



2010 World Series of Poker Presented by Jack Link's Beef Jerky
Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada

Official Report
Event #15
Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split Eight-or-Better
World Championship
Buy-In: \$10,000
Number of Entries: 170
Total Net Prize Pool: \$1,598,000
Number of Places Paid: 16
First Place Prize: \$447,446
June 6-8, 2010

Tournament Headlines

Frank Kassela Wins First WSOP Gold Bracelet

Las Vegas Businessman Wins Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split World Championship

Frank Kassela Defeats Allen "Chainsaw" Kessler Heads-Up and Collects \$447,446

Final Table Includes Four Former WSOP Gold Bracelet Winners – Harman, Zolotow, Juanda, Minieri

Russian Vladimir Shchmelev Becomes First Player to Make Three Final Tables

WSOP Hosts Richest Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split Tournament in Poker History

Overview

[Frank Kassela](#) was the winner of the \$10,000 buy-in Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split World Championship at the 2010 World Series of Poker. It marked his first career WSOP gold bracelet victory. The successful businessman and serious part-time poker player who recently moved to Las Vegas from Memphis, TN collected \$447,446 for first place. He defeated an all-star final table lineup that included four former WSOP gold bracelet winners – including John Juanda, Steve Zolotow, Jennifer Harman, and Dario Minieri.

This was Kassela's second WSOP final table appearance. His most notable previous

accomplishment had been a cash in last year's \$40,000 buy-in 40th Anniversary Tournament.

Kassela is a 42-year-old married father of five children. He started playing poker seriously about 10 years ago. Kassela has cashed in several tournaments around the country and has now accumulated more than \$1.5 million in overall tournament winnings. However, his lone victory was a win last year at the LA Poker Classic. Kassela can now proudly claim the title of "2010 Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split World Champion."

All \$10,000 buy-in events on this year's WSOP schedule are officially designed as "World Championship" events, since these are the highest buy-in tournaments in each respective form of poker. World Championship events include Seven-Card Stud, Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split, Deuce-to-Seven Lowball, Omaha High-Low Split, Limit Hold'em, Heads-Up No-Limit Hold'em, Pot-Limit Hold'em, H.O.R.S.E., Pot-Limit Omaha, and the No-Limit Hold'em Main Event Championship.

Only the top 16 tournament finishers collected prize money. The runner up was [Allen "Chainsaw" Kessler](#), the unrelentingly crabby touring pro and combative tournament demagogue, who came as close as ever to winning his first WSOP gold bracelet. Several former WSOP gold bracelet finishers cashed in this event – aside from Harman (3rd), Zolotow (4th), Juanda (5th), and Minieri (8th) other champions included Gary Benson (9th), Blair Rodman (15th), and Toto Leonidas (16th).

This was the richest Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split prize pool in poker history – at \$1,598,000. It eclipsed last year's previous record by \$56,400. This was only the third million-dollar prize pool ever for any Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split tournament.

The Champion – Frank Kassela

The \$10,000 buy-in Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split (Event #15) winner is Frank Kassela, from Las Vegas, NV. He previously lived in Memphis, TN.

Kassela is 42-years-old. He was born in Chicago, IL. His family relocated and he grew up in the Dallas suburb of Mesquite.

At age 25, Kassela moved to Memphis, TN -- where he started a successful business.

Kassela is the owner of Mid-American Specialties, which sells promotional and specialty products, primarily to government offices. His company has one office in Dallas and three offices in Memphis.

Kassela says he sleeps very little. He usually gets about three to four hours of sleep per night.

Kassela began playing poker seriously about 10 years ago.

Kassela moved to Las Vegas recently so he could concentrate more on poker playing. He could be classified either as a pro or semi-pro, depending on the time of year. Kassela is playing poker full-time now; however, during other months he spends much of his time concentrating on his business.

Kassela's favorite poker game is Pot-Limit Omaha. He is trying to start up a regular mid-to-high stakes Pot-Limit game at various Las Vegas casinos. Since he has not been successful, he often plays PLO with \$2-5 blinds, which is the largest game found on a regular basis.

