



2011 World Series of Poker Presented by Jack Link's Beef Jerky  
Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino  
Las Vegas, Nevada

Official Report  
Event #26  
Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em  
Buy-In: \$2,500  
Number of Entries: 1,378  
Total Net Prize Pool: \$3,134,950  
Number of Places Paid: 126  
First Place Prize: \$689,739  
June 15-17, 2011

### **TOURNAMENT HEADLINES:**

Second WSOP Gold Bracelet for the Ukraine

Oleksii Kovalchuk Wins First WSOP Title

Ukrainian Poker Pro Collects \$689,739

European Players Demolish Americans at Final Table

Runner-up Ionel Anton Becomes Highest Romanian Finisher in WSOP History

Full House at the 2011 WSOP-- Tournament Attendance Still up Double Digits over Last Year

26 Gold Bracelets Won – 32 More Still to Go

### **OVERVIEW**

When communism collapsed and the Iron Curtain disintegrated some 20 years ago, many observers wondered about the impacts of half a billion people suddenly being jolted by the culture shock of having to compete with the rest of the free world for the first time.

Repressive governments disintegrated. Walls crumbled. Flags of freedom waved. Suddenly millions of people living in more than two dozen countries controlled their lives and made their own decisions – about *everything*. Eastern Europeans and citizens of the former Soviet Union were allowed to travel freely and were granted access to the influences and attractions of the West.

A few years later, when poker's tentacles began branching out into Europe, the game knew no boundaries. Poker didn't just stop when it reached England, France, and Germany. Poker expanded further and continued to spread east.

Young people, who had previously grown up confined to watching mind-numbing state-run television and playing conventional board games like chess, were suddenly bombarded with flashy images of an exciting new game called *poker*. The game began to appear on satellite network feeds beamed into cities from

Prague all the way to Moscow. Adoration of the iconic chessmasters such as Kasparov and Karpov was displaced by Ivey envy and Negreanu worship.

Then, there was the Internet revolution. Access to online poker games, breaking tournament news, and strategy discussions in different languages accelerated the infancy and inevitable maturity of poker to nations and people who likely would have *never* been exposed to the game if under the same confining rules of prior generations. Online poker sites began to attract thousands of new players from countries with names that many of their opponents wouldn't be able to locate on a map. Players with screen names like "Krzysztof" from Kazakhstan began bad beating the heck out of online pros from Leeds to L.A.

The old proletariat might as well have pawned their old hammers and sickles for cards and chips. Hungary, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and 20 more nations once famously referred to by one former U.S. President as "the Evil Empire" had more young people playing poker than were once enrolled in the Marxist-driven Young Pioneers. Inevitably, some of these players starting winning. A few players starting winning really big.

Two poker players saw the dynamics of a new age around them. Both got caught up in the craze. They started playing the game everyone seemed to be talking about. One of the players lived in the Ukraine. The other player resided in Romania.

The idea that a poker player from Kiev and another from Bucharest would be playing heads up for a gold bracelet at the World Series of Poker would have been unthinkable just a generation ago. Now, it's treated as rather ordinary. Such is the astronomical growth of the WSOP abroad and the universal magnetism it holds for millions of poker players.

On the night of June 18th, Ukrainian poker pro Oleksii Kovalchuk defeated Romanian engineer Ionel Anton in heads up play and won the \$2,500 buy-in Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em championship at the 2011 WSOP. Kovalchuk collected whopping \$689,739 for first place. He was also presented with the famed WSOP gold bracelet, which symbolizes the game's ultimate achievement.

Kovalchuk becomes the second player in history from the Ukraine ever to win a WSOP gold bracelet. The first Ukrainian to win was Eugene Katchalov, who won the \$1,500 buy-in Seven-Card Stud championship just two weeks ago. The runner-up Anton had nothing to be ashamed of either. He became the highest-finishing Romanian player in WSOP history.

Some day, other repressive regimes will collapse. Evil dictators will fall. People of all ages will be liberated. Just as before, hundreds of millions of a new generation will covet exciting new opportunities. For the first time, they shall gain access to the most appealing activities the world over, which will inevitably include poker.

It wasn't too long ago that a Russian poker player first won a WSOP gold bracelet. That occurred in 2006. Now, five years later, not just one, but two Ukrainians have won victories at the 2011 WSOP.

All this begs the question. How long before the WSOP crowns a Chinese champion? Or, a North Korean champion? Can a Libyan world poker champion be in our future?

Whether it's politics or poker – more revolutions are coming.

