report at the end of each day. Hope you enjoy it.

### Day 1: Sunday June 5<sup>th</sup>

Cynthia's staying home again this year, but we're both headed to Vegas on July 1<sup>st</sup> to spend 4 days at the Flamingo for her birthday (long story, but the air/hotel was free, courtesy of Ebro Poker Room).

I flew out of Pensacola on Delta via Atlanta at 9:15am and arrived in Las Vegas at 2:45pm, grabbed my Dollar Rental Car, and checked in at the Fitz. After unpacking I headed to NY Pizza & Pasta for a couple slices and then to Wal-Mart to pick up some groceries. The Rio has pretty much the identical set-up they had last year, the only change is the Final Table area is much larger and centrally located in the Amazon Room. With the rigging and lighting it's been described as a spaceship landing in the poker room.

#### Hand #1

I decide to ease my way into the WSOP and get a seat at a \$1/\$3 NLHE table. Right away I can tell it's no easy table. Not only am I not catching any cards but those I do catch get drawn out on. Here's an example: I have   in middle position. A tight played UTG opens for \$20. He hasn't been coming into many pots and I can tell is frustrated. I decide to smooth call and see who else comes in. The big stack calls the \$20 from the button and we're 3-way to a flop of   . The original raises leads out for \$45. I know I have him beat and want to chase away any draws, so I bump it to \$145. The big stack thinks a bit and 3-bets to \$300. The original raiser folds and I move all-in for \$125 more. He smacks down his   like it's the nuts. The original raiser says he folded  , so I only have to fade 3 outs – one ten and two aces. The dealer wastes no time in turning the case . No queen on the river and I'm re-buying. There were several hands like this one and by midnight I'm down \$1,100. Not the best start to my World Series.

### Day 2: Monday June 6<sup>th</sup>

I'm up at 7am, still adjusting to the time change. Apparently free breakfast was included with the room (eggs, bacon, hash browns, and biscuits) so I give that a try, along with a side of pancakes, to start my day. Not great, but not terrible either, plus it was less than \$3 for the pancakes. I'm out of the Fitz by 9am and head to Spinetti's, a poker supply store located downtown. I bought a \$1 Red Garter chip from them off eBay a few weeks earlier and want to pick it up and see what else they've got. Most of their chips are overpriced – always cheaper winning them on eBay. From there I stop off at Arizona Charlies on Decatur,

which supposedly had new \$1 chips (they didn't) and then to the Monte Carlo and the Flamingo which both did have new \$1 chips.



## Hand #2

Over at the Rio event #10, the \$1,500 NLHE 6-max, is about to get started with a record field of 1,400+ runners. This leaves only 10 tables free for cash games. After an hour on the \$2/\$5 NLHE waiting list I finally get a seat. I come in for \$500 and pick up **A♦ K♦** on the first hand. A player ahead of me raises to \$20, I raise to \$65, he 4-bets to \$225, and I move in and am called. I'm up against **Q♣ Q♥** and lose another flip when I don't improve. Chips!

## Hand #3

A while later I limp with **Q♥ J♦** and 4 of us see a flop of **A♥ K♥ 7♥**. I lead out for \$20 and the player in position raises to \$75. It's folded to me and I make the call with the nut flush draw. We're heads-up to see the dealer turn a **6♠**. I check and the villain bets \$90. Since he has me covered I decide I'm getting the proper implied odds with 12 outs, so I call the \$90. The river is the **10♠** giving me the Broadway straight. I check with the intention of check-raising. He obliges with a bet of \$235 and I shove for about \$230 more. He calls and rolls over the **9♥ 8♥** for the flopped flush. The river was his money card, but in retrospect I still played the hand poorly.

## Hand #4

The UTG player opens to \$25 and I call with **Q♦ Q♥** intending to trap. We're heads-up to a flop of **J♠ 10♠ 5♦**. He leads out for \$50 and I raise to \$125. He announces all-in and I call the extra \$350. He asks if I have a set – never what I want to hear. The board runs out **7♥ A♦** and he shows me **K♠ K♣**. I muck my queens face up and decide to call it quits after losing \$1,700 during the afternoon session. I grab a burger at TGI Friday's across the street in the Gold Coast and then head back to the Fitz.

