

WORLD SERIES OF POKER[®] EUROPE

2010 World Series of Poker Europe
Casino at the Empire
London, UK

Official Report
Event #1

Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em
Buy-In: £2,500

Number of Entries: 244
Total Net Prize Pool: £610,000
Number of Places Paid: 24
First Place Prize: £170,802
September 14-16, 2010

Tournament Headlines

Phil Laak Wins First Gold Bracelet

Famed "Unabomber" Stages Dramatic Final Table Comeback en Route to First WSOP Victory

Opening Event at 2010 WSOP Europe is a Total Sell Out

Malta's Andrew Pantling Dominates Most of Tournament, but Finishes Second

Chris Bjorin Finishes Third, Now the All-Time WSOP Europe Cashes Leader -- with Five

OVERVIEW

[Phil Laak](#) has done just about *everything* in poker.

He's won major tournaments. He cashed dozens of times. He played in high-stakes poker games on television and among celebrities. He's traveled around the world playing poker. He's become famous. He dates a movie star. He even set a world record for the most consecutive hours spent playing poker (at 115). It seemed, the one thing Phil Laak had *not* done was win a WSOP gold bracelet.

Until now.

Laak, a.k.a. the "Unabomber" achieved a monumental breakthrough victory in the [£2,500 buy-in Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em championship](#) (Event #1). This was the first of five events scheduled at this year's tournament series played at London's Casino at the Empire. The colorful Las Vegas resident and poker pro collected £170,802 for first place, which is the equivalent of about \$270,000 (USD).

Laak overcame long odds and a strong second-place showing by [Andrew Pantling](#), from Malta by way of Toronto, Canada. Pantling dominated play during most of the three-day tournament. He seized the chip lead late on Day One. He continued to hold the lead throughout Day Two and arrived at the final table way ahead in chips by nearly a 2 to 1 margin over his closest rival. Once the final table began, Pantling was never in serious danger of relinquishing his advantage, that is, until he became embattled in a heads-up duel with Laak. It was Laak who was the recipient of a fortuitous flurry of good fortune en route to a thrilling first-ever gold bracelet victory.

The win was particularly pleasing to Laak at this moment in history. Laak finished second five years ago in a WSOP heads-up match against Johnny Chan, who won his then-record tenth gold bracelet. He came to the final table with his right arm in a cast and sling, the result of a serious accident while riding an ATV last month. Laak, who was cheered on by his biggest fan -- Hollywood actress and former gold bracelet winner Jennifer Tilly -- seemed far more serious than his usual unpredictable persona. While he was talking incessantly throughout the finale, the carnival-like antics that usually accompany a high-profile finale were missing on this occasion. Perhaps that was due to the gravity of the moment and the special significance of finally achieving a long-elusive gold bracelet.

The final table included two former WSOP gold bracelet winners – [Chris Bjin](#) (London, UK) and [Willie Tann](#) (London, UK). Also present were Ilan Rouah (Strasbourg, France), Andrew Pantling (Malta), and David Peters (Toledo, OH USA).

The tournament was a complete sell out, attracting a capacity crowd totaling 244 entries. The prize pool amounted to £610,000. The top 24 finishers collected prize money. Among those who cashed was John Tabatabai (Cardiff, UK), who was the runner up to Annette Obrestad when she won the inaugural WSOP Europe championship held in 2007.

With yet another impressive third-place finish, two-time former gold bracelet winner Chris Bjin now has five WSOP Europe cashes and three final table appearances -- the most by any player. Since this was only the 12th gold bracelet presented in Europe, that means Bjin has cashed in 42 percent of events and final tabled one quarter of all tournaments played in London.

To see the official final results, please click [HERE](#).

THE WINNER

The winner of the £2,500 buy-in Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em tournament, WSOP Europe Event #1 is Phil Laak, from Las Vegas, NV (USA).

Laak is a 38-year-old professional poker player.

