



2016 WSOP OFFICIAL REPORT

ALAN PERCAL WINS \$10K HEADS-UP NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM CHAMPIONSHIP

Florida actuary with Humana collects \$320,574 top prize in Event #9

Latest champion wins seven straight heads-up matches

“This is only the second Heads-Up tournament I’ve played,” winner confides

John Smith, 69-year-old Vietnam Veteran finishes as runner up

MEET THE LATEST WSOP GOLD BRACELET CHAMPION

Name: Alan Percal

Birthplace: Miami, FL (USA)

Age: 23

Current Residence: Weston, FL (USA)

Marital Status: Single

Children: None

Profession: Actuary and Part-time Poker Player

Number of WSOP Cashes: 1

Number of WSOP Final Table Appearances: 1

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

Best Previous WSOP Finish: None

Total WSOP Earnings: \$359,016 (including three WSOP Circuit cashes)

Personal Facts: Started playing chess, which turned into a passion for poker

Quote of the Day:

“I tended to get bored playing full games, nine-handed. So, I started playing heads-up online because it was much more intriguing. Before that, I started out as a chess player, then I found that heads-up play was very similar to chess.”

Alan Percal (winner of the \$10K Heads-Up No-Limit Hold'em championship)

It's astounding to think that a first-time cash at the World Series of Poker would be in one of the most grueling and highly-competitive tournament events on the entire schedule.

Winning seven-straight heads-up matches, against many of the toughest players with the deepest bankrolls in the game would be like knocking out multiple heavyweight boxing champions or whipping a Grand Slam winner on the tennis court. Those things aren't supposed to happen.

But it did, at least for one time here at the 2016 World Series of Poker.

Alan Percal, a 23-year-old actuary from Westin, FL with the Humana health care provider, won the \$10,000 buy-in Heads-Up No-Limit Hold'em tournament. The competition was played over three days and nights and concluded on the ESPN main stage at the Rio in Las Vegas. Percal collected \$320,574 in prize money in what was – incredibly – his very first time to cash in a WSOP event after two previous in-the-money finishes on the WSOP Circuit.

In fact, coming into this tournament, which was only the second heads-up event Percal had ever entered, he'd suffered a disastrous run over the last year and a half in series events.

“We came out here last year and like went zero for 20,” Percal said. “It was a total disaster. But I came back and stuck with it, and now here I am,”

Percal achieved his stunning victory by winning seven consecutive heads-up matches, following drawing a first round bye. The final moment of triumph came when the young poker player scooped the final pot of the tournament ending up with a pair of eights against John Smith, a 69-year-old former Vietnam War veteran from Lahabra Heights, CA who finished as the runner up.

Percal defeated a succession of tough opponents, starting with Brian Rast, Jeff Gross, Alan Wehbi, Konstantin Ramazanov, and Benjamin Geisman on the first two days, which finally ended on the third day with a victory over Olivier Busquet in the semifinals and finally, John Smith.

“I was excited to get the bye in the first round – everyone wants the bye,” Percal said. “Then, I ended up drawing Brian Rast in the second round. When I saw that, I just started laughing. There were like 100 players I would have rather drawn than Rast. But after I defeated him, that gave me a lot of confidence, and he even complimented me

afterward that I played well. That was definitely the most nerve-racking, since it's only the second Heads-Up tournament I've played. After that win, I felt much more comfortable."

As for his future plans, Percal joked with his boss at Humana that if he won this tournament he might not go back to work. Then again, the analyst with a deep background in statistics knows the odds of making it full time as a poker pro.

"I'm playing some more events for sure," Percal confided. "But after that, I'm going back to work."

This tourney which has been a staple at the WSOP over the past ten years, attracted 153 entries, which created a prize pool totaling \$1,188,200. The top 16 finishers collected prize money.

Here's a brief report of the other top finishers who made to at least the quarterfinals:

Second Place: John Smith, from La Habra Heights, CA surprised the competition by coming in second. The military veteran who has been playing poker for 50 years, collected \$198,192 in prize money. Much like the winner, Smith wasn't expected to go deep, but ended up advancing in 6 of 7 rounds with what was described as an "unorthodox" style. Prior to this impressive showing, Smith had cashed in only one other event, which just so happened to be the \$10,000 Heads-Up championship two years ago, when he made it to fifth round.

Semi-Finalist: Alex Luneau, from Paris hoped to become the first French gold bracelet winner of this year's series. But ended up falling just short of the finals, losing to John Smith. Nevertheless, he still ended up with a \$123,929 payout. This marked Luneau's sixth time to cash and third deep run, following two previous final table appearances at the WSOP.

Semi-Finalist: Olivier Busquet, from Katonah, NY was looked upon as a favorite to win this event, particularly as the tournament played down to a smaller number. The short-handed and heads-up specialist who crafted his skills by playing high-stakes heads-up matches made one of his deepest runs ever at the WSOP, ending up as a semi-finalist, which paid out \$123,929. Busquet lost to the eventual winner, Alan Percal.

Quarter-Finalist: Matthew Diehl, from Flemington, NJ cashed for just the second time in a WSOP event with his deep run in this tourney. He collected \$56,202.

Quarter-Finalist: Nick Yunis, a poker pro from Chile, had previously posted 11 cashes, but no final table appearances. His achievement in this tournament marked his biggest cash since a 126th-place showing in the 2014 WSOP Main Event. Yunis added \$56,202 to his poker bankroll.

Quarter-Finalist: Benjamin Geisman, from San Diego, CA made his first WSOP cash really count with a nice run in this tournament. He pocketed \$56,202 for winning his first five matches.

Quarter-Finalist: Orlando Romero, from Amarillo, TX cashed for the second time at this year's series and eight occasion overall with his run into late on the second day of this tournament. He added \$56,202 in winnings to go along with \$134,000 in WSOP Circuit earnings, to date.

OTHER NOTABLE IN-THE MONEY FINISHERS:

Antonio "the Magician" Esfandiari, a two-time gold bracelet winner who is best known for winning \$18,000,000 in the inaugural "Big One for One Drop" back in 2011, made the money.

Jared Jaffe, a gold bracelet winner, made it into the money.

FUN FACTS:

Out of 153 entries, only two were female.

Ages of players ranged from 21 up to 69. The eldest player, John Smith, finished as the runner up.

The United States provided two-thirds of the participants but managed to cash in 75 percent of the payout positions.

Stressing the importance of drawing a random bye, there were 103 players who advanced by default in the first round, while 50 players had to play a match. All four of the finalist and semi-finalists received a first-round bye.

EVENT DIRECT LINKS:

For this event's final results, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/results.asp?grid=1232&tid=14909>

For Alan Percal's official player profile page, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/players/playerprofile.asp?playerID=142083>

For the live reporting logs for this event, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/updates.asp?grid=1232&tid=14909>

To access licensed images from this and all 2016 WSOP gold bracelet events, please visit:

www.pokerphotoarchive.com

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)