That evening I drove over to the Starbucks on El Rancho and hopped on the Internet to check e-mail. The Nevada Chip Approval Report was posted for the month of May and included approval of 2 new \$1 chips: one at Silverton Casino and the other at the Las Vegas Travel Center #108 (a.k.a. Alamo Casino). I had been



to Silverton before, but the other was new to me. I Googled it but only got into on Travel Centers of America, those TA service stations you see along the Interstates. Sure enough, I called the number and in addition to slot machines they said they opened tables games today. She gave me directions and they were right across the street from Silverton in one of those standard TA service station. A small room ringed with slot machines and 3 tables in the middle – blackjack, craps, and 3-card poker – made up the “casino”. The craps table was empty, but the other 2 tables had 1 patron each pushing red \$5 chips back and forth. By the number of 18-wheelers in the lot they must have been truckers. I asked one of the dealers for ten \$1 chips and left. At the Silverton I just went to the cage and asked if their new chips were released yet and if I could buy ten. The new chips were mixed in with 5 previously released \$1 chips already in use spread across the tables, so rather than me trying to round up 10 of the new \$1 chips she just got them from the vault. She checked with her supervisor and came back with 10 chips. I'll add one of each to my collection, trade a couple of the others with friends, and sell the remaining pairs for \$9. It's always nice to be the first to find new \$1 chips.



### Day 3: Tuesday June 7<sup>th</sup>

Today I decided to play in the Golden Nugget Grand Poker Series a couple of casinos down Fremont Street. I played in this tournament in prior years. The \$235 buy-in NLHE event started at noon. You start with 12,000 chips with 40 minute levels. The event drew 73 runners. I made it to the end of Level 9 at 6:30pm for the dinner break with 21 others.

#### Hand #5

Upon returning I 3-bet the chip leader at our table with  $\text{A}\clubsuit \text{Q}\clubsuit$  and he called with  $\text{8}\heartsuit \text{8}\diamondsuit$ . I hit my queen on the turn and doubled up to about 28,000 chips while the average stack was 41,000.

#### Hand #6

Later that same level I 3-bet the guy on my right with  $\text{A}\heartsuit \text{Q}\heartsuit$  and called his shove only to race against his  $\text{7}\heartsuit \text{7}\diamondsuit$ . The dealer put a  $\text{7}\clubsuit$  in the door and that was all she wrote. I was out in 20<sup>th</sup> place where only the top 9 cashed. I did manage to “harvest” a few chips which I’ll sell to offset the entry fee.

After some dim sum at *Orchids Garden* I headed back to the Fitz and called it a night. My fortune cookie read: “Be direct, usually one can accomplish more this way.” Yup, that sounds like me.

### Day 4: Wednesday June 8<sup>th</sup>

After another breakfast at the Fitz I headed to Starbucks to check my e-mail. Plenty of people want to buy the new Silverton and Alamo chips, so I reloaded this morning. I also sold a few Rio chips. Then it was off to the Venetian to play poker. They have one of the nicest rooms in Vegas and they draw plenty of action. After a short wait I was seated at a \$2/\$5 NLHE must-move table. I recognize one of the players from Biloxi. I’ve played with Nancy before. She’s now sporting a WSOP Circuit ring.

#### Hand #7

I buy-in for \$500 and pick up  $\text{J}\diamondsuit \text{J}\heartsuit$  on the first hand. I open to \$20 and Nancy calls from the SB. The flop is  $\text{2}\clubsuit \text{3}\diamondsuit \text{5}\clubsuit$ . Nancy checks and I bet \$25. She raises to \$75. I decide just to call. The turn is the  $\text{10}\heartsuit$ , a safe card. Nancy bets \$80 and I call. The river brings the  $\text{3}\heartsuit$ , pairing the board. She check. I figure she may have a small over pair or maybe the trey counterfeited her, so I bet \$180. She calls and tables a wheel with  $\text{A}\clubsuit \text{4}\heartsuit$ . I pull out \$400 more.

