

2013/2014 World Series of Poker Circuit
Season 10
Lodge Casino
Black Hawk, CO
Event #11
No-Limit Hold'em Main Event Championship
Buy-In: \$1500 (+\$175)
Total Entries: 330
Prize Pool: \$495,000
May 2-5



Eric Blair Wins the Main Event

Eric Blair wins the Lodge Casino Main Event and an automatic seat to the National Championship in Atlantic City.

After three days of face-paced poker, the WSOP Circuit Main Event at the Lodge Casino is complete. Play on the final day was so active and aggressive, players were busting out almost constantly until the intense heads-up battle. When it was over, Eric Blair emerged victorious, winning his first Circuit ring and \$116,325 in prize money.

There were five players remaining in the tournament after Day 2, and they returned at noon on Monday to determine a winner. By the end of the first level of play (Level 25), only two players were left. Eric Blair and Nicholas Petitti then battled heads up for the ring for about 3 hours. Blair secured his victory at about 4:15 p.m. in Level 29. In addition to the ring and the first-place money, Blair's victory earns him a free entry into the WSOP National Championship to held May 22nd-24th at Bally's Atlantic City.

Blair took his achievement in stride, and had high praise for all his final table opponents. "They all played really well," he said after his win. "They were tough. No one was giving it away. It was mentally grueling."

Blair entered Day 3 with an average stack, and was third in chips out of the remaining five players. However, after only about 15 minutes, he challenged for the chip lead. On just the sixth hand of the day, Blair knocked out Corey Zedo (5th place, \$28,967), when his **K♣ K♥** held up against Zedo's **6♣ 6♦**.

After another 15 minutes, Craig Varnell, the start-of-day chip leader, jumped back out front when he busted Alex Greenblatt (4th place, \$38,585). Varnell won a coin flip win **A♣ J♠** against Greenblatt's pocket nines. Greenblatt had amassed an impressive stack of chips on Day 1, finishing with 410,500. At the time, no other player had more than 300,000. Greenblatt parlayed that successful start into an equally successful Day 2, holding the chip lead for much of the day.

After Greenblatt's elimination, with only three players remaining, the two chip leaders started to battle. Blair scored the first blow by calling a big river bluff from Varnell. With the board reading $4 \heartsuit 3 \clubsuit 2 \clubsuit 3 \clubsuit 9 \heartsuit$, Varnell bet 585,000 into a pot of about 850,000. Blair called with $5 \clubsuit 5 \clubsuit$, and Varnell showed $Q \clubsuit 6 \heartsuit$. With that pot, Blair retook the chip lead. Blair took another bite out of Varnell's stack about 20 minutes later when he rivered two-pair to beat Varnell's top pair. That hand left Varnell severely short-stacked, and he soon lost an all-in against Petitti. He was eliminated in 3rd place for \$52,237.

By the time of Varnell's elimination, just over an hour had passed since the start of play. Within about ten minutes, the tournament was almost over. Blair and Petitti got all their chips in middle with Blair holding top pair and Petitti holding middle pair and a flush draw. Petitti completed his flush on the turn, and heads-up play continued for another three hours. Eventually, after a preflop raising war, the players got into a coin flip with Blair holding $A \heartsuit Q \heartsuit$ against Petitti's $10 \heartsuit 10 \clubsuit$. The flop came queen-high, and Petitti's hand never improved.

Craig Varnell's 3rd-place finish secured him Casino Champion honors. After winning a ring in Event #7 and cashing in Event #3, he ended up with 100 points, just barely edging out Tim Campbell, who finished with 97.5. By virtue of winning the title of Casino Champion, Varnell earns a free entry into the National Championship, where he may once again meet Eric Blair across the felt.

The fast pace of play on Day 3 was typical for the rest of this tournament as well. Over the course of two starting days, this event attracted 330 entries, generating a prize pool of \$495,000. The top 33 places were paid. By the beginning of Day 2, only 69 players were left, and they reached the money bubble after a little more than two hours. After only 10 minutes of hand-for-hand play, Aaron Frei (who was Casino Champion at Harrah's Tunica) was the unfortunate bubble boy, finishing in 34th place. All remaining players were guaranteed a payout of at least \$2,955.

There were only 12 players left at the dinner break on Day 2, and they reached the official final table about an hour after returning from dinner. Four of those players, Brian Hartner, Jamie Wolf, Jonathan Haidsiak, and Gino Levrini, were eliminated before the end of the night, and the final five players returned Monday for Day 3.

Several notable players made the money, but were eliminated on Day 2 before the final table. Joe Kuether finished in 29th place (\$3,312), and Bernard Lee finished 25th (\$3,757). Lee won his first WSOP Circuit ring in one of the preliminary events here at The Lodge Casino, but was unable to win his second in the Main Event. Immediately after Lee busted out, the man he defeated heads up to win his ring busted as well. Alex Masek earned \$4,321 for his 24th place finish. Masek has won eight Circuit rings, more than any other player in history, but will have to wait for another day to extend his record.

Notes on the event:

- Joe Kuether finished in 29th place. He finished third place in the Main Event in Philadelphia just last week.
- Alex Masek finished in 24th place. Masek is the all-time rings leader with eight.

The player who accumulates the most overall points during the Lodge Casino twelve combined gold ring tournaments earns the title Casino Champion and receives automatic entry into the WSOP National Championship set to take place at Bally's Atlantic City May 22-24, 2014.

All players who cash in ring events receive points that apply toward the Casino Championship race and the season-long race to claim one of 50 at-large National Championship bids awarded to the top point earners throughout the season. More information on the points system is available on WSOP.com.

Here is the list of gold ring winners from Horseshoe Council Bluffs:

EVENT #1: Chad Donnelly defeated 269 players (\$365 NLH) for \$19,773
EVENT #2: Valentin Vornicu defeated 145 players (\$580 NLH) for \$20,299
EVENT #3: Greg Eyster defeated 770 players (\$365 NLH Re-Entry) for \$46,205
EVENT #4: Tim Campbell defeated 212 players (\$365 NLH) for \$15,900
EVENT #5: TJ Thondup defeated 165 players (\$365 NLH) for \$13,364
EVENT #6: Osama Aweida defeated 146 players (\$365 O8B) for \$12,246
EVENT #7: Craig Varnell defeated 189 players (\$365 NLH) for \$14,739
EVENT #8: Ryan Pringle defeated 199 players (\$365 NLH) for \$15,520
EVENT #9: Bernard Lee defeated 179 players (\$365 Turbo NLH) for \$14,500
EVENT #10: Mark Weisser defeated 132 players (\$580 NLH) for \$18,480
EVENT #11: Eric Blair defeated 330 players (\$1,675 NLH ME) for \$116,325

This is the eleventh of 12 gold ring events at the Lodge Casino.

For more information about the World Series of Poker Circuit, be sure to follow us on Twitter @WSOP or check out WSOP.com.

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