*For a comprehensive recap of Event #26, please visit the WSOP.com tournament portal page for this event [HERE](#).*

### **EVENT #26 CHAMPION – OLEKSII KOVALCHUK**

The 2011 World Series of Poker \$2,500 buy-in Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em champion is Oleksii Kovalchuk, from Kiev, Ukraine.

Kovalchuk is a 21-year-old professional poker player.

Kovalchuk was taught to play poker by his father. He started playing in 2007. He plays about half the time online, and the other half in live games. Kovalchuk has played in several tournaments in Europe.

When he's not playing poker, Kovalchuk enjoys tennis, motorsports and chess.

This is the first year Kovalchuk has attended the WSOP. He has already cashed three times.

For his victory, Kovalchuk collected \$689,739 for first place.

According to official records, Kovalchuk now has 1 win, 1 final table appearance, and 3 in-the-money finishes at the WSOP.

Kovalchuk currently has \$706,633 in career WSOP winnings.

Kovalchuk is to be classified as a semi-professional poker player (in WSOP records and stats), since he has been playing for a short time, but has been making money at the game over the past year.

Kovalchuk becomes the second Ukrainian poker champion in history at the WSOP. The first was Eugene Katchalov, who won the \$1,500 buy-in Seven-Card Stud championship just two weeks ago. However, it's fair to point out Katchalov now lives in New York, NY. Accordingly, Kovalchuk becomes the first full-time resident of the Ukraine to ever win a gold bracelet.

**WINNER QUOTES** (Note: The winner was interviewed at tableside moments after the victory)

On how he was introduced to poker and the WSOP:

*In 2007, my father told me the rules and I learned the game. It was very interesting for me and I began to play. I am now 21-years-old. This is my first trip to Las Vegas.*

On the poker scene in his hometown of Kiev:

*There are many cash games going. There are not too many tournaments. Most of them get about 200 people. It happens maybe once every three months.*

On the three Europeans beating the three Americans:

*All the players were strong. American or European, they all played well. It did not matter.*

On how it felt to win a gold bracelet:

*I feel very happy. I do not know what to say. I do not think about the money. The money is second to me. I wanted the gold bracelet and to win.*

**THE FINAL TABLE**

The official final table was comprised of the top six finishers.

The final table contained no former gold bracelet winner – which was only the third time so far this has happened at the 2011 WSOP.

Four nations were represented at the final table – including Great Britain (1 player), Romania (1 player), Ukraine (1 player) and the United States (3 players). The three Americans were eliminated first, leaving the three Europeans to compete for the title, thereby taking the top three money spots.

The heads-up battle began with Oleksii Kovalchuk holding slightly more than a 2-to-1 chip advantage over Ionel Anton. However, the Romanian battled back and took a big chip lead, which put the Ukrainian at risk. About 90 minutes into the duel, the chip stacks were dead even. Then, Kovalchuk went on a roll and finished off Anton in about 20 minutes.

The runner up was Ionel Anton, from Bucharest, Romania. He is a 43-year-old engineer, having graduated from the prestigious Polytechnic Institute of Bucharest. This was his first time to play at the WSOP.

For both the first- and second-place finishers, this was the first year either had attended the WSOP.

The third-place finisher was Chris Moorman, from Benfleet, UK. He is a 25-year-old poker pro who is one of the world's top online players. This marked his 11<sup>th</sup> time to cash at the WSOP, all since 2008. Moorman took 12<sup>th</sup> place in this same event held at last year's WSOP Europe, played in London.

The fourth-place finisher was Dan O'Brien, from Las Vegas, NV. He is a former Wall Street trader-turned poker pro. His best previous finish was a third-place showing in 2008. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland.

The fifth-place finisher was Mazin Khoury, from Durham, NC. He cashed in the previous Six-Handed tournament held this year, finishing 38<sup>th</sup> out of 1,920 players. Khoury is a 21-year-old college student enrolled at North Carolina State University.

The sixth-place finisher was Anthony Ruberto, from Davie, FL. He is a professional pool player. Ruberto has attended the WSOP over the past five years, this being his highest finish, to date.

Final table play began at 8:20 on a Friday evening. Play ended at 1 am. The finale went for about 4 hours and 40 minutes. This was one of the shortest finales of the year.

The final table was played on ESPN's so-called secondary stage. The new final table set is getting raves in terms of design and appearance. No stage in the history of poker has ever looked as spectacular. Viewers will be able to see ESPN's coverage again once the WSOP Main Event begins.

