



**2011/2012 World Series of Poker Circuit  
Harrah's Rincon (San Diego)  
Event #11  
Main Event Championship  
No-Limit Hold'em  
Buy-In: \$1,500 (+100)  
Total Entries: 332  
Total Prize Pool: \$483,060  
March 24-26, 2012**

**Official Final Results:**

1	Joseph Kuether	Elm Grove, WI, US	\$111,104
2	Christopher Cronin	Gilbert, AZ, US	\$68,686
3	Ryan Gentry	LA JOLLA, CA, US	\$50,108
4	Freddy Deeb	LONG BEACH, CA, US	\$37,167
5	David Funkhouser	ANN ARBOR, MI, US	\$28,998
6	Leroy Spires	LAS CRUCES, NM, US	\$21,414
7	Christopher Bratene	Temecula, CA, US	\$16,617
8	Stephen Plache	MANHATTAN BEACH, CA, US	\$13,081
9	Ryan Buckholtz	Studio City, CA, US	\$10,444
10	Raymond Dandrea	OLYMPIA, WA, US	\$8,449
11	Brandon Cantu	LAS VEGAS, NV, US	\$8,449
12	Wadih Kaawar	SAN DIEGO, CA, US	\$8,449
13	Suzanne Matzura	Prescot, AZ, US	\$6,932
14	John Carreno	LOS ANGELES, CA, US	\$6,832
15	Matt Salsberg	STUDIO CITY, CA, US	\$6,932
16	Eric Baldwin	HENDERSON, NV, US	\$5,763
17	Stephen Plache	MANHATTAN BEACH, CA, US	\$5,763
18	Joel Chang	Los Angeles, CA, US	\$5,763
19	Alexandru Masek	SAN DIEGO, CA, US	\$4,855
20	David Levi	LAS VEGAS, NV, US	\$4,855
21	Richard Lanes	El Cajon, CA, US	\$4,855
22	Peter Voltz	SAUGUS, CA, US	\$4,145
23	Jimmy Zeledon	San Jose, CA, US	\$4,145
24	Jeffrey Blenkarin	Rockford, MI, US	\$4,145
25	Guillermo Lopez	SAN DIEGO, CA, US	\$3,584
26	Dana Kellstrom	STEVENSON RANCH, CA, US	\$3,584
27	Philip Sparta	FAIRFAX, VA, US	\$3,584

28	Jed Dickerson	CARLSBAD, CA, US	\$3,140
29	Phong Nguyen	SEATTLE, WA, US	\$3,140
30	Matthew Chang	ROCKVILLE, MD, US	\$3,140
31	Brian Montanez	RNCH CUCAMNGA, CA, US	\$2,782
32	Stanley Solis	EL CAJON, CA, US	\$2,782
33	Sean Burson	Hidden Valley Lake, CA, US	\$2,782
34	Corey Cutrell	Seattle, WA, US	\$2,497
35	Stephen Buell	GREEN BAY, WI, US	\$2,497
36	Daniel Chong	Foothill Ranch, CA, US	\$2,497

## Tournament Report:

### Joe Kuether Wins Main Event Championship at Harrah's Rincon

### Several Big Names Cash – Including Freddy Deeb, Brandon Cantu, Alexandru Masek

### Jonas Mackoff Wins “Best All-Around Player” Title and National Championship Entry

**Rincon Reservation, CA (March 26, 2012)** – When cards flew into the air at the start of the latest World Series of Poker Circuit event which took place at Harrah's Rincon near San Diego, Joe Kuether was 200 miles away, driving through the small town of Baker, CA.

Baker is not known for much, other than being home to what's described as the “World Largest Thermometer.” It's a dusty truck stop which might otherwise attract no visitors whatsoever except for the blue and white oasis, called The Mad Greek restaurant.

While Kuether was zipping past Baker, more than 300 poker players were assembling inside the special events center at Rincon a nearly three-hours drive, ready to play in San Diego's biggest poker event of the year. Little did anyone know at the time, the winner would be arriving late.