#### Hand #8

On the very next hand the player UTG opens for \$15. I call with  $\text{5}\clubsuit \text{3}\clubsuit$ . One other player calls only to have the BB 3-bets to \$50. I may have been a bit tilted from the last hand, so I call. Besides, it’s a good hand to stack someone with. The flop is a dream:  $\text{2}\heartsuit \text{4}\clubsuit \text{6}\clubsuit$ . The BB leads out for \$75. I call and the other player folds. We’re heads-up to a turn of  $\text{4}\clubsuit$ . Not the best card in the deck, but I put this guy on an over pair. He bets \$130 and I move all-in. He calls the extra \$230 and I rake the pot after a  $\text{9}\diamondsuit$  falls on the river. So I’m back to where I started. Just as I’m thinking this might be a good table I get moved, along with Nancy, to table 21. There are bigger stacks at this table (max buy-in is \$1,000 at the Venetian). I plan to be patient and pick my spots better today.

#### Hand #9

I'm in the BB with  and after 3 limpers the SB raises to \$20. I call as does everyone else and we see a flop of . Not bad for my hand. The SB leads for \$50 this time. I call as does one other player. The other player has us covered and has played well, so I'm cautious thinking we may both be on flush draws. The turn brings a . The SB bets \$100. I call as does the other player. The river is the , making my flush but pairing the board in the process. The SB bets \$150. I don't think I can raise, so I just call. When the other player folded I knew I'd won and flip up my baby flush. The SB flashed . That was a nice pot.

#### Hand #10

I look down to see  UTG and limp in. UTG+1 limps and UTG+2 raises to \$50. It's folded back around to me and I raise to \$145. The limper folds and the raiser calls the extra \$95. The flop is . I decide to check to disguise the strength of my hand hoping my opponent will bluff at the pot. Instead he checks behind. The turn is a . Now I bet \$225 and after some time the UTG+2 player folds.

#### Hand #11

Three players limp into the pot and the BTN raises to \$20. I'm in the SB with  and call. It's folded to the player in the CO who also makes and call. We're 3 to a flop of . I lead out and bet \$40. The CO folds and the BTN calls. The turn is a . I bet \$80 this time and the BTN raises to \$220. Now, I've seen this guy play a little crazy, and he just lost a big pot the previous hand, so he's probably steaming a bit. I know I'm ahead in the hand. He has another \$435 left behind. I decide that calling is the correct play and then check to him on most rivers to give him the opportunity to bluff off the rest of his stack. I call the extra \$140. The river is the . I check and as if on cue the BTN moves all-in for \$435 and I snap call. He says, "No pair" and I table my hand. He shows me  for the busted gut shot as he slides all his chips my way before leaving the table.

#### Hand #12

The little Indian guy on my left has been giving me problems all day. I'd take the lead in the hand and he'd raise me on the turn or river. In this hand I have  UTG and limp in. The Indian raises to \$20 and I call. We're heads-up to a flop of . I decide to turn the tables and let him bet. I check and he bets \$45. I take my time and call. The turn is a . I check and he bets \$75. I call. The river is a . I don't know if he'll bet, so I lead for \$75. He calls and I show him the king. He claimed my queen out-kicked him and I believe him. With that he departs the table. We lost a few other soft players as well. It's 9:30pm now, so I decide to rack up and hit the noodle bar for dinner. Today's \$1,150 win is finally a step in the right direction.

#### Day 5: Thursday June 9<sup>th</sup>

I'm settled in to my morning routine – the "Double Down" breakfast special at the Fitz followed by checking my e-mail at Starbucks. I popped into the Rio to see today's noon tournament, the \$1,500 Pot Limit Hold'em, and check the cash game action. Only three \$2/\$5 NLHE tables were running and a small 500+ runner field in the tourney. The Amazon room was empty. With that I decided to go back to the

Venetian with their better game selection, lower rake, and larger player pool. I'm 9<sup>th</sup> on the list and in 15 minutes am seated with \$500 in chips. I'm holding steady and feeling out the group of players. It's another must move table, so there are a lot of replacement players coming and going. Finally we settle in.

#### Hand #13

I'm +/- \$50 for a while until I limp in with  $3\heartsuit 3\spadesuit$  and a player in late position raises to \$20. We're heads-up to a flop of  $3\clubsuit 4\clubsuit 4\heartsuit$ . I check and he makes a c-bet of \$15. I call and the turn is a  $J\clubsuit$ . I check and he bets \$35. He can't call a raise unless he's got something (I hope he does), so I raise to \$100, but he folds.

