



**2012 World Series of Poker Presented by Jack Link's Beef Jerky
Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada**

**Official Report
Event #1**

Casino Employees Championship – No-Limit Hold'em

Buy-In: \$500

Number of Entries: 732

Total Net Prize Pool: \$329,400

Number of Places Paid: 81

First Place Prize: \$70,859

May 27-28, 2012

TOURNAMENT HEADLINES:

Chip Saechao Wins First WSOP Gold Bracelet of 2012

California Blackjack Dealer Wins Casino Employees Championship

2012 WSOP Begins in Grand Style – as Rio Celebrates Memorial Day Weekend

One Gold Bracelet Won – 60 More to Go!

.....

TOURNAMENT OVERVIEW

The first World Series of Poker tournament of the year concluded at the tail end of a memorable Memorial Day weekend with the crowning of a new poker champion, whose victory was a surprise even to the winner.

Chiab “Chip” Saechao, from Visalia, CA, won the Casino Employees Championship, which is a special competition limited exclusively to employees of the gaming industry. He collected \$70,859 in prize money. Saechao was also presented with his first WSOP gold bracelet, which is the ultimate prize in poker.

Saechao is a full-time blackjack dealer at the Tachi Casino, in Lemoore, CA -- which is located in California's Central Valley (near Fresno). This marked his first time to cash in a major poker tournament and first time to compete in the Casino Employees Championship. However, Saechao did play twice previously in the WSOP Main Event Championship. Afterward, Saechao made a startling revelation that he intended only to play in cash games at this year's WSOP, but instead decided to try out one gold bracelet event upon arrival -- ultimately ending up with the top prize.

This was classified as WSOP schedule Event #1, since it's the first gold bracelet of 61 to be awarded this summer in Las Vegas. The tournament was played over two consecutive days and nights, during a busy Memorial Day weekend. The final hand was a thrilling conclusion to the hard-fought tourney, as ultimate victor Saechao spiked a ten on the turn, which proved decisive, against his opponent's top pair and top kicker. Saechao ended up making a full house -- tens over queens -- while the second-place finisher closed with three-queens.

The runner up was Patricia Baker, from Little Torch Key, FL. She nearly broke the three-year consecutive string of all-male stag gold bracelet winners by becoming the first female since Vanessa Selbst to win a gold bracelet in an event other than the Ladies World Championship. Instead, she accepted a nice consolation prize amounting to \$43,754.

Just prior to the start of the Rio's first event, WSOP Tournament Director Jack Effel took the main stage and began things in grand style. Keeping with ritual that has become an annual tradition, all casino employees in the room were thanked for their dedication and professionalism.

Next, longtime poker dealer Richard Turnbull, from Reno, NV was introduced. He is an 85-year-old veteran of World War II – during which he served proudly in the U.S. Navy. Turnbull started dealing poker 37 years ago and has since worked at the Fremont, Las Vegas Hilton, MGM, and Sahara. Effel jokingly introduced the honoree by saying, "Turnbull has dealt more bad beats than Mike Tyson." Then, Turnbull gave the crowd a rousing rendition of the customary announcement which begins all WSOP events. "Shuffle Up and Deal" boomed across the room at 12:10 pm and cards flew into the air for the first time on the tournament floor.

The Casino Employees Championship began with 732 players. After the first day, only 46 players survived. Second day action took place on Memorial Day, lasting until well past midnight.

Some of the more notable names who cashed included WSOP Executive Ty Stewart, who oversees much of poker's biggest show on earth. Shattering the myth once and for all that poker is a game of skill, Stewart not only miraculously made the money, but was also within a pot of two of making the final table. He finished 19th.

Also in the money was former PokerStars executive Dan Goldman, now a consultant to a Native-American casino in California. He took 22nd place.

Upon gazing at the dazzling piece of jewelry he had just won, Saechoa was quite impressed. "I plan to wear it and show it off," he said, moments after the victory. "Not too many can come over here to Las Vegas and go back home with this."

.....

MEET NEW WSOP GOLD BRACELET CHAMPION – CHIP SAECHAO

The 2012 World Series of Poker "Casino Employees Champion" is Chiab "Chip" Saechoa, from Visalia, CA.

Saechoa is called "Chip" by his family and friends.

Saechoa is a blackjack dealer. He works full-time at the Tachi Casino, which is located in California's Central Valley.

Saechoa is 35-years-old. He was born in Thailand. He spent much of his early life in a refugee camp for displaced persons.

Saechoa immigrated to the United States at the age of 15.

After graduating from high school, Saechoa attended college at College of the Sequoias. But he did not graduate.

Saechoa was attracted to the casino business because of the excitement of the industry.

Saechoa collected \$70,859 for first place. He was also awarded his first WSOP gold bracelet.