Laak is pronounced "lock."

Laak was born in Dublin, Ireland. But he grew up in the United States and speaks with no detectable Irish accent.

Laak is the youngest of six children. He speculates that his outgoing personality is largely the result of being the youngest child and striving for attention at an early age.

Laak is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He earned his degree in electrical engineering.

While in his 20s, Laak held numerous odd jobs – including working as a repo man, dishwasher, and gardener. He also worked as a stock trader in New York, where he developed a passion for backgammon. Laak became quite proficient at the game and played competitively for high stakes in private games. Encouraged by his success in backgammon, Laak gradually developed a fondness for poker. He played regularly in some of the famous underground clubs in New York City.

Laak previously won two major tournaments, including the World Poker Tour Celebrity Invitational in 2004 and the William Hill Grand Prix in 2005. His overall tournament earnings now total about \$2.5 million.

Laak appears regularly on televised poker shows. He has appeared numerous times on GSN's *High Stakes Poker* and NBC's *Poker after Dark*.

Laak's girlfriend is Hollywood actress and former Oscar-nominee Jennifer Tilly, who won a WSOP gold bracelet in the 2005 Ladies World Poker Championship. She was present at the final table from start to finish and cheered Laak to victory.

Laak's best friend is former WSOP gold bracelet winner Antonio Esfandiari. In fact, the two poker pros often work together in seminars and appearances around the country.

Laak collected first-place prize money amounting to £170,802, which equals about \$270,000 (USD).

With part of the prize money, Laak says he intends to help his mother buy a house in Los Angeles.

With this victory, Laak now has one win, three final table appearances, and seven cashes at the WSOP. His first WSOP cash took place in 2005. Laak's accumulated WSOP career earnings now total \$509,529.

Prior to this win, Laak's most famous WSOP moment came when he played heads-up against poker legend Johnny Chan in the 2005 Pot-Limit Hold'em championship. The battle was memorable not only because Chan won his then-record tenth gold bracelet that night. It was perhaps just as remembered for the antics of Laak who entertained a huge audience (and Chan) with a series of bizarre stunts – the likes of which have never been seen before in the game of poker. Among the many frolics that night, Laak did push ups, yoga, and a game of musical chairs *while playing* at the final table (Note: See "Redux" below for the official report from that event).

In July 2010, Laak set a world record for the most consecutive hours spent playing poker. He played poker for nearly five straight days, clocking in a mind-boggling 116 hours at the table. Laak's effort shattered the previous world record which has been set a year earlier by Paul Zimble at 2009 WSOP Europe at London's Casino at the Empire.

Laak wore an arm cast at the final table, the result of a fracture suffered last month while riding an ATV. The accident was serious and potentially very dangerous. Laak stated afterward that he was lucky not to have landed on his head or neck when dismounting from the motor vehicle, which might have caused a far more serious injury. While the misfortune was indeed painful and resulted in a broken arm, Laak conceded that in some ways he was quite fortunate not to have endured something far more serious. In typical Laak fashion and in reverence for this year's WSOP Europe series played in London, he painted his arm cast with the Union Jack flag, the nation symbol of Great Britain.

Following his victory, instead of posing with the gold bracelet in the traditional fashion, Laak jokingly placed the famed poker amulet around his cast and beamed for the cameras. This occasion is believed to be the first time a player with a broken arm has accepted a WSOP gold bracelet.

Phil Laak became the third American player to win a gold bracelet at WSOP Europe. The previous American winners were John Juanda (2008) and Barry Shulman (2009).

WINNER QUOTES

On winning his first WSOP gold bracelet: "The main thing to me is now is that I don't have to listen to all the ragging I get from everyone when I play. Eighty percent of the time, it's all I hear – that I don't have a gold bracelet yet. Well, that's all gone now."

More on winning a gold bracelet in relation to many of his peers who already have WSOP wins: "Antonio (Esfandiari) has been riding me for years that he has a bracelet, and I don't. Maybe now, he'll finally shut up (laughing)."

