

2015/2016 World Series of Poker Circuit

Season 12

Bicycle Hotel and Casino

Bell Gardens, Ca.

Event #9

No-Limit Hold'em Main Event

Buy-In: \$1,500 (+\$175)

Total Entries: 756

Prize Pool: \$1,134,000

March 26-29, 2016



Antonio Esfandiari Wins Bike Main Event

One of poker's all-time greats adds a Circuit ring to his impressive resume

Bell Gardens, Ca. (March 29, 2016) — Antonio Esfandiari—already one of the most successful players in World Series of Poker history—notched another accolade today by winning the Main Event at the WSOP Circuit at the Bicycle Casino. Esfandiari already leads the WSOP all-time money list and has three bracelets, and is likely most famous for winning the 2012 Big One for One Drop tournament for over \$18 million, the biggest first-place prize in poker history. Now he has his first Circuit ring and yet another six-figure score (\$226,785).

At times, Esfandiari seemed destined to win this tournament. He entered Day 2 with 520,000 in chips, leading his closest competitor by more than 200,000. “To be honest, I just had hands,” Esfandiari said of his Day 1 performance. “And I kept getting paid off. So I was really fortunate to have other people hold something good when I had really strong hands, and all of a sudden I looked up and I had 500K.” He also took the opportunity to give a friend of his a good-natured needle. “Mostly I’d like to thank Phil Laak because he donked off about 90K to me in a spot when he should have lost about 35-40K. So if it weren’t for my dear friend Phil I wouldn’t have had this victory, so I have to thank him for that.”

It’s fitting that Esfandiari won his first Circuit ring in this event – it attracted a star-studded field with some of the biggest names in poker, as well as celebrities from the entertainment industry. In fact, the runner up has only won one of the biggest poker tournaments ever. Jamie Gold won the 2006 WSOP Main Event, besting a field of 8,773 players en route to winning \$12,000,000, the third-largest first-place prize in WSOP history.

The combination of Esfandiari and Gold not only brought star power to the final table, it also created a fun-loving atmosphere. “It was great,” Esfandiari said of playing with Gold. “Jamie’s a really fun guy. He’s one of the guys who makes the table enjoyable, and those are the guys you want to play with. I hate sitting there with these wizards that stare you down and tank for five minutes before every decision. It’s so tilting.”

When heads-up play began, Esfandiari held a big chip lead, about 13-1. “I’m really glad I won. This one would’ve hurt me forever if I lost, once I had the chip lead.” Gold actually started to make a comeback, beginning with a [key all-in hand](#) when his 9-7 outdrew Esfandiari’s jack-nine.

“Once he caught that seven, I just couldn’t believe it,” Esfandiari said. But Gold’s comeback fell short, and Esfandiari ended up in the winner’s circle.

Gold entered Day 3 with a big chip lead, carrying 2,875,000 in chips into the final day. At that point, Esfandiari was in sixth place out of the remaining 12 players. Also advancing to Day 3 were WSOP bracelet winners Bryn Kenney and Jack Duong, as well as Barry Woods, Ludovic Geilich, and Ray Henson. Henson, like Gold and Esfandiari, owns a few pieces of WSOP history. He won the big re-entry event at the Choctaw Circuit last year. At the time it was the biggest tournament in Circuit history. A few months later, he finished in third place in the Colossus event at the World Series of Poker, the biggest live poker tourney ever. Henson ended up finishing in fourth place today (\$76,830).

The other famous face on Day 3 belonged to Bruce Buffer, the UFC’s ring announcer. He just barely missed the final table, finishing in 11th place. Other players from the entertainment industry included actors Bill Fagerbakke and James Woods. Woods finished in 30th place, while Fagerbakke missed out on making the money.

Oddly enough, Esfandiari almost didn’t even play this event. “My father-in-law is in town, and we came to see him while he was playing, and I decided to play.” Esfandiari’s father-in-law is Bob Bounahra, who [won a ring of his own](#) a few days ago. Bounahra rose to prominence in the poker world in 2011, when he made the [November Nine](#).

Bounahra, as well as Esfandiari’s wife, were on the rail cheering him on throughout the final day, and Esfandiari spoke at length about how the big role of family in his life. “I’m a dad now. I love being a dad, and obviously my son is the most important thing in my life.”

He also added that other priorities and other activities have cut into his poker playing a bit. “I’m definitely rusty with my tournament poker. There were spots where I really didn’t know what to do. So this was a great warmup for the World Series. After the past couple days, my confidence is oozing.”

This was the ninth of 12 gold ring events on the WSOP Circuit schedule at the Bicycle Hotel and Casino. The \$1,675 no-limit hold’em main event attracted 756 players. The total prize pool came to \$1,134,000 and the top 81 finishers were paid.

The tournament began on Saturday, March 26 at noon and there were two starting flights. That brought back 140 players for Day 2 on Monday at noon. There were 12 players that survived Day 2 and came back for the third and final day. Cards got in the air on Tuesday at 1 p.m. and the final table was at 2:40 p.m. and a winner was crowned at 9:30 p.m. The entire duration of the final table lasted about seven hours.

Here is the list of gold ring winners from the Bicycle Hotel and Casino:

- EVENT #1: Truong Nguyen defeated 995 players (\$365 NLH Re-Entry) for \$55,200
- EVENT #2: Jose Ramirez defeated 158 players (\$365 NLH) for \$12,795
- EVENT #3: Eshed Hadaya defeated 130 players (\$365 NLH) for \$10,915
- EVENT #4: Susie Genard defeated 125 players (\$365 Omaha 8 or Better) for \$10,490
- EVENT #5: Zahi Bahar defeated 117 players (\$365 NLH) for \$10,520
- EVENT #6: Bob Bounahra defeated 83 players (\$1,125 NLH) for \$26,555
- EVENT #7: Robert Gil defeated 145 players (\$365 NLH Turbo) for \$12,255

EVENT #8: Bert Beavers defeated 413 players (\$365 NLH Monster Stack) for \$27,275

EVENT #9: Antonio Esfandiari defeated 756 players (\$1,675 NLH Main Event) for \$226,785

The player who accumulates the most overall points during the Bicycle Hotel and Casino's 12 combined gold ring tournaments earns the title Casino Champion and receives automatic entry into the WSOP Global Casino Championship. Additionally, all players who cash in ring events earn points that apply toward the season-long race to claim one of the at-large Global Casino Championship bids awarded to the top point earners throughout the season. More information on the points system is available on WSOP.com.

For more information about the WSOP Circuit, be sure to follow us on Twitter at [@WSOP](https://twitter.com/WSOP) or check out WSOP.com.

For additional information please contact:

Steve Schult (WSOP Media Coordinator) at Steve.Schult1@gmail.com.