#### Hand #14

I'm treading water for the next hour or so – not really picking up any playable hands. A new player sits on my left and I bluff him out of a couple pots. The tough looking kid in Seat 3 takes notice and knows I'm stealing. I pick up  $K\heartsuit J\clubsuit$  in early position and decide to open for a raise to \$20. The kid calls and everyone else gets out of our way. The flop is  $7\spadesuit 4\heartsuit 2\heartsuit$ . I make a c-bet for \$20 figuring the kid won't call. He decides to make a stand and raises to \$80. I haven't shown down many hands, so unless he just called with a big pair or hit a set on the flop he has to fold to a 3-bet. So with that thinking I re-raise to \$200. I have \$450 behind and he just has me covered. He thinks and thinks for about 3 minutes before announcing all-in. I don't think too long before folding. Now, you might think that my play was awful and 3-betting with air can never work. Trust me, it can work. Need proof? The kid flips up  $Q\clubsuit J\heartsuit$  and rakes in the pot.

#### Hand #15

I add four \$100 bills to my stack after the last hand. Now I'm UTG with  $A\heartsuit Q\heartsuit$  and limp in for \$5. The CO raises to \$20 and the pudgy guy on the button re-raises to \$55. I call and the CO folds. We're heads-up to a flop of  $J\heartsuit 10\heartsuit 6\heartsuit$ . I check and the pudgy guy makes a pot-sized bet of \$100. I call. The turn is the  $4\heartsuit$ . We both check. The river is the  $A\heartsuit$  bringing backdoor diamonds. I lead out for \$100 and he reluctantly calls. I table my hand and he mucks saying he had pocket kings. I win a nice pot.

#### Hand 16#

A few hands later I pick up  $5\clubsuit 3\clubsuit$ . Recall I won a big pot with this hand yesterday. The pudgy guy raises to \$20 and I'm the only caller. The flop is  $K\clubsuit 5\spadesuit 10\clubsuit$ . He bets \$85 and I semi-bluff to \$200. He folds.

#### Hand #17

Again, the pudgy guy opens to \$20 and I call with  $A\clubsuit 10\clubsuit$ . The flop is  $6\heartsuit 3\spadesuit 2\heartsuit$ . He checks and I lead out for \$20. He calls. The turn is a  $J\clubsuit$ . He checks and I check behind. The river is the  $A\heartsuit$ . He checks and I bet \$50. He calls. I table my hand and he shows  $A\clubsuit J\heartsuit$ . He didn't bet because he thought I might have made the diamond flush. His aces-up wins.

#### Hand #18

There are 4 limpers and I check from the BB with  $9\clubsuit 3\clubsuit$ . The flop is  $2\clubsuit 3\heartsuit 10\clubsuit$ . It gets checked around. The turn is the  $9\heartsuit$  giving me two pair. I bet \$15 and pick up one caller. The river is the  $3\heartsuit$ . I bet \$35 and get called by  $J\heartsuit J\clubsuit$ . This full house was the biggest hand I made all day.



### Hand #19

The pudgy guy opens to \$20 and I call with  $\text{A}\spadesuit\text{9}\clubsuit$ . The flop is  $\text{J}\heartsuit\text{9}\heartsuit\text{6}\clubsuit$ . I lead out for \$25 and he calls. The turn is the  $\text{Q}\heartsuit$ . I lead for \$55 and he calls. The river is the  $\text{3}\clubsuit$ . I lead for \$180 and he calls with  $\text{K}\heartsuit\text{J}\heartsuit$  and wins a nice pot off me.