On his heads-up strategy against eventual runner up Andrew Pantling (who mostly dominated the tournament, until the very end): "He was really, really aggressive. So, I tried to go along with that and steal a pot occasionally -- because you have to steal from time to time. I did a lot of check-calling. No matter what I had -- aces, kings, queens or whatever, I would just check-call. Then, I would check raise him a lot when I figured out he could not have much of a hand, even though I did not always have a big hand myself...it's much easier to play heads-up with the opponent is predictable and pathetic. But Andrew was a tough opponent. He was tough to figure out sometimes."

On what he thought was the decisive factor that led to victory: "I have a ton of experience looking at flops. I wanted to see as many flops as I could, and then go from there. I wanted to keep the pots small pre-flop and then take it from there."

On winning the tournament's final hand when his opponent (Andrew Pantling) was drawing to a huge number of outs, which quite possibly could have reversed the final outcome: "Hey, I admit it -- I had to dodge the world on that final hand."

More on the implications of winning a WSOP title: "I'm a camera whore. For me, the attention is great. You win a gold bracelet and you get more attention. I am the youngest of six kids. Shrinkers have examined this factor. Statistically, the youngest kids are more loquacious -- first to the party and last to leave, you know."

On winning a WSOP victory versus collecting a big cash prize: "Ultimately, poker is all about the money. I'm a dollars and cents guy. But this is great."

On the timing of this victory -- coming after setting the endurance record and breaking his arm in recent months: "Whenever you win, it feels like a perfect storm. You feel like you have a guardian angel protecting you. Like during my (fractured arm) accident. The statistics going in from the moment when I was flying through the air going towards the ground were weighed against me. I finished in like the top five percent when I landed. It was really bad but could have been much worse. It was high speed. I could have smashed my head. I could have been paralyzed or blind or worse. But all I got was the broken arm and some bruises. Sometimes, you just run good."

On why he plays so much poker: "I play poker because it is profitable *and* fun. But if was *only* profitable or *only* fun, then I would not be doing it. It has to be *both*. Like, playing video games is fun. Making decisions is fun. Why don't they have jobs listening to music? Or eating cheese pizza? Or watching David Letterman? If they did, I'd be rich."

On his next goal: "I am planning to learn to play the piano. Before my accident, I did not realize how little I was utilizing my two good arms. When this (broken) arm comes back, I'm going to buy a portable electric keyboard and am going to learn how to play the blues on the piano. Every time I hear the blues on the piano, I say – 'Man, I wish I could do that!' There's nothing that is stopping me from doing that, except like five years of practice. That's the thing I want to do next, which is learn and study piano."

The Final Table

The final table contained two former WSOP gold bracelet winners – Chris Bjin (2 wins) and Willie Tann (1 win).

Five different nations were represented at the final table – including England, France, Malta, and the United States.

The runner up was Andrew Pantling, from Malta. He is originally from Toronto, Ontario (Canada). He is an executive for an online poker site. His career tournament winnings now total more than \$700,000 – most of which was earned in various European tournaments. This was Pantling's second time to cash in a WSOP tournament.

The third-place finisher was Chris Bjin, from London, UK. He now has 56 career in-the-money finishes at the WSOP. This currently ranks as an eighth-place tie (with Chau Giang) on the all-time WSOP cashes list.

Bjin now has five cashes at WSOP Europe and three final table appearances, in what (to date) have been a total of 12 events played. This is the most of any player. This was Bjin's highest WSOP Europe finish, so far.

The fourth-place finisher was David Peters, from Toledo, OH (USA). He previously won a WSOP Circuit event in 2008, held at Caesars Palace Las Vegas,

The fifth-place finisher was Ilan Rouah, from Strasbourg, France. This marked his first time ever to cash in a WSOP event.

