



2015 WSOP OFFICIAL REPORT

KONSTANTIN MASLAK CHECKMATES THE OMAHA/STUD SPLIT EVENT

Russian Chess Grandmaster Collects \$269,612 Top Prize in Event #13

Better Late than Never: Split Match Lasts Four Days

Israeli-Born Hani Awad Finishes as Runner Up

MEET THE LATEST WSOP GOLD BRACELET CHAMPION

Name: Konstantin Maslak

Birthplace: Volgograd (Russia)

Age: 30

Current Residence: Volgograd (Russia)

Marital Status: Married

Children: None

Profession: Poker Player and Sports Gambler

Number of WSOP Cashes: 8

Number of WSOP Final Table Appearances: 1

Number of WSOP Gold Bracelet Victories (with this tournament): 1

Best Previous WSOP Finish: 46th (2013)

Total WSOP Earnings: \$309,070

Personal Facts: Chess Grandmaster who began playing poker in 2009

Russia has a reputation for producing the world's greatest chess players. For centuries, Russians have mastered the complex board game and dominated the global chess scene. With increasing frequency, they're now doing the same thing in poker.

Konstantin Maslak, a 30-year-old chess grandmaster from Volgograd, Russia became the latest champion at the 2015 World Series of Poker. He topped a tough field of 474 players in the \$2,500 buy-in Omaha/Stud High-Low Split tournament, and ended up winning his first gold bracelet. First place paid \$269,612, which was the biggest payday of Maslak's poker career, which dates back to 2009.

Maslak's road to glory wasn't easy. The tournament took four days to complete, extending into a fourth day of activity because of the late-night stalemate when play was three-handed. Maslak's toughest opponent proved to be Hani Awad, an Israeli-born player who came very close to winning the second gold bracelet in a row for Israel. Idan Raviv won the previous day, which was Event #12. However, Awad couldn't maintain his chip advantage the two times during heads-up play when he had Maslak down by more than a 2 to 1 deficit. The see-saw match resulted in numerous chip lead changes, lasting nearly two hours, with Maslak scooping the final pot of the tournament.

This was Maslak's 8th time to cash at the WSOP, which he's attended three out of the last four years. Maslak has also enjoyed a number of cashes at major European tournaments since he began playing regularly about six years ago. However, he's not achieved anything close to this magnitude.

"I am a chess grandmaster," Maslak said afterward. "But I saw my friends playing poker and decided to try it. I liked it, so I continued to play. I mostly play on the Internet."

Maslak spends just as much time watching and betting on sports. He particularly enjoys soccer (football) and basketball. He even missed last year's WSOP because he was so into the FIFA World Cup.

This was Maslak's third time to cash already at this year's series. He finished in-the-money in The Colossus (Event #5) and also min-cashed the \$1,500 buy-in Omaha High-Low Split event.

An interesting side note was the fourth place finish by Viacheslav Zhukov, also from Russia. He was aiming for what would have been his third WSOP gold bracelet, the most by any player from that country. However, Zhukov didn't survive the third day and had to watch as his fellow countryman won the title.

Here's the succession of other finishers who made the final table, which was played over a two-day stretch and ended on a Saturday afternoon at the Rio in Las Vegas:

Second Place: Hani Awad took 2nd place, which paid \$166,583. The Israeli-born player now living in Las Vegas now has 7 WSOP cashes.

Third Place: Ben Dobson finished 3rd, worth a \$105,893 payout. The poker pro from Nottingham, UK now has 6 WSOP cashes.

Fourth Place: Viacheslav Zhukov, a two-time gold bracelet winner (2011 and 2012) finished in 4th place, good for \$76,357. He now has 11 WSOP cashes and in excess of \$1.6 million in earnings here at the annual summer classic.

Fifth Place: Kevin (Tuan) Vo ended up in fifth place, grossing \$55,923. He is a 40-year-old poker pro originally from Vietnam and now residing in the Atlantic City area.

Sixth Place: Brandon Paster was the 6th-place finisher. He is a mailman from Washington, DC and a gold bracelet winner from last year in the \$1,500 buy-in Pot-Limit Omaha tournament. This time, Paster had to settle for \$41,581.

Seventh Place: Chris Birchby took 7th place, which paid out \$31,379. He is a CEO who enjoyed his eighth time to cash at the series.

Eighth Place: Jose Paz-Gutierrez rounded out the final table, finishing 8th. He earned \$24,036 in prize money, his 11th time to finish in the money here at the WSOP. Paz-Gutierrez is an executive in a plastics company.

OTHER NOTABLE IN-THE MONEY FINISHERS:

Former Main Event “November Niners” Eric Buchman and John Racener cashed in this event, 10th and 37th respectively.

Two-time gold bracelet winners Barry Shulman and Brian Rast cashed in this event, 17th and 33rd respectively.

1998 world poker champion Scotty Nguyen cashed in this event, finishing 39th.

FUN FACTS:

The average player age in this event was 44.1 years, considerably higher than the WSOP tournament average by about seven years.

The gender breakdown was 458 males and 16 females.

There were 75 players from countries other than the U.S.

There were 31 first-time WSOP players in this event.

EVENT DIRECT LINKS:

For this event’s results, visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/results.asp?grid=1136&tid=14213>

For Konstantin Maslak’s official player profile page, visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/players/playerprofile.asp?playerID=129209>

For the Live Reporting Log for this event, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/updates.asp?grid=1136&tid=14213>

For photos from this event, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/photos.asp?grid=1136&tid=14213>

For official winner photo, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/pdfs/reports/14213-winner-photo.jpg>

For the live stream archive of this event, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/videos/?vcat=13>

(Note: Will appear 48 hours after event concludes)

Written by Nolan Dalla (WSOP Media Staff)