### Hand #20

This is the biggest pot I played today. A new player comes to the table and is seated two to my right. He's European and wearing the standard issue Beats headphone by Dr Dre. Another 20-something, in fact most of the players are 20-somethings and the majority of them derive all their income from poker. The landscape has certainly changed from 10 years ago. Anyway, Euro opens to \$20 from UTG. I raise to \$45 with  $\text{K}\clubsuit\text{K}\heartsuit$ . That troublesome kid in Seat 3 calls as does Euro, so we're three to a flop of  $\text{Q}\clubsuit\text{9}\clubsuit\text{3}\clubsuit$ . Euro checks and, with about \$150 in the pot already, I want to take it down now and drive out the flush draws, so I bet \$125. The kid thinks long and hard again, but with Euro yet to act he decides the best course of action is to fold. Euro thinks a bit and moves all-in for \$450. If he has a flush I'm beat, but it's not easy to flop a flush. I call the extra \$325 and he shows a monster draw with  $\text{A}\clubsuit\text{Q}\clubsuit$ . I need to fade 14 outs twice. He's actually the favorite in the hand with 51.6% equity. The dealer was on my side as both the turn and the river brick out and I rake in the pot. Euro is pretty upset and leaves the table to cool off.

I played a few more hands until players started racking up and departing and an influx of replacements arrived. The dealer was greeting them by name, so this meant they were all regulars. No need for me to contribute to this crowd, so I rack up too taking with me a tidy profit of \$640.

It's only about 7pm, so I give *Luv-It Frozen Custard* a call and ask what today's flavors are. She says butter pecan and champagne cherry. I tell her I'm on my way. This place has been around for years. Hardly any tourists even know about it. They make vanilla and chocolate, plus 2 other flavors, fresh daily. Whatever isn't sold that day is packed into pints and quarts and are sold from the freezer. I get a double scoop of butter pecan and eat it in the shaded parking lot (there's only a walk-up window – no place to sit indoors). There's a steady line of customers the entire time and several know the workers by name. It's a friendly place with good custard.

I stopped back at the Fitz, grabbed my laptop, and headed to the strip mall that the Starbucks is in. I noticed a pizza-by-the-slice place next door earlier today. I ordered one of each (Neapolitan and Sicilian style) and ate it outside while reading e-mails. More chip sales with the new \$1 Silverton and \$1 Alamo each selling for \$4.80 (plus \$2.75 s&h) on eBay. I went back to both places twice already and got 10 chips each time from the cage. They're all accounted for, so I'll make another trip tonight. Ten chips is about all the cage is willing to sell you. In fact, at the Alamo truck stop casino they said I could buy ten \$1 chips and two \$5 chips. No more, no less. I know they break even or lose money on the \$1 chips, so they must have figured they've sell two \$5 chips and make a couple bucks in the process. Not a problem. I have a guy wanting a \$5 chip anyway and I'll put the other on eBay.

While trying to keep myself occupied between folding hands at the Venetian I started looking through their chips. Both Venetian and Palazzo chips are used interchangeable at both properties. The mold is the standard “hat and cane” used by Paulson, the manufacturer of the chips (now part of Gaming Partners International (GPI)). There are a few variations on the hat and cane mold – one with a short cane variety (SCV) shown on the left and another with a long cane variety (LCV) shown on the right. Paulson considers



both molds the same as the variation is minor. So minor, in fact, that I do not consider them “different” chips and only have one mold variation in my collection. I came across both \$1 Venetian and \$1 Palazzo chips with the SCV on both sides (denoted as SCV/SCV), the LCV on both sides (LCV/LCV), and the variation with the SCV on one side and the LCV on the other (SCV/LCV). I found enough variations to pick up 2 sets of \$1 Venetian chips and 1 set of \$1 Palazzo chips. I posted these for sale on the chip forum. I also checked the chip guide and no one had cataloged the \$1 Palazzo LCV/LCV variation. A few minutes later I get an e-mail from a collector in Australia wanting to buy the \$1 Palazzo LCV/LCV, \$1 Venetian SCV/SCV, \$1 Silverton, and \$1 Alamo. That’ll be \$18 delivered, mate! PayPal gladly accepted.

As I’m banging away on the computer the pizza guy comes out with another slice of each for me. He said it looked like I enjoyed them, so here’s two more. I thank him and finish both before driving south on I-15 to pick up more chips at the Silverton casino and Alamo truck stop, and calling it a night.

