

2016/2017 World Series of Poker Circuit

Season 13

The Bicycle Hotel and Casino

Bell Gardens, Ca.

Event #12

No-Limit Hold'em Turbo

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

Total Entries: 169

Prize Pool: \$50,700

March 15, 2017



Valentin Vornicu Wins Ninth Ring in Turbo Finale

Vornicu ties Alex Masek and Maurice Hawkins atop the all-time ring leaderboard.

Bell Gardens, Ca. (March 15, 2017) — Valentin Vornicu made World Series of Poker Circuit history on Wednesday night at the Bicycle Hotel and Casino by winning his ninth Circuit ring in the \$365 no-limit hold'em turbo.

Vornicu bested a field of 169 entries to win \$13,675 to tie Alex Masek and Maurice Hawkins for the most rings won all-time.

"I am so stoked. I don't know what to say," said Vornicu struggling to find words after his record-tying victory. "All these guys that you're talking about are really good players. So, being up there with them makes me feel proud. I respect all these guys and their games. And honestly, I think a couple of them, I won't say which, I think are better than me."

Vornicu has been a fixture on the Circuit for the last five years and has turned into one of the most successful players in Circuit history. While he's happy that he's gotten to where he is, the journey isn't lost on him.

"Ever since I started playing the Circuit back in the day, it was Mark "Pegasus" [Smith] that had five rings and everybody was stoked and chasing him. And Alex [Masek] had three and I was just starting poker and I was like 'I don't know. Maybe one day I'll win a ring. It's been five years now and I'm on the track to 10. We'll see.'"

Poker has evolved and changed since Vornicu first made himself a household name on the Circuit. With poker constantly evolving, so has Vornicu. The San Diego native feels that over the course of the last five years, he's grown as a player. Growth that is symbolized with his record-tying ring.

"Obvious, playing tournament poker, you set yourself up for disappointment," said Vornicu. "A lot of losing. So, when you do win, it channels all the emotion from all the busts and the bad beats. And yeah, for me it means, I guess it's an accomplishment of persevering and studying, trying to get better all the time at the game. And gaining experience over the years."

“I feel like a much more experienced player right now. I used to punt stacks all the time and now I do it a lot less often, you know?”

Vornicu is looking to become the first player to hit that ever elusive 10-ring mark, but he still feels there is comradery amongst some of the players who are at the top of the list. He’s looking to be the first to cross that threshold, but making his mark with nine is something nobody can take away from him.

“I love winning,” said Vornicu. “But if Alex [Masek] goes on a tear and gets like three rings at the next stop, I don’t care. I’ll be happy for him. I still have nine and I think that’s a huge accomplishment for me. Alex [Masek] is a good friend of mine and I talk to Ari [Engel] and I know Maurice [Hawkins]. I don’t think any of us is like ‘Oh, who’s going to make it to 10?’”

This win is a little bit of déjà vu for Vornicu. At this stop last season, he won his eighth ring in the final event of the series, another single-day turbo event. And just like last season’s turbo victory, this win gave Vornicu the Casino Champion crown over his good friend Mike Leah, who was there sweating the heads-up match between Vornicu and Mark Hamilton.

Four of his nine rings have come at the Bike and another few came at the former Harrah’s Rincon stop in the San Diego area. More than half of his total rings have come in the Southern California area and Vornicu doesn’t think that’s a surprise.

“An advantage that I think I have is that most of the time I drive back home and sleep in my own bed at night,” said Vornicu. “That’s a big advantage. I’ve driven like five hours every day, except for like the last two days. I stayed here the last two days, but other than that I usually just make the drive home.

“I really do think it’s a big advantage to stay at home and sleep in your own house. I can relax at home if I bust early and I can hang out with my dog. If you’re in another place and you’re traveling somewhere, you can go back to your room, but if you’re at home, then it’s like nothing ever happened that day. You can go meet up with your friends, see a movie or whatever. I think that adds like 5-10% to my win rate.”

Aside from the home state advantage that Vornicu has, he has an affinity for the Bicycle Casino and the way everything is run on property.

“Honestly, props to Mo [Fathipour] here running the tournaments,” said Vornicu. “I think overall it’s a friendly place for players to play. Everybody that I meet, with a few exceptions, has a lot of fun at the tables. I feel like there is a good atmosphere here.”

Along with the money and the ring, Vornicu earns 50 points towards the Casino Champion race. The points from the win give Vornicu enough to overtake Mike Leah and become the Casino Champion for the Bicycle Casino stop. He earns an automatic seat into the Global Casino Championship this August in Cherokee, North Carolina.

This was the 12th of 12 gold ring events on the WSOP Circuit schedule at the Bicycle Hotel and Casino. The \$365 no-limit hold’em turbo attracted 169 entries. The total prize pool came to \$50,700 and the top 18 finishers were paid.

The tournament began on Wednesday, March 15 at noon and a final table was reached around 8:30 p.m. and the final hand was dealt around 10:30 p.m, making the total duration of the finale about two hours.

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

EVENT #1: Fredrick Arni defeated 1,472 players (\$365 NLH Monster Stack) for \$87,010
EVENT #2: William Wolf defeated 127 players (\$365 NLH) for \$10,665
EVENT #3: Danny Illingworth defeated 121 players (\$580 NLH) for \$16,495
EVENT #4: Joseph Hoffman defeated 123 players (\$365 Omaha H/L) for \$10,330
EVENT #5: Albert Ng defeated 187 players (\$365 NLH) for \$15,585
EVENT #6: Neil Ho defeated 198 players (\$365 NLH Six-Max) for \$16,345
EVENT #7: Joe Marcal defeated 183 players (\$365 NLH) for \$14,275
EVENT #8: Dylan Wilkerson defeated 705 players (\$1,675 NLH Main Event) for \$216,790
EVENT #9: Gal Yifrach defeated 100 players (\$3,250 NLH High Roller) for \$90,005
EVENT #10: Mike Leah defeated 103 players (\$1,125 NLH Bounty) for \$12,450
EVENT #11: Dave Banerjee defeated 152 players (\$365 NLH) for \$12,320
EVENT #12: Valentin Vornicu defeated 169 players (\$365 NLH Turbo) for \$13,675

The player who accumulates the most overall points during the Bike'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 50 expected 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.

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