

2016/2017 World Series of Poker Circuit

Season 13

Palm Beach Kennel Club

West Palm Beach, Fla.

Event #7

Eight-Max No-Limit Hold'em

Buy-In: \$300 (+\$65)

Total Entries: 107

Prize Pool: \$32,100

February 13, 2017



Stephen Smith Wins the Ring in Event #7

New South Florida pro making a splash to start the new year

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (February 15, 2017) — Stephen Smith is the newest first-time winner on the World Series of Poker Circuit. Smith outlasted a field of 107 entries in the \$365 Eight-Max, winning his first ring and \$9,630 in cash.

Smith is a 47-year-old professional poker player, who recently moved to Juno Beach, Florida from Alabama. He's been playing the game for about 15 years, but he only recently decided to pursue poker a bit more seriously after leaving the Army. "Back in March 2016, I decided to start playing... not as a professional," he started. "But as much as I traveled doing it, it turned into a profession."

So far, the new career is going rather well. Smith has earned close to \$100,000 in the past year, and he's having a particularly hot start to the young 2017 campaign. The key to his success? "Work hard," he said. "Study every day. Exercise every day. Do the grind every day."

The late stages of this event were a grind Smith was well prepared for, and he entered the final table tied for the chip lead with Josh Sidman. A couple hours later, the two were heads up for the ring, very deep and still dead even in chips.

Sidman won the early stages of the match, wearing Smith down to about 160,000 of the 1,070,000 chips in play. Smith fought back valiantly though, and the duel teetered back and forth for more than two hours. Finally, with the two once again even in chips, the final hand played out with a fitting flip of the coin.

It began with Sidman opening the button and Smith three-betting the big blind. Sidman moved all in for 509,000 — just less than half the total chips — with queen-ten of hearts, and Smith called with pocket eights to flip for the ring. Sidman turned a flush draw but could not improve on the river, giving Smith the pot with a pair of eights. When the stacks were verified, Smith's was indeed larger, and he was suddenly a WSOP Circuit winner.

In his postgame interviews, the champ once again highlighted the role of preparation in his recent success. “I believe in goals. I believe in training,” he said. “I’m not exaggerating, every single day that I’m not playing, I spend three or four hours studying and watching videos.”

Smith also credits his high school sweetheart and wife of 28 years, Debbie, for supporting him as he embarks on his new career as a poker pro. “I don’t know how my marriage could be any better,” he beamed. “She’s my best friend, and she supports what I do a hundred percent. It’s just awesome.” Debbie received the good news from Stephen over the phone just seconds after the last card was dealt.

Event #7 was the seventh of 12 gold ring events on the WSOP Circuit schedule at the Palm Beach Kennel Club. The \$365 eight-handed event drew a field of 107 entries, generating a prize pool worth \$32,100. The final 12 players finished in the money.

The tournament began Tuesday, February 14 at 4 p.m., and Day 1 concluded with 12 players remaining at the end of Level 15. Day 2 began Wednesday, February 15 at 3 p.m., and the last hand was dealt around 8 p.m.

The player who accumulates the most overall points during the Palm Beach Kennel Club’s 12 ring events earns the title of 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 limited at-large bids. More information on the points system is available on WSOP.com.

All rings at the Palm Beach Kennel Club are furnished by Jostens, the official ring supplier of the 2016/2017 WSOP Circuit season.

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