According to official records, Saechoa now has 1 win, 1 final table appearance, and 1 in-the-money finish at the WSOP.

Saechoa currently has \$70,859 in career WSOP winnings.

Saechoa started playing poker about two years ago. He won a seat into the WSOP in the first tournament in which he participated. In fact, Saechoa played in two Main Events prior to entering this tournament for the first time.

Saechoa says he plays mostly in low-stakes cash games, with an occasional low buy-in tournament on occasion.

Saechoa is to be regarded as an amateur poker player since he both works full-time in another occupation.

Saechoa's favorite poker player is Daniel Negreanu.

.....

WINNER QUOTES (POST-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW)

On working as a blackjack dealer: "I like working in the casino business. It's fast money and it sure beats working out in the hot sun."

On his confidence level entering the final day: "I won my seat into the WSOP Main Event, a few years ago. And then, I won a seat again the following year. I decided to myself then, -- that maybe I really can play this game, after all."

On players he respect most in poker: "I like Daniel Negreanu, is who I respect most. He is always nice matter what. When I see him on TV, he is always nice no matter what happens -- unlike some of the other guys."

On plans for the \$70,000 in prize money: "I will pay off a lot of my debt. And, I will give some of it to my wife so she can buy some nice things."

On what he thinks of the newly-designed WSOP gold bracelet this year: "I love it!"

On returning to work after winning 70 grand and a gold bracelet: "I plan to wear it and show it off. Not too many can come over here to Las Vegas and go back home with this."

.....

THE FINAL TABLE

The final table contained no former WSOP gold bracelet winners.

The final table was comprised of nine players, which included the following occupations:

Casino Dealer – 6
Floorperson – 1
Hotel Manager – 1
Server – 1

Final table players were exclusively from the United States. Five different states were represented -- including Florida (2), Washington (2), Illinois (1), Colorado (1), Georgia (1), Nevada (1), and New York (1).

Final table participants ranged in age from 24 (youngest) to 57 (oldest).

The runner up was Patricia Baker, who was also making her first WSOP-related cash. He is a poker dealer from West Palm Beach, FL. However, she recently moved to Las Vegas and now works at the Rio. Second-place paid \$43,754 in prize money.

The third-place finisher was James Routus, from Seattle, WA. He is a dealer. Routus collected \$28,206 in prize money.

The fourth-place finisher was Ray Pulford, from Chicago, IL. He is a 27-year-old poker dealer. Pulford's finish in this tournament brought mixed emotions. He was the chip leader during most of the final table, but two took bad beats late in the tournament and went out with \$20,663 in prize money.

The fifth-place finisher was Nicolas Vaca, who is originally from Bogata, Columbia. He is a 24-year-old dealer and part-time poker player. Vaca dealt this previous season on the WSOP Circuit.

The sixth-place finisher was Jay Pinkussohn, from Denver, CO. He is a graduate of Western State College of Colorado. This was Pinkussohn's second time to cash in a WSOP event.

The seventh-place finisher was Stephen Phan, who is originally from Vietnam. He now lives in Rento, WA. Phan is a 57-year-old floorman at a casino in the Seattle area.n

The eighth-place finisher was Matthew Wilmot, from Hollywood, FL. He works as a server.

The ninth-place finisher was George Ivanov, who is originally from Bulgaria. He now lives in Las Vegas, NV. Ivanov is a 33-year-old hotel manager. An interesting side note about Ivanov is that he says he learned to speak English by listening to hip-hop music.

.....

OTHER IN-THE-MONEY FINISHERS

No former WSOP gold bracelet winners cashed in this event.

Notables who cashed included 19th-place finisher, Ty Stewart. He is an executive with Caesars Interactive Entertainment, which oversees all WSOP operations. This was the second time Stewart has cashed in this event, after a deep run in 2010. The Casino Employees Championship is the only tournament in which Stewart is permitted to play, since it's open to gaming industry employees.

Another notable player from the casino industry who made the money was Dan Goldman, from Redondo Beach, CA. He is one of the executives who transformed the website PokerStars into a global empire. He now works as a consultant to the Barona Casino, near San Diego. Goldman took 22nd place.

.....

ODDS AND ENDS

Attendance for this tournament decreased slightly over the previous year, when there were 850 entries.

The tournament began in grand fashion with WSOP Tournament Director Jack Effel standing in the middle of the tournament room and welcoming players to the first event on this year's schedule. In his opening remarks, Effel said, "All of you are special to us. Without casino employees, there is no live poker. Without casino employees, there is no Las Vegas. Without casino employees, there is no WSOP." The last comment evoked cheers from the gallery of players and spectators.

