

**2015/2016 World Series of Poker Circuit
Season 13
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Potawatomi Hotel and Casino
Event #9
The Main Event
Buy-In: \$1500 (+\$175)
Total Entries: 677
Prize Pool: \$1,015,500
Feb. 10-13, 2017**



Alex Aqel Wins the Potawatomi Main Event

Alex Aqel wins his second six-figure score in the past three months.

MILWAUKEE (February 13, 2017) – Ala Aqel, who goes by [Alex Aqel](#), has won the 2017 Potawatomi Circuit Main Event for \$208,184, his first career WSOP Circuit gold ring, and an automatic entry to the [2017 Global Casino Championship](#). He defeated a 677-player field in the \$1,675 buy-in event to win Wisconsin’s largest first place prize ever. The Main Event was the first time a Wisconsin poker tournament’s prizepool exceeded \$1 million dollars.

Aqel was no stranger to the Potawatomi big money stage. Just last November he won an MSPT \$1,100 buy-in event for \$138k here at Potawatomi. At the time, it was Wisconsin’s second largest first place prize ever awarded. Aqel now owns two of the three biggest scores in Wisconsin poker history. Despite having a six-figure score in the past, this \$208k win more than doubled his career tournament earnings.

“Playing for that amount of money is a lot easier because I just recently had a big score myself,” said Aqel.

It was more than just playing for the huge pay jumps for Aqel. He was also playing for the ring and the title of WSOP champion.

“It was more that I just wanted to win a WSOP Main Event,” said Aqel. “That was huge for me.”

Aqel said that he has played in about 10 Circuit Main Events, but has struggled to make a Day 2. That all changed for Aqel in a big way when he not only made Day 2 in this event, but also Day 3. He has played few events at the Last Vegas series.

Aqel was involved in some of the most notable hands in the tournament. Midway through Day 2 [Aqel played in a massive pot against six-time gold ring winner Josh Reichard](#). Reichard limped the button and Aqel raised from the small blind. Reichard called and the two players saw a flop of two jacks and a three with two hearts. Aqel bet and Reichard called. The turn was an off-suit deuce and Aqel bet. Reichard raised and Aqel called. After the turn there were about 60 big blinds in the pot. The river brought a seven and a third heart. Aqel checked and Reichard shoved all-in for his last 27 big blinds. Aqel tanked for several minutes and eventually had the clock

called him. He eventually folded, and did his best to convince Reichard to show his hand. Reichard did not oblige and he mucked his hand face down.

“It’s really hard for him to have a bluff there, but because he raised the turn, his hands are very narrow what he can shove that river with,” said Aqel. “I didn’t think it was the flush, so it had to be the boat.”

Aqel said that he didn’t think Reichard would limp-call to try to outplay the second biggest stack at the table, but if he did, good for him and props to him.

“I think he played his hand a lot better than me, and I made a big fold,” said Aqel. “I think he had deuces full.”

Aqel did lose a good portion of his stack on that hand, but didn’t let the setback slow him down from collecting chips for the remainder of the day. Aqel ended up finishing Day 2 second in chips with just eight players remaining.

Aqel came out of the gates on Day 3 with all cylinders firing. He overtook the start of Day 3 chip leader, [Denise Pratt](#), within the first hour of play. Day 3 didn’t come without its own speed bumps however. He ran a [failed bluff](#) against [Garrett Riley](#) and then started trending downward, in part to being card dead.

“I couldn’t catch a break after that. I think I blinded down to about 14 bigs,” said Aqel.

Aqel got the momentum back on his side after [doubling through Riley](#). He regained his swagger from that pot and from that point forward couldn’t be stopped. He [doubled through Pratt after flopping a set](#) to jump back up to the top of the chip counts. Eventually he got heads up with [Chad Wiedenhoef](#).

“The kid was an animal. He had heart, man, he had heart,” said Aqel about his heads-up opponent. “He was willing to gamble it up a little more than I was.”

Aqel said he made some key hands against Wiedenhoef, [including hitting quads once](#), to help propel him to victory.

This marked Aqel’s 5th career WSOP cash and second career final table. In 2013, Aqel finished in second place in a Hammond Circuit turbo event for just under \$12k. The 32-year-old is from Chicago and partners with his brother in a computer service business. Just as in years past, he plans on going to Las Vegas in the summer to play in the World Series of Poker at the Rio. He said the he will probably play about 12 events and that he hopes to get that first million dollar score.

The top 72 players cashed with minimum cash worth \$2,843. Gold ring winners to make it into the money in Potawatomi’s first-ever WSOP Circuit Main Event, include [Chris Karambinis](#) (14th), [TK Miles](#) (19th), [Fadi Hamad](#) (30th), [Krzysztof Stybaniewicz](#) (34th), [Ravi Raghavan](#) (37th), [David Hubbard](#) (39th), [Allen Kessler](#) (40th), [James Dorrance](#) (49th), [Nick Jivkov](#) (50th) and [Andy Philachack](#) (51st).