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That’s as much as I wrote while in Las Vegas. When all was said and done I ended \$1,730 winner. Here are a few more big hands:

#### Hand #21

It’s about 8pm and I go to the Golden Nugget poker room. I get a seat at what looks to be an easy table. The problem is that no one has many chips in front of them except the guy to my right (always good). I ask him if it’s a good game, especially since he’s got \$800+ in front of him. He says it was a good game earlier, but not anymore. I get dealt a few big hands and open for raises. Either everyone folds or a continuation bet takes down the pot. On about the 3<sup>rd</sup> hand I get dealt  $\heartsuit J$   $\clubsuit J$ . I again raise to \$12 and a player re-raises me all-in, about \$135 more. This is a crazy re-raise. I figure he has a hand he really doesn’t want to see a flop with, usually a mid pair or big ace, or maybe he was the table bully before I sit down and wants to put me in my place. I snap call. The board runs out  $\heartsuit J$   $\heartsuit J$   $\spadesuit Q$   $\heartsuit 8$   $\clubsuit 4$ . He says, “You win” and tables  $\spadesuit A$   $\heartsuit K$ . I table quad Jacks and win an extra \$163 high hand jackpot. He leaves the game and the guy next to me tells me that he’s been a jerk and deserved that. He says he was raising big with nothing and getting people to fold.

## Hand #22

Two hands later I'm dealt **A♦ A♥**. I open with my standard raise to \$12. A player re-raises to \$35. He has about \$200 left, so I want to raise enough where he'll just move in on me. I raise another \$85 and make it \$120 total. Right on cue he announces all-in and I just flip up my aces. He has **J♠ J♥** and when the dealer doesn't produce a jack I win a nice pot and he leaves the game. I'm up \$739 in less than 10 hands. I tell the guy next to me that it sure looks like a good game, but now that no one has any real money in front of them I might as well leave since I probably won't be getting any of his stack. So I depart.

## Hand #23

This hand took place at the Venetian \$2/\$5 NLHE game shortly after being moved from a must-move game into the main game. All the players were young and competent. No soft spots, so I must be the soft spot – not good. There were no seats at what looked like a better game, so I figured I'd play a few hands anyway. After being raised off some mediocre hands I decide to limp in with **10♣ 9♣** UTG. The player on my left calls and when it gets around to the BB he raises to \$30. I decide to call figuring if I hit my hand I may stack him as I've seen him make large c-bets. The player on my left also calls and we're 3 to a flop of **6♣ 7♣ 9♣**. I flop top pair with a gut shot straight draw. I'm happy, but not thrilled. The UTG player leads out for \$50. This is a lot smaller c-bet than I've seen him make, which either means he flopped a monster or is cautious with 2 players left in the hand. With about \$90 in the pot already I figure it's not too expensive, so I call figuring we'll be heads-up and my top pair may be good. To my surprise the guy on my left re-raises to \$150. The UTG player just calls the extra \$100. His hand can't be that big. If he flopped a set or had a big over pair he would have 3-bet to make any straight or flush draws pay. Now the pot is \$440 and another \$100 to me. I think a bit before deciding to call. The turn is a **4♣**. This didn't complete any straights (if someone had **8x 5x** they didn't need the four and I doubt anyone was playing **5x 3x** with this action. The UTG player checks. I check. The guy on my left bets \$300. He only had about \$225 left, so it's kind of a strange bet. The BB now folds. I have about \$435 behind. There's now \$840 in the pot. I'm not getting the right odds to call, but I have a good feeling about this hand, so after some deliberation I slide 3 stacks of red chips into the pot and make the call. The turn is a lovely **8♣** completing my straight. I doubt my opponent can fold for an extra \$135, and I can't put him on backdoor clubs, so I push all-in. He sighs and says, "I guess I call". I say straight and table my hand. He throws his **8♠ 5♠** face up into the muck. He flopped the low end of the straight with a flush redraw and a gut shot straight flush draw! Always nice to hit a 3-outer and scoop a \$1,410 pot. With that I immediately racked up with murmurs of "hit and run" mumbled by a few. He asked if I was going and I said that you're all better than me, so my best decision would be to leave.

I pick up more \$1 chips with mold variations from the Las Vegas Club and Western (both downtown) and Casino Royale, Bill's, Bally's, Paris, New York New York, Hard Rock, Rio, and the Stratosphere.

In total I ended up selling dozens of chips for \$4 each or more for a total of over \$670. Not bad.







I also traded several and was able to add the following \$1 chips to my collection which is now at 3,174 chips and counting. Check them all out at on my casino chip website.