The sixth-place finisher was Willie Tann, from London, UK. Tann previously won a WSOP title in 2005.

OTHER IN-THE-MONEY FINISHERS

Other former WSOP gold bracelet winners who cashed in this event included – Praz Bansi (11th place).

John Tabatabai, from Cardiff, UK was the seventh-place finisher. Tabatabai is perhaps best known for finishing second to Annette Obrestad, when she won the inaugural WSOP Europe championship in 2007.

Praz Bansi is one of only three British players with multiple gold bracelets. He won his second title earlier this year in Las Vegas. Bansi finished 11th in this event.

Liv Boeree -- known for winning a recent European Poker Tour (EPT) championship in San Remo, Italy -- cashed in this event. Her 19th-place finish was her highest at the WSOP, to date.

Five of this year's WSOP November Nine entered this tournament. They were – Michael Mizrachi, John Dolan, Matt Jarvis, Filippo Candio, and John Racener.

There was no defending champion from 2009, since this was the first time a Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em tournament has been played at WSOP Europe.

ODDS AND ENDS

The tournament was a complete sell out. Every table and seat was filled to capacity. The large turnout required the implementation of an alternate system. About two down alternates were seated as players were eliminated. All alternates were sat within 80 minutes of the start of the tournament.

This is the first of five events on the 2010 WSOP Europe schedule. It is the 58th gold bracelet event played in 2010, when combined with the 57 events which took place in Las Vegas a few months ago.

This is the 886th gold bracelet event in World Series of Poker history. Note: This figure includes every official WSOP event played, including tournaments during the early years when there were no actual gold bracelets awarded. It also includes the 12 gold bracelets awarded at WSOP Europe, to date.

In the 41-year history of the WSOP, the total combined amount of prize money that has been awarded amounts to \$1,229,337,165.

The total number of entrants in the WSOP Main Event (all years combined) is 51,000.

The tournament began with opening remarks by WSOP executive Ty Stewart and Tournament Director Jack Effel. The official "Shuffle Up and Deal" honor went to J.P. Kelly from Aylesbury, UK. He is the only British player to have won WSOP gold bracelets both at the WSOP in Las Vegas and WSOP Europe in London.

The tournament was played over three consecutive days. Day One lasted about 12 hours. Day Two took about ten hours. Day Three (the final table) lasted about six hours.

The official WSOP gold bracelet ceremony takes place on the day following the winner's victory. The ceremony takes place on at center stage at Casino at the Empire and begins following the dinner break of the noon tournament. The ceremony begins at approximately 8:10 pm. The entire presentation is open to public and media. Video and photography is permitted by both media and the public.

THE TOURNAMENT

The £2,500 buy-in Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em tournament attracted 244 entries. The total prize pool amounted to £610,000. The top 24 finishers collected prize money.

The chip leader at the end of Day One was Andrew Pantling.

The chip leader coming into the final table was Andrew Pantling. He ended up finishing second.

Phil Laak was ranked third in chips at the start of play on Day Three and gradually built up his stack. Once heads-up play began, he gained momentum and gradually wore down his opponent by winning a majority of the small-to medium-sized pots that were contested.

When heads-up play began, Pantling and Laak were very close in chips. They battled heads-up for nearly two hours.

The final hand of the tournament came when Laak was dealt [Kd] [5c]. Pantling was dealt [Ah] [9h]. The flop came [7h] [4h] [4c], giving Pantling the decisive lead and a huge number of outs to improve by making a flush or a pair. But the [5d] on the turn was the perfect card for Laak, who suddenly reversed things and had the lead. Still, Pantling had many outs drawing to a heart, a nine, or an ace. As the huge crowd swelled towards the rail, the final fateful card was dealt. It was the [Qc], a beautiful blank to the eyes of Laak and his many fans in the audience. It also meant defeat for Pantling, who played marvelously over three days. Laak had finally earned an elusive WSOP gold bracelet victory.