Kuether entered the \$1,600 buy-in Main Event Championship, and took his seat during the fourth hour of play on Day One. By end of the first session, he was above average in chips and well on his way to his biggest live tournament cash, to date.

On Day Two, Kuether not only survived the next session. He arrived at the final table on the third day ranked fifth in chips. With the mixed disappointment of a seventh-place finish in a WSOP Circuit event two months earlier at Caesars Palace Las Vegas still fresh on his mind, Kuether was determined to improve dramatically on his earlier performance. He not only did just that, he managed to defeat a formidable final table lineup that included several fellow professional poker players, including living poker legend Freddy Deeb.

During the seven-hour final table battle, Kuether remained unfazed throughout play. Not even the realization of his first WSOP Circuit gold ring and \$111,104 in prize money did much to elicit an emotional reaction from the 24-year-old poker pro from Elm Grove, WI. It was almost as though Kuether *expected* to win.

And win he did. This marked Kuether's second time to cash this season. He also has three previous cashes at the WSOP in Las Vegas. Prior to relocating to Las Vegas recently to play more live poker, Kuether played online poker full-time at his home in Wisconsin. He now mostly

plays cash games and tournaments in and around Las Vegas – except for an occasional rare side trip to tournaments within driving distance, such as WSOP Circuit events in California.

Kuether is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, where he earned a degree in accounting. He expects to play in more tournaments in the near future, including several WSOP events this summer in Las Vegas. Kuether also earned a seat in the WSOP Circuit National Championship, coming up in July.

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The Main Event Championship was but one highlight of the 12-day poker series at Harrah's Rincon. Other memorable moments including the following:

**Dan Natarelli Wins "Best All-Around Player" Title** – Jonas Mackoff from Vancouver, BC edged out Chris Cronin and Dan Natarelli in the "Best All-Around Player" race at Harrah's Rincon. Mackoff ended the series with three cashes and 102.5 points. He finished 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> in his three in-the-money finishes. Mackoff needed a late rush in the final event of the series (4<sup>th</sup> place) to clinch the victory. Natarelli had begun the day as points leader. However, Cronin's deep run in the Main Event (ultimately finishing second) catapulted him into second place. Mackoff earned a seat along with Main Event winner Joe Kuether.

**Texans Dominate Rincon for Second Straight Year** – Two players from Dallas -- John C. Harris and Josh Evans won gold rings at this year's Rincon series. David Clark, another player from Dallas, finished second in one event. The two victories comes a year after three Dallas players dominated last year's WSOP Circuit, played here at Harrah's Rincon. In March 2011, Seneca Easley, Mstr Lynch, and Justin Kruger won a combined four gold rings between them, including the Main Event and "Best All-Around Player" honors. So, for those who are counting – six out of the last 20 gold ring events played at Harrah's Rincon have been won by players from the Dallas area – which is more than the host city of San Diego.

**Brandon Cantu's First Gold Ring Victory** -- Brandon Cantu made a mockery out of Event #10. He destroyed the field in near-record time – turning a tournament that was scheduled to last two days into just one. Cantu collected \$27,004 in prize money, plus his first WSOP Circuit gold ring. Cantu is a two-time WSOP gold bracelet winner who won his first title in 2006 (\$1,500 buy-in No-Limit Hold'em). His second victory came in 2009 (\$1,500 buy-in Pot-Limit Omaha High-Low Split). With his latest victory, which was only his second time to cash on the WSOP Circuit, Cantu now has nearly \$1.8 million in career WSOP earnings.

**Longest Heads-Up Match of the Season** – In Event #8, the heads-up finale turned into the longest heads-up match of the current season, clocking in at more than 120 hands played over 4-hours and 20-minutes. Relative newcomer to the live tournament scene Corey Cutrell, from Seattle, defeated William Berman, an attorney from Carlsbad, CA. The 21-year-old aspiring poker pro collected \$18,500 in first-place prize money. He was also presented with his first WSOP Circuit gold ring – just three months after he became legal age to play in (most) Circuit events.

