



2016 WSOP OFFICIAL REPORT

LAWRENCE BERG WINS SIX-HANDED DEALER'S CHOICE

Local poker pro collects \$125,466 top prize in Event #5

19-game mix draws some tough competition – 389 entrants

Yueqi Zhu, from China, finishes as runner up

MEET THE LATEST WSOP GOLD BRACELET CHAMPION

Name: Lawrence Berg

Birthplace: Pittsburgh, PA

Age: 38

Current Residence: Irvine, CA

Profession: Poker Player

Number of WSOP Cashes: 4

Number of WSOP Final Table Appearances: 1

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

Best Previous WSOP Finish: 30th (2014)

Total WSOP Earnings: \$142,551

Personal Facts: Has two puppies

Lawrence Berg is the newest member of poker's gold bracelet club at the World Series of Poker.

The former casino dealer-turned-poker pro who bounces back and forth between homes in Irvine, CA and Las Vegas, NV won the \$1,500 buy-in Dealers Choice Six-Handed tournament, which was played at the Rio in Las Vegas over three consecutive days and nights June 7-9. Berg collected \$125,466 in prize money, making this the biggest win of his career. Prior to playing poker full-time, concentrating mostly on cash games, Berg worked as a poker dealer at the Bellagio.

Berg won his victory by topping an ultra-demanding tourney competition that included a mix of up to 19 possible poker games being dealt out over the duration. Berg stated that he encountered every game at least once during the tournament. That wide variety of options required him to master several of the lesser-played poker games, which seemed right up his alley given that he's accustomed to playing mixed cash game sessions regularly in Las Vegas' biggest poker rooms.

"I called Baducy and Badugi quite a lot (when it was my turn), and also Big O," Berg said afterward. "I didn't really like Limit Hold'em or No-Limit Hold'em."

Berg shared some secrets which he thought were the keys to victory. He noted that a major component of his strategy wasn't to necessarily play his own "best" games, but to pick out games (when he was designated as the dealer) which he considered weaknesses within his opponent's repertoire.

"It's really important to identify weaknesses in your opponents and see what games they are playing badly and then try and concentrate on those games when you can," Berg said. "But then, there are some players who don't play any of the games bad. Andrew (Brown – the third-place finisher) didn't play anything bad, so it didn't matter as much with him."

Berg also noted that stack sizes play a big role in which game to choose.

"Your stacks are very important as to which games you should choose," Berg said. "If you're very short, you don't want to get anted away in Stud. So, it's better to take a big-bet game where you can move all in which makes it hard for your opponents to call. That way, you can steal antes and build a stack, sometimes without ever seeing a showdown."

Berg topped a field of 389 players and a final table which included two previous gold bracelet winners – Andrew Brown and Paul Volpe, who finished 3rd and 4th respectively. Yueqi Zhu, from Benxi, China finished as the runner up. He was no slouch either, having cashed 47 times now at the WSOP. Zhu's consolation prize of \$77,526 in this tourney moved him close to the million-dollar mark in career WSOP earnings.

This tourney created a prize pool totaling \$525,150. The top 59 finishers collected prize money.

"I got lucky at the right time," Berg admitted. "Everybody played good."

As for the gold bracelet and what the victory means, Berg became less stoic about his reaction to receiving poker's most coveted prize after several days of maintaining a poker face. "I'm really happy to win a gold bracelet. I'm very happy about this."

This was the fifth event on this year's schedule. This leaves 64 tournaments still to go in what promises to be the biggest and most exciting WSOP ever.

Here's a brief report of the other top finishers who made the final table:

Second Place: Yueqi Zhu, from Benxi, China locked up his highest WSOP finished by coming in as the runner up. The player who learned how to play via the Internet collected \$77,466 for second place. Zhu now has 47 cashes on his WSOP resume. He was chip leader at one point when play was three-handed, but wasn't able to maintain that advantage.

Third Place: Andrew Brown, from Valatie, NY ended up at the third place finisher. His payout came to \$50,250. Brown was one of two finalists who was a gold bracelet winner. He won a WSOP victory in 2008 in an Omaha High-Low Split event.

Fourth Place: Paul Volpe, from Philadelphia, PA arrived at the final table ranked second in chips. He ended up finishing fourth. The winner of a gold bracelet in 2014, Volpe now has four top-4 finishes in WSOP events in the last three years. Volpe went card dead late in the tournament and had to settle for a payout worth \$33,393.

Fifth Place: Joey Couden, a poker pro from Reynoldsburg, OH picked up his 18th cash in a WSOP event by making his fourth career final table. Couden earned \$22,765 for finishing fifth and has now exceeded the quarter million mark in WSOP-related earnings.

Sixth Place: John Templeton, from Sarasota, FL cashed for the second time at this series, after making a nice run in the Colossus event. He pocketed \$15,932 for fine effort.

Seventh Place: Daniel Habl, from Berlin, Germany posted his second career cash in this tournament, earning \$11,454. As the seventh-place finisher, he rounded out the official final table in a six-max event.

OTHER NOTABLE IN-THE MONEY FINISHERS:

Chris Ferguson, the 2000 WSOP Main Event champion, finished 19th. After a long hiatus, this marked his first time to cash in a poker tournament since 2010.

Svetlana Gromenkova, the Russian-born poker player from New York, NY who won the 2008 Ladies World Poker Championship, finished in 21st place.

Luis Velador, a two-time gold bracelet winner, finished in 23rd place.

Eli Elezra, a three-time gold bracelet winner, finished 38th.

Vladimir Shchemelev, a gold bracelet winner, finished 43rd.

Jeff Madsen, a four-time gold bracelet winner, finished 45th.

Mike Wattel, a gold bracelet winner, finished 53rd.

Richard Ashby, a gold bracelet winner, finished 58th.

FUN FACTS:

Dealers Choice means exactly what it says. Players may pick any of 19 standard poker games on a rotation basis.

The average age of participants was 39 years. The youngest player was 21. The oldest player was 77.

The field broke down as follows – 311 American players / 78 players from elsewhere

The field broke down as follows – 97 percent male / 3 percent female

The countries with the most participants included – United States, Russia, Canada, U.K., and Australia.

EVENT DIRECT LINKS:

For this event's results, visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/results.asp?grid=1232&tid=14905>

For Lawrence Berg's official player profile page, visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/players/playerprofile.asp?playerID=119748>

For the official winner photo, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/pdfs/reports/14905-winner-photo.jpg>

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

<http://www.wsop.com/videos/?vcat=2>

(Note: Will appear 48 hours after event concludes)

Written by Nolan Dalla (WSOP Media Staff)