The tournament officially began on Tuesday, September 14th at 12:15 pm. The tournament officially ended on Thursday, September 16th at 8:00 pm (London time).

MORE ABOUT WSOP EUROPE

This is the fourth year of WSOP Europe. All events have been played at Casino at the Empire, located in Leicester Square in Central London. There have now been 12 gold bracelet events held in the U.K. Four more events are scheduled this year.

Casino at the Empire hosts a poker room. However, due to the size of the WSOP, the tournament area is expanded to include about half of the casino floor space. There are 34 active poker tables available for use at WSOP Europe.

WSOP REDUX: 2005 MATCH BETWEEN PHIL LAAK AND JOHNNY CHAN (OFFICIAL REPORT)

A Perfect 10:

Poker Legend Johnny Chan Becomes First Player in WSOP History to Win Ten Gold Bracelets

The World Series of Poker is filled with many memorable moments: Doyle Brunson's back-to-back wins back in 1976-77 holding his trademark hand -- ten-deuce; Stu Ungar's rise from the ashes in his third world championship (a.k.a. "the comeback") in 1997; Online poker player Chris Moneymaker's stunning victory in 2003. These events rank among the most unforgettable of poker memories.

What happened at 3:18 am on a Sunday night at the Rio Pavilion in Las Vegas ranks right up there as one of the games's greatest moments. Johnny Chan won his all-time record tenth WSOP gold bracelet. After a two-year epoch during which poker's three most famous players remained locked in a virtual dead heat with nine gold bracelets each (lifetime wins), Chan finally broke through and became the first player to win Number Ten.

It would be hard to decide which was more exciting -- the final duel between Chan and Phil 'the Unibomber' Laak -- or the fanfare of media and well-wishers swarming around Chan afterwards.

Neither of these things would have happened had it not been for one dazzling hand which took place when play was four-handed. Chan was dealt Q-Q. His opponent, Frank Kassela, was dealt A-A. The former world champion was 'all in.' Chan, not accustomed to needing help from the deck, was in serious trouble. Almost as though his fate was pre-ordained, the flop brought a queen. The jam-packed crowd went ballistic. In a mere few seconds, Chan went from one step away from the rail to the chip lead. Indeed, pocket queens would prove to be a lucky hand for Johnny Chan.

The tournament began with 425 entrants. Finalists included four former gold bracelet winners -- Johnny Chan (3), Jerri Thomas (1), Ivo Donev (1), and Humberto Brenes (1). The chip leader was formidable poker pro, Tony Hartman. At the final table, players and chip counts were as follows:

THE FINAL TABLE:

SEAT 1 -- Jerri Thomas 65,000 in chips
SEAT 2 -- Tony Hartman 200,000 in chips
SEAT 3 -- Richard Osborne 55,000 in chips
SEAT 4 -- Johnny Chan 70,000 in chips
SEAT 5 - Ivo Donev 50,000 in chips
SEAT 6 -- Frank Kassela 170,000 in chips
SEAT 7 -- Richard Harrich 75,000 in chips
SEAT 8 -- Humberto Brenes 125,000 in chips
SEAT 9 - Phil Laak 85,000 in chips
SEAT 10 -- Ashok Surapaneni 175,000 in chips

Players were eliminated in the following order:

10th Place - Ivo Donev, from Austria, has made several final tables and in-the-money finishes at the WSOP. He arrived low on chips and went out first. Tenth place paid \$11,730.

9th Place - Costa Rican Humberto Brenes went out next when his 6-6 was flattened by Richard Harroch's 9-9. Brenes collected \$19,550 for 9th place.

8th Place - After Brenes departed, Ashok Surapaneni was eliminated on the very next hand when his A-10 was topped by Frank Kassela's Q-Q. That gave Kassela the chip lead for the first time. Surapaneni collected \$29,325 for 8th place.