Kassela has already accumulated more than \$1.5 million in career tournament winnings. He has 36 major cashes. His only tournament victory prior to this win was in a Pot-Limit tournament at the 2009 LA Poker Classic.

Kassela's first tournament cash was at the 2003 Jack Binion World Poker Open.

Kassela collected \$447,446 for first place. He was presented with his first WSOP gold bracelet.

According to official records, Kassela now has one win, two final table appearances, and five cashes at the WSOP. His career WSOP earnings now total \$550,059.

Following his victory, Kassela joked that he would give his gold bracelet to his 14-year-old daughter. This brought mock protest from Kassela's son who sat in the audience and watched his father win his first WSOP title. After contemplating who would get the bracelet, Kassela agreed that it would be best to win at least one more so each member of the family would receive the prized jewelry.

Winner Quotes

On what winning his first WSOP gold bracelet means: "This feels good! I feel terrific! I couldn't feel better!"

On the meaning of his victory: "Once you start playing poker, you definitely want to win a World Series gold bracelet. That's why you play tournament poker."

On poker games he likes to play: "I'm trying really hard to get a regular PLO game going in Las Vegas. That's the game I like to play."

On his self-assessment as a Stud High-Low player: "I think I play it well. But it's not a game I play tons of. I first started playing it at the Horseshoe in Tunica."

On tournament strategy: "Stud High-Low is about the slow accumulation of chips. You're not going to get as many chips quickly as you are in Pot-Limit Omaha (and other games). It's a building process. It requires patience."

On playing heads-up against his friend, poker pro Allen Kessler: "He was in a really bad spot, chip count-wise, when we got heads up. He was down about 4 to 1. In Stud High-Low, that's just insurmountable, unless you run into some perfect hands."

On his reputation as a table talker: "I just like to talk. I wish I could say it was a strategy. I just like to run my mouth."

The Final Table

The final table consisted four former WSOP gold bracelet winners – John Juanda (4 wins), Steve Zolotow (2 wins), Jennifer Harman (2 wins), and Dario Minieri (1 win).

This was the most gold-bracelet heavy finale of any final table played so far at this year's WSOP. Half of the finalists were former title winners, with a combined total of nine wins between them

Three different nations were represented at the final table: Italy, Russia, and the United States. There were four Las Vegas residents at this final table – the most of any table so far.

The final table began eight-handed. This is standard practice in Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split.

Final table participants ranged in age from 25 to 65.

The runner up was Allen "Chainsaw" Kessler. The former owner of a marketing firm from Philadelphia, PA, who now resides in Las Vegas, scored his biggest payout yet in a WSOP event with this finish – worth \$276,485. Kessler finished second in an Omaha High-Low Split event in 2005. He battled Kassela tough late but could not overcome his serious chip disadvantage in the final stages of the tournament. This marked his 14th WSOP cash.

The third-place finisher was Jennifer Harman, from Las Vegas, NV. She is a two-time WSOP gold bracelet winner (2000 No-Limit Deuce-to-Seven Lowball and 2002 Limit Hold'em). Harman ran out of momentum later and busted out in the tenth hour of play. With her \$173,159 payout, she now has more than \$1.6 million in career WSOP earnings.

The fourth-place finisher was Steve Zolotow, from Las Vegas, NV. Zolotow is a two-time former gold bracelet winner (1995 Chinese Poker and 2001 Pot-Limit Hold'em). He is affectionately known as the "Bald Eagle," due to his uncanny resemblance to the menacing feathered species. Zolotow is originally from New York City, where he once owned a bar and was a fixture on the underground poker scene during the 1960s and 1970s. At age 65, Zolotow is one of poker's most eclectic personalities. He once met Marilyn Monroe. He (claims to have) fallen asleep in the same bed with Elizabeth Taylor. With this cash – worth \$125,379 – Zolotow crossed the million-dollar threshold in WSOP career winnings.