Action was streamed live over WSOP.com. Viewers can tune in and watch most of this year's final tables. Although hole cards are not shown, viewers can follow an overhead camera as well as a pan-shot of the table. The floor announcer provides an official account of the action.

### **OTHER IN-THE-MONEY FINISHERS**

The top 126 finishers collected prize money.

The defending champion from 2010 was William Haydon. He finished in 52<sup>nd</sup> place.

Among the former gold bracelet winners who cashed in this tournament – aside from those who made the final table – were the following: David "Bakes" Baker, Nenad Medic, Ted Lawson, Allen Bari, Phillip Tom, Pascal LeFrancois, Ayaz Mahmood and Jake Cody.

Alex Bolotin, who won the 2009 Ante Up for Africa charity event at the WSOP, finished in 111<sup>th</sup> place.

Rene Angelil, manager and husband of international musician Celine Dion, finished in 120<sup>th</sup> place.

At one point when the tournament was down to two tables, the nation of France appeared to have a decent chance to crown its third champion this week. But two French players, Benjamin Pollak and Anthony Lellouch, went out ninth and 10<sup>th</sup>, respectively.

Tournament results are to be included in the WSOP official records. Results are also to be included in the 2011 WSOP "Player of the Year" race.

"WSOP Player of the Year" standings can be found at WSOP.com [HERE](#).

### **ODDS AND ENDS**

Last year's same event attracted 1,245 players. There were 1,378 entries this year – which means attendance increased by 10.6 percent. Virtually every event and game variant – other than Seven-Card Stud and Limit Hold'em – has attracted an increase in attendance over 2010.

This is the 918<sup>th</sup> gold bracelet awarded in World Series of Poker history. This figure includes every official WSOP event ever played, including tournaments during the early years when there were no actual gold bracelets awarded. It also includes the 16 gold bracelets awarded to date at WSOP Europe (2007-2010). Moreover for the first time ever, one gold bracelet was awarded for this year's winner of the WSOP Circuit National Championship.

The official WSOP gold bracelet ceremony takes place on the day following the winner's victory (or some hours later when the tournament ends very late). The ceremony takes place inside The Pavilion, which is the expansive main tournament room hosting all noon starts this year. The ceremony begins at the conclusion of the first break of the noon tournament. The ceremony usually starts around 2:20 pm. The national anthem of the winner's nation is played. The entire presentation is open to the public and media. Video and photography is permitted by both the public and members of the media.

Kovalchuk gold bracelet ceremony is set to take place on Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup>. The national anthem of the Ukraine will be played in honor of his victory. This will be the second time this has taken place in 2011.

### **EVENT HISTORY**

Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em started out primarily as an online poker game. Many international poker sites now offer just as many Six-Handed games as full-ring games.

Six-Handed cash games and tournaments are not played at most brick and mortar casinos. The reason is obvious. The games and tournaments require just as many tables, dealers, and resources as a standard nine-handed set-up. But in Six-Handed play, the number of players (and takeout) is reduced by a third. The WSOP believes the game merits gold bracelet status since it requires a different skill set from conventional games, and has proven to be very popular worldwide.

Six-Handed Hold'em emphasizes short-handed poker skills. Rather than a full table of nine players, each table is played six-handed (or less, as players bust out). This generally requires competitors to play cards out of the standard range of starting-hand requirements. It also makes post-flop skill paramount to victory. The game is included on the WSOP schedule in an effort to test as diverse a range of poker skills as possible.

Six-Handed No-Limit Hold'em made its WSOP debut in 2005. Former champions from these events include Dutch Boyd, Bill Chen, Jeff Madsen and others.

This largest Six-Handed live tournament in poker history took place earlier at this year's WSOP in Event #10 when 1,920 players entered the \$1,500 buy-in competition. That figure demolished the old record (1,663 players), which had been set at last year's WSOP.

This was the largest Six-Handed tournament in history at this buy-in level.

### **TOURNAMENT PLAY**

The tournament was played over three consecutive days.

The tournament officially began on Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at noon. The tournament officially ended on Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, at 1:05 am.

### **2011 WSOP STATISTICS**

Through the conclusion of Event #26, the 2011 WSOP has attracted 30,938 combined total entries. \$47,710,385 in prize money has been awarded to winners.