**Josh Evans' Amazing Comeback** – At one point during Event #9, things looked pretty bleak for Josh Evans when play was at 13-handed. The Dallas-based poker pro took a brutal beat late in the tournament and appeared to be just moments away from elimination. Evans looked down and had only two chips in front. He had just enough chips to post a big blind. Then, lightning struck. Evans not only managed to survive through the round of blinds, he doubled up multiple times over the next few hours. The following day, Evans played some of the best poker of his life, ultimately ending up with his first WSOP Circuit victory. His career winnings at the WSOP alone now totals just shy of \$1 million.

**Richard Lanes' Has Four Cashes** – Richard Lanes has only four WSOP Circuit cashes on his tournament resume. Incredibly, they have all taken place this year at Harrah's Rincon. Lanes led all other players with most cashes at this series – taking 22<sup>nd</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> in his four in-the-money finishes.

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The Main Event Championship was a \$1,600 buy-in No-Limit Hold'em tournament which attracted 332 entries. The total prize pool came to \$483,060. The top 36 finishers were paid prize money. All players who cashed received WSOP Circuit National Championship ranking points.

Among those that cashed were four-time WSOP Circuit gold ring winner Alexandru Masek, who finished three times in the money here at Harrah's Rincon. Longtime tournament veteran David Levi also made the money. Two-time WSOP gold bracelet winner and one-time gold ring winner Brandon Cantu also made a deep run, finishing in 11<sup>th</sup> place. Moreover, two former WSOP Circuit gold ring winners made the money, including Matt Chang and Corey Cutrell.

A full list of all players who cashed in Event #11 can be seen at [WSOP.COM](http://WSOP.COM)

The tournament was played over three consecutive days. About half of the field was eliminated during Day One. Day Two whittled the field from 167 players down to nine. The final table was played on Day Three.

After Raymon Dandrea went out in tenth place, Freddy Deeb arrived among the final nine as the chip leader. But at least two dangerous rivals – Leroy Spikes and David Funkhouser -- were also close in the starting final table chip count.

Seat 1: Chris Cronin (Gilbert, AZ) – 285,000 in chips  
Seat 2: Ryan Buckholtz (Studio City, CA) – 413,000 in chips  
Seat 3: Freddy Deeb (Las Vegas, NV) – 1,200,000 in chips  
Seat 4: Joe Kuether (Elm Grove, WI) – 781,000 in chips  
Seat 5: Ryan Gentry (San Diego, CA) – 860,000 in chips  
Seat 6: Leroy "Ty" Spires (Las Cruces, NM) – 1,150,000 in chips  
Seat 7: David Funkhouser (Los Angeles, CA) – 968,000 in chips  
Seat 8: Stephen Plache (Manhattan Beach, CA) – 625,000 in chips  
Seat 9: Chris Bratene (Temecula, CA) – 377,000 in chips

The final table included only two former WSOP Gold ring winners – Freddy Deeb and Ryan Gentry.

The final playing session began at 1 pm local time. Play finished at 8 pm making the total duration about seven hours. The official order of finish was as follows:

**9<sup>th</sup> Place** – Ryan Buckholtz finished in ninth place. He is a 32-year-old entrepreneur from Studio City, CA. Buckholtz has a number of other deep runs in major tournaments, including a third-place showing at a WSOP Circuit event earlier this year, at The Bicycle Casino in Los Angeles. Buckholtz also took second place in an event earlier this year at the California State Poker Championships.

**8<sup>th</sup> Place** – Stephen Plache took eighth place. He is a 45-year-old self-employed business owner from Manhattan Beach, CA. This was Plache's first time to participate in a WSOP Circuit event. However, he does have two previous cashes at the WSOP in Las Vegas. Plache is a graduate of the University of San Diego, where he earned a degree in finance.