7th Place - Richard Harroch took a tough beat on what might have been one of the most important hands of the tournament. Harroch was dealt A-J and was 'all in' against Johnny Chan's 4-4. The flop came J-5-8....followed by a 7 and 6 on the turn and river. The runner-runner straight gave Chan the pot and put Harroch on the rail. Seventh place paid \$39,100.

6th Place - Tony Hartman had a disappointing final table. He arrived as chip leader, but watched helplessly as his chips moved in the wrong direction. Hartman's bad run was summed up in his final hand -- pocket queens versus Phil Laak's pocket tens. Wham! A ten on the flop booted Hartman out in 6th place -- good for \$48,875.

5th Place - Jerri Thomas was low on chips. She managed to survive six 'all ins' before finally succumbing to a 5th place finish. On her final hand, A-8 was dominated by Richard Osborne's A-10. Neither player made a pair, but the ten played. Thomas walked away with 5th-place prize money -- \$58,650.

4th Place - After Frank Kassela lost the most important pot of the night to Johnny Chan (see A-A versus Q-Q), he went out a short time later, losing his final hand to Phil Laak. Kassela earned \$68,425 for 4th place.

3rd Place - While play was three-handed, Chan widened his chip advantage. Then, another bizarre hand took place when Phil Laak had much the worst of it with K-10 and had his opponent (Richard Osborne) 'all in' with A-K. The river brought a ten to Laak, sending him into a frenzy. Meanwhile, Osborne staggered away in disbelief. \$78,200 was the consolation prize for 3rd place.

2nd Place - The final duel was so compelling that ESPN cameras were turned on for an event which was not originally scheduled to be televised. Phil Laak versus Johnny Chan was as great poker theatre as there ever has been in the history of the World Series. Johnny Chan may have seen everything in his 23 years as a pro, but he had certainly not witnessed the equivalent of Phil 'Unabomber' Laak playing the role of circus clown, crazed lunatic, and grand shaman all wrapped up in a single, seemingly disturbed, poker player. Chan sat stoically most of the time, while Laak bounced around the final table like Jackson Pollack painting a canvas.

He darted back and forth around Chan, the dealer, and the Tournament Director -- often in the middle of hands. When he folded a hand, he pleaded with the dealer to rabbit hunt cards, seemingly more interested in a hypothetical outcome than reality. Like a deranged madman, Laak had the audience (and occasionally Chan, too) in stitches. No one would have thought that there was about 150 grand riding on the outcome (the difference in prize money between first and second place).

It would be safe to say that although it was past 3 am, *no one* -- not the players, nor the audience, nor the staff -- wanted this match to end. It was a grand theatre worthy of an extended encore. It was a seven-course meal in the world's finest restaurant, with an open bar tab. No one wanted to leave. The final curtain came down on the Chan-Laak show when the Unabomber was dealt K-J. Chan was dealt Q-Q. The flop came J-5-5. Laak was trapped. He was 'all in' with top pair and Chan had an overpair. Two blanks fell and Chan had delivered the final knockout punch. Laak may have hit the canvass like Sonny Liston, but he couldn't turn off the antics that would have been appropriate for Mohammed Ali. Laak continued to chatter away, oblivious to the loss, while Chan the victor stoically treated the occasion much like a Tuesday afternoon at the office.

Phil 'Unabomber' Laak took \$156,400 for second place.

1st Place - Johnny Chan won the world poker championship in 1987 and 1988. He came within one card of winning the 1989 WSOP, as well. His win in the event amounted to \$303,025.

One must now wonder if and when Phil Hellmuth (or Doyle Brunson) might catch Chan for the all-time most wins record. Given that Chan plays fewer tournaments than any of the three, his record is even more extraordinary.

Official Report by Nolan Dalla -- World Series of Poker Media Director

Note: All results are now official and may be reprinted by media. We would appreciate if you are posting these on a website, you provide a link back to www.wsop.com Thank you.