Through the conclusion of this tournament, the breakdown of nationality of gold bracelet winners has been:

United States (17)  
Great Britain (3)  
France (2)  
Canada (2)  
Russia (1)  
Ukraine (1)

Through the conclusion of this tournament, the national origin (birthplace) of winners has been:

United States (13)  
Great Britain (3)  
France (2)  
Canada (2)  
Ukraine (2)  
Israel (1)  
Russia (1)  
Honduras (1)  
Indonesia (1)

Through the conclusion of this event, the home-states of (American) winners have been:

Nevada (3)  
California (3)  
Texas (2)

New York (2)  
Illinois (2)  
New Jersey (1)  
Florida (1)  
Tennessee (1)  
Connecticut (1)  
Indiana (1)

Through the conclusion of this tournament, the breakdown of professional poker players to semi-pros and amateurs who won gold bracelets has been:

Professional Players (21): Jake Cody, Cheech Barbaro, Eugene Katchalov, Allen Bari, Harrison Wilder, Matt Perrins, Sean Getzwiller, Viacheslav Zhukov, David Diaz, Andrew Badecker, Tyler Bonkowski, Brian Rast, John Juanda, Aaron Steury, Darren Woods, Jason Somerville, Bertrand Grospellier, Elie Payan, John Monnette, Mark Radoja, Chris Viox

Semi-Pros (3): Sean R. Drake, Amir Lehavot, Oleksii Kovalchuk

Amateurs (2): Geoffrey Klein, Foster Hays

Since the tracking of professionals/semi-pros/amateurs first started in 2005, this year is the biggest disparity of professionals winning than any year, so far.

Through the conclusion of this tournament, the victories of six of the 26 winners (23 percent) marked the first time the new champion had ever cashed at the WSOP.

Every WSOP held over the past 11 years has included at least one multiple gold bracelet champion (meaning two or more wins within the same year). The last year the WSOP was comprised exclusively of single-event winners was back in 1999. The record for most multiple gold bracelet winners within a single year was in 2009, when five players managed to win two or more titles. So far, no player has yet won two gold bracelets (this year).

The streak of male WSOP gold bracelet winners has now reached 187 consecutive events. Aside from the annual Ladies Championship, the last female player to win a WSOP tournament open to both sexes was Vanessa Selbst, in 2008. The longest "cold" streak for female players occurred between years 1982 and 1996, when 221 consecutive open events passed without a female champion.

The highest finishes by any female (open events) at this year's WSOP were by two players -- Maria Ho, who finished second (\$5,000 buy-in No-Limit Hold'em), and Kim Nguyen, who also finished as the runner up (\$1,500 buy-in Six-Handed Limit Hold'em).

The highest finish by any defending champion at this year's WSOP was by David Baker, who finished in sixth place after winning the previous \$10,000 buy-in No-Limit Deuce-to-Seven Draw Lowball World Championship.

New tournament records set at the 2011 WSOP (to date):

- Biggest Heads-Up tournament prize pool in history (\$3,040,000) – Event #2
- Largest live Omaha High-Low Split Tournament in history (925 entries) – Event #3
- Largest live Six-Handed tournament in poker history (1,920 entries) – Event #10
- Biggest Deuce-to-Seven tournament prize pool in history (\$1,184,400) – Event #16
- Largest live \$1,500 buy-in No-Limit Hold'em tournament in history with single day start (3157 entries) – Event #18
- Largest live \$1,000 buy-in No-Limit Hold'em tournament in history with single day start (3175 entries) – Event #20
- Largest consecutive-days starting field sizes in poker history (combined 6,350 entries) – Event #18 and Event #20
- Largest live Pot-Limit Omaha tournament in poker history (1,071 entries) – Event #22
- Largest Mixed-Game (Eight-Game Mix) in poker history (489 entries) – Event #23

New player records set at the 2011 WSOP (to date):

- The 35-year span between Artie Cobb's first cash in this event (1976) and most recent cash in the same event (2011) represents the longest time span in WSOP history. He accomplished this in Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split (Event #25).
- Phil Hellmuth added to his record as the individual all-time leader in cashes (80) and final table appearances (41), with his second-place finish in the Deuce-to-Seven Lowball Championship (Event #16).

### **CORRECTION**

In previous WSOP reports, it was noted that Elie Payan was the fifth French player in history to win a WSOP gold bracelet. This should read, he is the "sixth" player in history from France to win. The player omitted from the count was Gilbert Gross, who won a Pot-Limit Omaha gold bracelet in 1998. The WSOP regrets the error.

*Note: Various categories and statistics will be updated with each gold bracelet event as they are completed.*

*Note: All results are now official and may be reprinted by media. If you are posting these results on a website, we would appreciate providing a link back to: [WSOP.com](http://WSOP.com)*

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