

2014/2015 World Series of Poker Circuit

Season 11

Choctaw Casino Resort

Durant, Okla.

Event #1

No-Limit Hold'em Monster Stack

Buy-In: \$300 (+\$65)

Total Entries: 990

Prize Pool: \$297,000

January 8-9, 2015



Thomas Johnson Tames the Monster Stack

Circuit's first-ever deep stack event draws 990 players, sets Choctaw freezeout attendance record.

Dallas resident makes his first WSOP-related cash count, pockets \$56,427 and a gold ring.

Durant, Okla. (January 9, 2015) — Thomas Johnson of Dallas, Tex. won the World Series of Poker Circuit's first-ever Monster Stack event early Saturday morning at Choctaw Casino Resort. The tournament granted its participants a 20,000-chip starting stack (double that of standard ring events) at a \$365 price point and the reception was tremendous. The 990-player field marked the largest freezeout event in Choctaw's five-year Circuit history and generated a prize pool of nearly \$300,000. For his efforts, Johnson walked with \$56,427, his first Circuit gold ring and 50 points toward the Casino Championship.

"It's awesome," Johnson said of the win. "I've been playing [poker] a while. It's breathtaking. [...] It's really more about the ring than the \$56,000 to be honest."

The unique tournament required two days, roughly 26 hours and 32 levels of play to sheer itself to just one remaining. On Day 1, the super-sized field filled all available tables in the Center Stage Choctaw tournament space and overflowed into the convention center's 30 additional tables.

"I think it was great," Johnson said of the tournament. "I liked how it was toward the end. It [left] a lot of play in the game. Blinds went from 40 minutes to an hour and it gave everyone a chance to play with their chips."

After 21 levels of play on Day 1, the field narrowed to a more manageable 72 players remaining. Bracelet winner David "ODB" Baker rounded out the top 10 while ring winner Justin "Choctaw" Kruger sat fourth in the counts. The pair played their way to the final two tables but ultimately succumbed to Johnson's hot streak with Baker finishing 18th and Kruger 11th.

"I played pretty aggressive toward the end, especially when it got down to two tables," Johnson said. "I put [my chips] in when I thought I had it. I pretty much went with my gut."

Johnson and start-of-day chip leader Dennis Booze co-lead the 10-handed final table as the only two players over 3,000,000 chips. As play progressed, nothing changed and Johnson and Dennis

sat firmly in the lead. However, once three players remained, the pair relinquished its lead to William Leffingwell and it wasn't long before Johnson would be all-in and at risk.

Johnson looked down at [Ad][Jd] and got his last 5,100,000 chips in against Leffingwell's [As][Ks]. The flop and turn ran out no help to Johnson, but the river fell with a fury when it came the [Jd] pairing Johnson's jack and earning him the pot. Leffingwell smacked the table in disgust while Johnson jumped in excitement. The hand gave Johnson nearly 11,000,000 of the 19,800,000 chips in play and left Leffingwell crippled. He busted a few hands later.

"I honestly had a feeling the jack was coming on the river," Johnson would later say. "I felt like this was my event. When I came to the final table I had a good feeling. I think I maybe made two mistakes the whole time in my opinion."

The performance is a timely one for Johnson as it marks his first WSOP-related cash and awards him a first prize of more than 150 times his original \$365 investment.

Johnson is 30 years old and resides in Dallas, Tex. where he owns and operates a garage door service company along with his brother and two sisters. He says work weeks are often 80 hours, but he makes time to play poker whenever he can.

Event 1 was the first of 12 gold ring events on the WSOP Circuit schedule at Choctaw Casino Resort. The \$365 no-limit hold'em Monster Stack event attracted 990 players. The total prize pool came to \$297,000 and the top 99 finishers were paid.

The tournament began Thursday, January 8 at 12 p.m. and Day 1 wrapped following Level 21. Day 2 began Friday at 12 p.m. with 72 players remaining. Play narrowed to the nine-handed final table by 8 p.m. and action concluded shortly after midnight making the total duration of the finale about four hours.

Here is the list of gold ring winners from Choctaw Casino Resort

EVENT #1: Thomas Johnson defeated 990 players (\$365 NLH Monster Stack) for \$56,427

The player who accumulates the most overall points during Choctaw Casino Resort's 12 combined gold ring tournaments earns the title Casino Champion and receives automatic entry into the WSOP National Championship set to take place this spring at a yet-to-be-determined location.

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 56 expected 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.

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