The fifth-place finisher was John Juanda, from Las Vegas, NV. Juanda lasted nearly nine hours before busting out when he went card dead late. Juanda, a four-time WSOP gold bracelet winner and the 2008 WSOP Europe Main Event champion, collected \$97,989.

The sixth-place finisher was Kirill Rabcov, from Moscow, Russia. He won the 2008 Russian Poker Championship. This was his fourth time to cash at the WSOP and was his highest finish to date. Sixth place paid \$78,142.

The seventh-place finisher was Vladimir Shchmelev, from St. Petersburg, Russia. With his third final table appearance through only 15 events, Shchmelev has rocketed out to an early lead in the 2010 WSOP "Player of the Year" race. He was the runner up in the \$50,000 Poker Players Championship. Shchmelev also finished seventh in the \$10,000 buy-in Seven-Card Stud Championship. With this final table appearance, he becomes the first player to accomplish three-final tables at this year's series. He is also the first player in history to make it to three final tables in three designated "World Championship" events in a single year. Seventh place paid \$63,456.

Note: In various media reports, Vladimir Shchmelev has multiple spellings for his last name. He has been commonly reported as "Schmelev." The correct spelling is "SCHHEMELEV."

The eighth-place finisher was Dario Minieri, from Rome, Italy. He won the \$2,500 buy-in Six-Handed No-Limit event in 2008. Minieri has also made three final tables on the European Poker Tour (EPT). Eighth place paid \$52,366.

Gary Benson finished ninth. He was the first Australian to win a WSOP gold bracelet, a feat he accomplished in 1996.

Jennifer Harman became the second woman to make it to a final table this year. The first was J.J. Liu, who had a third-place finish.

The final table officially began at 5:30 pm and ended at 4:30 am. The final table clocked in at exactly 11 hours.

Other In-the-Money Finishers

The top 16 finishers collected prize money. Aside from those who made the final table, former WSOP gold bracelet finishers who cashed in this event included – Gary Benson (9th), Blair Rodman (15th), and Toto Leonidas (16th).

With his in-the-money finish in this tournament, John Juanda now has 52 career cashes. This puts him in a tie with Chau Giang for eighth place on the all time WSOP cashes list.

With his in-the-money finish in this tournament, Steve Zolotow now has 39 career cashes. This puts him in a tie with Mickey Appleman for 24th place on the all time WSOP cashes list.

The defending champion was Jeffrey Lisandro. He played in this event and lasted through the second day, but he did not cash.

Odds and Ends

This was the richest Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split prize pool in poker history. It eclipsed last year's previous record by \$56,400. This was only the third million-dollar prize pool ever for any Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split tournament.

This is the 845th gold bracelet event in World Series of Poker history. Note: This figure includes every official WSOP event played, including tournaments during the early years when there were no actual gold bracelets awarded. It also includes the 11 gold bracelets awarded at WSOP Europe (to date).

Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split is a game in which the highest and lowest hands split the pot equally. However, the lowest hand must first qualify to be eligible for half the pot. The qualifying low hand must be an "eight-low" or better. For this reason, the game is sometimes called Seven-Card Stud Eight-or-Better.

The final table was played on the ESPN Main Stage. Despite plenty of open seating, spectator interest in the event was scarce, due largely to the Draw Lowball format being relatively difficult to follow, if sitting in the audience.

The official WSOP gold bracelet ceremony takes place on the day following the winner's victory (or some hours later when the tournament runs past midnight). The ceremony takes place inside The Pavilion, which is the expansive main tournament room hosting all noon starts this year. The ceremony begins at the conclusion of the first break of the noon tournament, usually around 2:20 pm. The national anthem of the winner's nation is played. The entire presentation is open to public and media. Video and photography are permitted by both public and members of the media.

Kassela requested that the national anthem of United States be played at his WSOP gold bracelet ceremony.

