



**2012/2013 World Series of Poker Circuit
Southern Comfort 100 Proof
National Championship
Harrah's New Orleans
New Orleans, Louisiana
No-Limit Hold'em
Buy-In \$10,000
Total Entries: 127
Prize Pool: \$1,127,000
May 22-24, 2013**

Jono Hilton Wins 2013 WSOP National Championship

WSOP Circuit Grinder Tops Gold Bracelet Winner Max Steinberg Heads Up in Final

23-Year-Old Poker Player from Tennessee Becomes Third WSOP National Champion in History

“It's Really an Honor to Represent the Grinders” – Winner Says

New Orleans, LA (May 24, 2013) – In its three years of existence, the WSOP National Championship has already developed some serious history, controversy, and even a rivalry.

At the end of May, the WSOP National Championship brings the very best WSOP performers together in a single “by invitation only” tournament. Half of the qualifying field consists of WSOP Circuit players, who have played and earned the right to play in the championship by virtue of accomplishments at one of the 20 tour stops around North America held this season. The other half of the field includes the top 100 performers from WSOP gold bracelet events, as determined by the Player of the Year points race.

Frankly, the WSOP Circuit grinders have become a bit protective of this coveted title and have come to support each other through a strong social network of encouragement as well as comraderie. Meanwhile, the WSOP players tend to come in, some with the very wrong perception this is a softer field than might be experienced at higher buy-in gold bracelet events in Las Vegas and Europe.

For the third consecutive year, a WSOP Circuit qualifier won the title – and with it a WSOP gold bracelet. Following in the proud footsteps in previous years of Sam Barnhart (2011 champ) and Ryan Eriquazzo (2012 champ), this year's winner had a similar path to victory.

Jono Hilton, from Chattanooga, TN won the 2013 WSOP National Championship presented by Southern Comfort 100 Proof. The finale was played at Harrah's New Orleans, which has hosted the final WSOP Circuit stop during all nine seasons of poker action. In fact, this was the first time a gold bracelet had ever been awarded in North America, outside of Las Vegas.

Hilton is a 23-year-old poker pro who started playing seriously as a teenager. This was the first season Hilton had played on the Circuit, and his commitment paid off nicely with eight cashes, five final table appearances, and one win since last fall. The gold ring victory took place at Council Bluffs, IA two months ago.

However, Hilton's drive to win this event was undoubtedly fueled by what happened last year at the WSOP in Las Vegas. He finished second in one of the last gold bracelet tournaments on the schedule, which paid more than \$400,000. Even though the money was life changing, he still realized something was missing – which was victory and the supreme token of accomplishment that goes along with the triumph.

“This means a lot more to me now because I got second in a bracelet event last year. It was right there in front of me and I really thought I was going to win, but didn't,” Hilton said. “I think now it feels better than had I won it the first time, because I've been thinking about this all year.”

Remarkably, Hilton came into this tournament with a serious dilemma that transcends poker and money. He almost decided to pass on playing due to his mother's illness. He told his mother he would forgo with \$10,000 seat in order to be at her side. But Hilton's mother insisted that he complete his mission, which was performed with precision in front of ESPN's television cameras in the final tournament before the start of the WSOP in Las Vegas.

Hilton had others cheering for him, as well. His bride to be and young baby were outside the casino, waiting on news of what was happening. As soon as Hilton won the final hand, he ran through the Harrah's New Orleans showroom and into the arms of his family. It was a moment to remember.

Hilton collected \$355,599 in prize money for the victory, plus his first gold bracelet. He now has more than \$800,000 in WSOP earnings in just the past year.

The final heads-up match was an ideal set-up for drama with a WSOP Circuit grinder heads up against a WSOP gold bracelet winner -- Max Steinberg. Hilton flopped two pair on his final hand and scooped the final pot of the tournament. Steinberg missed a straight draw and the end result was settled.

“While I was playing this event I started getting a lot of love on Twitter from people who really wanted a (Circuit) grinder to win it,” Hilton said. “We don't get a lot of credit, like it's second level poker, like we're grinding and putting in more time. I don't think many of the players get credit for how good they are. It's really an honor to represent the grinders.”

The tournament generated a prize pool totaling \$1,127,000. The top 16 finishers collected prize money. Players who cashed were as follows:

1	Jonathan Hilton	CHATTANOOGA, TN, US	\$355,599
2	Max Steinberg	OAKLAND, CA, US	\$219,799
3	Robert Panitch	NORTHBROOK, IL, US	\$156,743
4	Brock Parker	SILVER SPRING, MD, US	\$114,008
5	John Bowman	HICKORY, NC, US	\$84,544
6	Joe Tehan	LAS VEGAS, NV, US	\$63,894
7	Nicolas Vaca-Rondon	BOGOTA, COLUMBIA	\$49,187
8	Jeremy Ausmus	LAS VEGAS, NV, US	\$38,570
9	Austin Apicella	FAIR OAKS RANCH, TX, US	\$30,785
10	Pavlin Karakikov	STAZA ZAGORA, BG	\$30,785
11	Rex Clinkscales	LAS VEGAS, NV, US	\$25,006
12	Ashly Butler	NEW ORLEANS, LA, US	\$25,006
13	Jarod Ludemann	WELLS, MN, US	\$20,663
14	Jim Willerson	SAN ANTONIO, TX, US	\$20,663
15	Andrew Robinson	HUTTO, TX, US	\$17,374
16	Samuel Panzica	SALINE, MI, US	\$17,374

The Final Table:

Eighth Place – Jeremy Ausmus was the first player to bust out. He was flattened when he lost a race holding pocket nines against an ace-queen, which connected with a queen on the flop. Ausmus is probably best known for his fifth-place finish in the WSOP Main Event last year. He has more than \$2.3 million in WSOP-related winnings. Eighth place in this event paid \$38,570.