The Main Event was the ninth of 12 gold ring events on the WSOP Circuit schedule at Potawatomi. The \$1,675 No-Limit Hold'em tournament attracted 677 players generating a \$1,015,500 prize pool.

The tournament featured two starting flights. Flight A was on Friday and drew 249 entries. Flight B was on Saturday and drew 428 entries. Day 2 started Sunday at noon with 132 players remaining. The day concluded at about midnight with just eight players left. Day 3 start Monday at noon and ended at 7:25 p.m. in the first hand of Level 32.

Final table seating assignments:

Final table action began with 24 minutes left Level 25 – 12,000/24,000 with a 4,000 ante

Seat 1: Josh Reichard – 810,000 (33 bb)
Seat 2: Nikolas Stone – 1,200,000 (50 bb)
Seat 3: Chad Wiedenhoef – 1,800,000 (75 bb)
Seat 4: Brad Jansen – 1,550,00 (64 bb)
Seat 5: Ala Aqel – 2,480,000 (103 bb)
Seat 6: Nicholas Pupillo – 1,200,000 (50 bb)
Seat 7: James Gregg – 1,900,000 (79 bb)
Seat 8: Denise Pratt – 1,200,000 (50 bb)
Seat 9: Garrett Riley – 1,400,000 (58 bb)

About the Final Table:

1st: Alex Aqel - \$208,184
Hometown: Chicago, Ill.
Age: 32
Occupation: Business Owner
WSOP Earnings: \$21,886

2nd: - \$128,816
Hometown: Whitewater, Wis.
Age: 35
Occupation: Control Room Manager
WSOP Earnings: \$39,220

3rd: James Gregg - \$94,482
Hometown: New Berlin, Wis.
Occupation: Business Owner
WSOP Earnings: \$1,310

4th: Denise Pratt - \$70,262
Hometown: Olive Branch, Miss.
Age: 52
Occupation: Pharmacist
WSOP Earnings: \$9,170

5th: Garrett Riley - \$43,195
Hometown: Quincy, Ill.
WSOP Earnings: \$26,512

6th: Nicholas Pupillo - \$40,447
Hometown: Addison, Ill.
Age: 25
Occupation: Poker
WSOP Earnings: \$169,911

7th: Nikolas Stone - \$31,298
Hometown: Pittsville, Wis.
Occupation: Poker
WSOP Earnings: \$290,206

8th: Josh Reichard - \$24,534
Hometown: Janesville, Wis.
Age: 25
Occupation: Poker
Circuit Earnings: \$313,739

9th: Brad Jansen - \$19,477
Hometown: West Bend, Wis.
Age: 30
Occupation: Attorney
Circuit Earnings: \$4,392

The Casino Champion of Potawatomi has still not been determined. It is down to Kenny Nguyen and Byron Ziebell. Nguyen has the lead, but Ziebell can pass Nguyen with a 9th place finish or better in Event #12.

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 50 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.

Here is the list of gold ring winners from the Potawatomi series:

EVENT #1: Ty Veras defeated 1,272 players (\$365 NLHE Re-Entry) for \$67,726
EVENT #2: Yousef Anbar defeated 235 players (\$580 NLHE) for \$29,371
EVENT #3: Winston Ackerman defeated 324 players (\$365 NLHE 30-minute) for \$22,842
EVENT #4: Leon Gao defeated 179 players (\$365 NLHE) for \$14,500
EVENT #5: Josh Reichard defeated 227 players (\$365 PLO) for \$17,021
EVENT #6: Travis Lauson defeated 247 players (\$365 NLHE 6 max) for \$19,639
EVENT #7: Eric Guth defeated 532 players (\$365 NLHE Monster) for \$34,310
EVENT #8: Nadya Magnus defeated 119 players (\$2,200 HR NLHE) for \$71,398
EVENT #9: Alex Aqel defeated 677 players (\$1,675 NLHE) for \$208,184
EVENT #10: Byron Ziebell defeated 266 players (\$365 NLHE Turbo) for 19,547
EVENT #11: Kalpesh Shah defeated 170 players (\$580 NLHE) for \$22,950

This is the final day of the WSOP Circuit at Potawatomi. Only Event #12 is yet to finish.

All rings at the Potawatomi series are furnished by [Jostens](#), the official ring supplier of the 2016-2017 WSOP Circuit season.

For more information about the World Series of Poker Circuit, be sure to follow us on Twitter [@WSOP](#) or check out [WSOP.com](#).

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