Event History

Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split was the first "split" game ever to be played at the WSOP,

when it was first introduced 32 years ago. In 1976, Doc Green became the first Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split World Champion. Interestingly, he won \$12,750 for first place that year, which is less than half what the bottom of the payout scale (16th place) earned in this year's event.

Since 1976, the list of event winners reads like a "Who's Who" of poker. Past winners include Johnny Moss, Doyle Brunson, Chip Reese, Mickey Appleman, Phil Ivey, John Juanda, Max Stern, Men "the Master" Nguyen, Mike Sexton, Artie Cobb, Vince Burgio, Cyndy Violette, Rich Korbin, Eli Elezra, and Jeffrey Lisandro.

In 1986, this game was inexplicably omitted from the WSOP schedule. After some protest by Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split enthusiasts, it was reinstated and has been included on the poker menu every year. Since 1995, every WSOP has included at least two Eight-or-Better events. This year's WSOP schedule includes two Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split tournaments – this \$10,000 buy-in World Championship and a \$1,500 buy-in event to be played June 14-16.

No player in WSOP history has ever won more than one gold bracelet in this game.

Last year's event attracted 164 entries. Entries increased slightly to 170 players.

Tournament Play

The tournament was played over four consecutive days, from June 6-9, 2010. The tournament was officially listed as a three-day competition, but the final table ran longer than usual and played well into a fourth day.

Here were the starting chip counts when final table play began:

Seat 1 -- Harman: 817,000
Seat 2 -- Zolotow: 560,000
Seat 3 -- Kassela: 372,000
Seat 4 -- Juanda: 644,000
Seat 5 -- Shchemelev: 398,000
Seat 6 -- Rabcov: 949,000
Seat 7 -- Kessler: 390,000
Seat 8 -- Minieri: 652,000

Kassela seized the chip lead about midway through the finale. He held the chip lead until the final hand was dealt. That came when Kassela was dealt (7c 7d) Qd 2h Qh 3s (Jh) which made two pair – with no low. Kessler had (Th 8d) 9c 8d Kc Ts (Qc) which was good for two pair -- tens and eights (no low). Kassela scooped and was the winner, which evoked cheers from one lone supporter in the audience, which was Kassela's son. Meanwhile, "Chainsaw" Kessler's merry band of followers shuffled away in despair and disappointment.

Kassela officially becomes the 2010 "Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split World Champion," replacing last year's winner Jeffrey Lisandro.

2010 WSOP Statistics

(Note: Event #15 concluded before Event #13)

Through the conclusion of Event #15, the 2010 WSOP has attracted 18,532 total entries; \$30,608,300 in prize money has been awarded to winners.

Tournament attendance is up from this same point last year. Through 15 events, there were 17,195 entries last year. There have been 18,532 total entries in the same span this year.

Through the conclusion of Event #15 (excluding #13), the nationalities of winners have been:

United States (8)
Canada (2)
England (2)
Hungary (1)

Through the conclusion of Event #15 (excluding #13), the national origin (birthplace) of winners has been:

United States (5)
Vietnam (2)
Canada (2)
England (2)
Hungary (1)
China (1)

Through the conclusion of Event #15 (excluding #13) the ratio of professional poker players to semi-pros and amateurs who won gold bracelets is as follows:

Professional Players (9): Michael Chow, Michael Mizrachi, Praz Bansi, Josh Tieman, Peter Gelencser, James Dempsey, Men "the Master" Nguyen, Matt Matros, Yan R. Chen

Semi-Pros (1): Frank Kassela

Amateurs (3): Duc Pham, Aadam Daya, Pascal Lefrancois

Note: A "pro" is defined as a player who makes the majority of his/her income from playing poker. However, there is some debate as to whether players who have lucrative industry deals and backing should really be termed as professionals. A "semi-pro" is defined as a player who derives some measure of income from playing poker over a reasonable period of time. However, many semi-pros have non-poker related business interests which provide a majority of earnings. "Amateurs" are players who have other means of support and do not play poker for income -- either part-time or full-time. Each winner is judged on a by case basis.

-- by Nolan Dalla

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