Performing the official "Shuffle Up and Deal" honors alongside WSOP Tournament Director Jack Effel was longtime poker dealer Richard Turnbull, from Reno, NV. He is an 85-year-old veteran of World War II -- when he served proudly in the U.S. Navy. Turnbull started dealing poker 37 years ago and has since worked at the Fremont, Las Vegas Hilton, MGM, and Sahara. Effel jokingly introduced the honoree by saying, "Turnbull has dealt more bad beats than Mike Tyson."

The Casino Employees Championship is not considered an "open" event, since entry is restricted to workers in the gaming industry. This is one of just three non-open events on the 2012 WSOP schedule. The other non-open events are the Ladies Championship and the Seniors Championship. All the other 58 tournaments are open events, since anyone over the age of 21 is eligible to enter.

The official WSOP gold bracelet ceremony takes place on the day following the winner's victory (or some hours later when the tournament end very late). The ceremony takes place inside Brasilia. The ceremony begins at the conclusion of the first break of the noon tournament. The ceremony usually starts 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 is permitted by both public and members of the media.

Saechao's gold bracelet ceremony is set to take place on Tuesday, May 29th. At his request, the U.S. National Anthem will be played in honor of his victory.

.....

EVENT HISTORY

The first WSOP special events for dealer and other casino employees began back in the early 1980s. Although records are sporadic, the late Ted Binion (son of WSOP founder Benny Binion) won the events twice -- in 1983 and 1985.

The Casino Employees Championship returned to the schedule at the 2000 WSOP. It was then called the "Dealers World Poker Championship." At the time, the tournament was only open to casino dealers. The following year, all casino employees became eligible. The inaugural event attracted only 109 entries. It doubled in size the next year due to the expanded eligibility.

The Casino Employees Championship was initially added to the WSOP schedule to recognize the considerable contributions of many dedicated professionals in the gaming industry. It has been an official gold bracelet event during all 13 years it's been held.

From 2000 to 2003, the Casino Employees Championship was played as a Limit Hold'em tournament. Since 2004, the event has been a No-Limit Hold'em tournament.

The largest turnout in history for this event took place at the 2006 WSOP when 1,232 players entered.

This event has traditionally been held either at the very start of the WSOP, or the very end. It has been the first event of the WSOP during each of the last four years.

The previous list of previous winners of the Casino Employees Championship includes:

Sean Drake (2011)
Hoai Pham (2010)
Andrew Cohen (2009)
Jonathan Kotula (2008)
Eric Narciso (2007)
Chris Gros (2006)
Andy Nguyen (2005)
Carl "Coach" Nessel (2004)
David Lukaszewski (2003)
David Warga (2002)
Travis Jonas (2001)
Dave Alizadeh (2000)

No event champion has ever repeated. However, one previous winner – David Warga – went on to win a second gold bracelet event eight years later, which took place at last year's WSOP.

.....

TOURNAMENT PLAY

The \$500 buy-in Casino Employees Championship was a No-Limit Hold'em competition. The tournament attracted 732 entries. The total prize pool amounted to \$329,400. The top 81 finishers collected prize money – which is the same number of players that were paid last year.

The final table officially lasted about six hours.

The tournament officially began on Sunday, May 27th, at 12:00 noon. The tournament officially ended on May 29th, at 2:00 am.

.....

2012 WSOP STATISTICS

Through the conclusion of Event #1, the 2012 WSOP has attracted 732 entries. \$329,400 in prize money has been awarded to winners, so far.

This year, there are 61 gold bracelet events being held in Las Vegas. This is an increase of two events over last year's number --59.

Through the conclusion of this tournament, the nationality of gold bracelet winners has been:
United States (1)

Through the conclusion of this tournament, the national origin (birthplace) of winners has been:
Thailand (1)

Through the conclusion of this event, the home states of winners has been:
California (1)

Through the conclusion of this tournament, the breakdown of professional poker players to semi-pros and amateurs who won gold bracelets is as follows:

Professional Players (0):

Semi-Pros (0):

Amateurs (1): Chip Saechao

Note: Various categories and statistics will be updated with each gold bracelet event as they are completed.

Note: All results are now official and may be reprinted by media. If you are posting these results on a website, we would appreciate providing a link back to: WSOP.com. Thank you.

For official news and the latest updates from the 2012 World Series of Poker, visit: WSOP.com

For statistics and historical information from the 2012 World Series of Poker, contact Nolan Dalla at: nolandalla@aol.com or nolandalla@gmail.com

For official photographs from the 2012 World Series of Poker, visit: www.wsopphotos.com

For specific media photo requests, email dcurley@hillmanpr.com and list "Urgent Media Request" as the subject line.

Note: All photos must be credited as follows: Photographer's Name/WSOP

The 2012 World Series of Poker's title sponsor is Jack Link's Beef Jerky. For more information, visit: www.jacklinks.com