**7<sup>th</sup> Place** – Chris Bratene was the seventh-place finisher. He is a 34-year-old software engineer from Temecula, CA. He has a wife and four children and is a graduate of Cal-State-San Marcos. This marked Bratene's first time to cash in a WSOP Circuit event.

**6<sup>th</sup> Place** – Leroy Spires came in sixth place. He is a 35-year-old engineer from Las Cruces, NM. This was Spires second time to make the final table at this year's Harrah's Rincon series, after an eighth-place showing in a previous event. He also took third place in the Main Event played at The Bicycle Casino earlier this year (won by Freddy Deeb).

**5<sup>th</sup> Place** – David Funkhouser finished in fifth place. He is a 28-year-old professional poker player from Los Angeles, CA. He is originally from Ann Arbor, MI. This was only the second WSOP Circuit Funkhouser has played. However, he has enjoyed great success in the past as an online player. Moreover, he cashed twice at last year's WSOP in Las Vegas. Fifth place paid \$28,998.

**4<sup>th</sup> Place** – Freddy Deeb ended up as the fourth-place finisher. He is a longtime poker pro with homes in both Las Vegas and Los Angeles. Deeb also recently opened his own restaurant in Claremont, CA. Deeb appeared to be the player to beat during most of the final session. But he took a few beats late and went out in a relatively disappointing position. Deeb is a two-time WSOP gold bracelet winner (including the prestigious Poker Player Championship). He has nearly \$3.7 million in WSOP-related earnings alone for his career. Had Deeb managed to win this tournament he would have become the first player ever to win two WSOP Circuit Main Events in the same season. Instead, Deeb had to settle for \$37,167 in prize money.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place** – Ryan Gentry finished in third place. He is a 34-year-old professional poker player from San Diego, CA. This was Gentry's eighth time to cash on the WSOP, in addition to his five cashes at the WSOP in Las Vegas. Gentry won a WSOP Circuit gold ring during its first season back in 2005 at Paris/Bally's. This impressive run paid \$50,108 in prize money.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place** – Chris Cronin enjoyed what can only be considered as a breakout series. He came in second in the Main Event, and also finished second in Event #9. Cronin is a 45-year-old editor and businessman from Gilbert, AZ. He owns an excellent poker publication called Southwestern Poker News. Cronin's previous poker accomplishments include wins at Choctaw Casino in Oklahoma, and the championship at the Winter Poker Classic in Scottsdale, AZ. Cronin collected \$68,686 in prize money for this fine effort and is on the verge of gaining at at-large bid in the WSOP Circuit National Championship, with 87.5 points (currently).

When heads-up play began, Cronin enjoyed a slight chip advantage over Kuether. But the Wisconsin native appeared to get stronger as players were eliminated and the hours passed at the final table. He grinded down his final opponent and won the last hand of the tournament in fitting fashion, holding pocket aces.

**1<sup>st</sup> Place** – Joe Kuether became the final WSOP Circuit champion crowned this year at Harrah's Rincon. He won \$111,104 for the victory. He was also presented with his first WSOP Circuit gold ring. Kuether also receives a pre-paid entry into the \$1 million 2011-2012 WSOP Circuit National Championship, which is classified as a WSOP gold bracelet event.

Here is the final list of all winners this year from Harrah's Rincon:

**EVENT #1: Randy Paguio (San Diego, CA) defeated 331 players in \$345 NLHE**  
**EVENT #2: Dean Buchanan (Kirkland, WA) defeated 155 players in \$555 NLHE**  
**EVENT #3: Patrick Schulze (Glendora, CA) defeated 100 players in \$345 NLHE**  
**EVENT #4: Dan Natarelli (Simi Valley, CA) defeated 487 players in \$345 NLHE**  
**EVENT #5: Delbert Ramos (Montebello, CA) defeated 159 players in TURBO**  
**EVENT #6: Jonas Mackoff (Vancouver, BC) defeated 197 players in \$345 NLHE**