Seventh Place – Nick Vaca-Rondon, originally from Bogata, Columbia was the second player to bust out. He ran low on chips and busted about three hours into the finale. Vaca-Rondon was previously a poker dealer. He finished fifth in the Casino Employees' event at last year's WSOP and qualified for a seat into this year's championship via the at large route, by gaining enough points in WSOP Circuit events. He posted ten cashes this season. Seventh place in this event paid \$49,187.

Sixth Place – Seasoned tournament veteran Joe Tehan, from Las Vegas, NV was the third player to bust out. Tehan took a few beats and was eliminated about 100 hands into the finale. Tehan has finished in the money 30 times at the WSOP. He's accumulated more than \$500,000 in WSOP-related earnings. His qualification came via his WSOP showing as a top 100 players in the Player of the Year rankings. Sixth place in this event paid \$63,894.

Fifth Place – Tim Bowman (a.k.a. John Bowman), from Hickory, NC was the fourth player to bust out. Remarkably, Bowman has only played three poker tournaments in his life, and has cashed for big money two times. He won the Main Event Championship in his home state of North Carolina. His qualification into this event was automatic via that win. Fifth place in this event paid \$84,544.

Fourth Place – Brock Parker, from Silver Spring, MD finished fourth. Parker is a two-time WSOP gold bracelet winner. He won back to back Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em events in 2009. Parker now has nearly \$1.6 million in WSOP earnings. His qualification into this event came from 7 cashes and 2 final tables at last year's WSOP. Fourth place in this event paid \$114,008.

Third Place – Robert Panitch, a.k.a. "Uncle Krump," from Northbrook, IL finished third. Panitch enjoyed his best WSOP showing ever in this event. He was one of the 62 online qualifiers. Panitch cashed nine times this season. He's retired and is 62-years-old. Panitch had the largest cheering section of any player in this tournament. It was a great season for the player lovingly called "Uncle Krump." Fourth place in this event paid \$156,743.

Second Place – WSOP gold bracelet winner Max Steinberg, from Oakland, CA was the runner up. Steinberg won a \$1,000 buy-in No-Limit Hold'em event year, which paved the way to his qualification. With this victory, Steinberg crosses the \$1 million mark in WSOP earnings. Second place in this event paid \$219,799.

First Place – Jono Hilton, from Chattanooga, TN won the 2013 WSOP National Championship. The 23-year-old poker pro was a WSOP Circuit at large qualifier. He cashed eight times this past season. That included five final table appearances and won victory, which took place at Council Bluffs, IA. First place in this event paid \$355,599.

Tournament Notes

- The three-day tournament began with 127 players.
- There were 100 WSOP Circuit qualifiers (all showed up).
- There were 27 out of the eligible 100 players from the WSOP (Player of the Year rankings) who participated. The lower turnout was due to these WSOP qualifiers being required to post a \$10,000 entry fee. Circuit qualifiers were all pre-paid.
- Two WSOP gold bracelet winners cashed – Brock Parker and Jim Willerson.
- The final table included one gold ring winner – Brock Parker.
- The final table included one of last year's "November Nine" finalists – Jeremy Ausmus,
- The final table lasted about 8.5 hours and ended at 10:30 pm.

- The WSOP National Championship takes place at the conclusion of the 2012-2013 WSOP Circuit season. The season began in August 2012 and ended in May 2013.
- This is the third WSOP National Championship. Previous winners were Sam Barnhart (2011) and Ryan Eriqezzo (2012).
- This was the first WSOP gold bracelet ever awarded in North America outside of Las Vegas. Worldwide, gold bracelets have now been awarded in Las Vegas, London (U.K.), Cannes (France), Melbourne (Australia), and New Orleans.
- This year boasted the most internationally diverse group of players yet. Seven Canadians, two Bulgarians, and a Colombian joined 90 American Circuit qualifiers. The Canadians were Mike Leah, John Crncic, Sandra Wong, Idris Gencoglu, David Pecaski, Paul Sokoloff, and Alex Bylicki. The Bulgarians were Nick Jivkov and Pavlin Karakikov. The Colombian, Nicolas Vaca-Rondon made the final table.
- Only three players qualified for a WSOP National Championship seat all three years – Charles “Woody” Moore, Kyle Cartwright, and Kurt Jewell. A total of 29 players have qualified for two years.
- This year's WSOP National Championship was proudly presented by Southern Comfort 100 Proof, which was a welcome presence at all the WSOP Circuit stop this past season.

This concludes the 2012-2013 WSOP Circuit season.

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