**EVENT #7: Josh Evans (Dallas, TX) defeated 164 players in \$345 6-HANDED**  
**EVENT #8: Corey Cutrell (Seattle, WA) defeated 139 players in \$345 NLHE**  
**EVENT #9: John C. Harris (Dallas, TX) defeated 220 players in \$345 NLHE**  
**EVENT #10: Brandon Cantu (Las Vegas, NV) defeated 87 players in \$1,080 NLHE**  
**EVENT #11: Joe Kuether (Elm Grove, WI) defeated 332 players in \$1,600 Main Event**  
**EVENT #12: XXXXXXXXXXXXX defeated 138 players in \$345 NLHE**

Only four tour stops remain this season. The next WSOP Circuit stop will take place at Horseshoe Council Bluffs, in Iowa. The dozen gold ring events will be played March 29 through April 10.

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## **MORE ABOUT THE WSOP CIRCUIT AT HARRAH'S RINCON**

The Harrah's Rincon Casino and Resort, nestled in the cool mountains 45-miles away from sunny San Diego, is jointly owned and operated by the Rincon San Luiseno Band of Indians and Caesars Entertainment.

Harrah's Rincon has been one of only three flagship Caesars Entertainment properties which have hosted a tour stop during each and every season, since the WSOP Circuit was launched back in 2005.

This year's "12 Rings in 12 Days" series is taking place March 15-26. As has been the case for all previous major poker events, all action is held inside an expansive grand ballroom located on the first floor, adjacent to the main casino.

Harrah's Rincon is widely considered to be one of most upscale properties on the WSOP Circuit. The casino and poker room draws mostly from the Los Angeles and San Diego areas. The hotel has 662 rooms and a 21-story tower. The casino has 1,600 slot machines and 51 gaming tables – including a poker room located on the second floor. The hotel and resort includes a health spa and the Woods Valley Golf Club.

This will be the 14<sup>th</sup> out of 17 stops of the 2011-2012 World Series of Poker Circuit season. Just two months ago, The Bicycle Casino (Los Angeles) became the second California casino to partner with the WSOP Circuit, following Harrah's Rincon's lead, years earlier.

Harrah's Rincon is an easy drive from just about anywhere in Southern California. The luxury resort is located north of San Diego off of Interstate 15 and is about a two-hour drive from Downtown Los Angeles. Las Vegas is about a four-hour drive. The casino is located close to the cities of Temecula and Escondido (CA). Harrah's Rincon is about an hour away from the San Diego International Airport. Multiple direct flights are available from just about anywhere in the country. As a major hub of Southwest Airlines, San Diego offers many bargain fares.

Poker players with spouses and friends are encouraged to consider Harrah's Rincon as the ideal destination to mix poker with many leisurely resort activities. San Diego, with 70-degree weather, is one of America's most popular tourist destinations.

With the current season now winding down, there's a lot at stake for poker players who make their way to Harrah's Rincon. Not only are a dozen gold rings up for grabs, lots of prize money will also be awarded to those who cash. All players who finish in the money will also earn ranking points, which are used to determine finalists for the season-ending WSOP Circuit National Championship.

Since the season began in September, all tournament players have been in the running for 100 guaranteed pre-paid seats in the \$1 million WSOP Circuit National Championship finale – which will be a WSOP gold bracelet event to be played in Las Vegas – July 6-7 (final table to be played July 11<sup>th</sup>)..

To see the complete Harrah's Rincon tournament schedule, please visit [WSOP.com](http://WSOP.com).

Stay tuned to [WSOP.com](http://WSOP.com) for the latest reports and updates from Harrah's Rincon. [WSOP.com](http://WSOP.com) will carry a LIVE VIDEO STREAM of every final table, starting most afternoons.

*Note: Be sure and follow all WSOP news and updates on Twitter @wsop*

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