



**2011-2012 World Series of Poker Circuit
Season Eight
Choctaw Casino Resort
Durant, Oklahoma
Final Report
Ring Event #11
Main Event
No-Limit Hold'em Re-Entry
Buy-In: \$1,600
Entries: 978
Prize Pool: \$1,422,990
January 21-23, 2012**

ABRAHAM ARAYA WINS WSOP CIRCUIT MAIN EVENT AT CHOCTAW

Pockets Five Times His Years Salary For Three Days Work.

Durant, OK (January 23, 2012) — The Choctaw Main Event field was the most decorated the 2011-2012 WSOP Circuit has seen. Todd Brunson, Layne Flack, Dennis Phillips, Scotty Nguyen, Tom McEvoy, Men "The Master" Nguyen, Ylon Schwartz and Chad Brown all played for their shot at a Circuit ring. Together they account for 23 WSOP bracelets, 298 WSOP cashes, five Circuit rings and almost \$24 million in career earnings.

But when the last river card was dealt, the title didn't belong to a past bracelet winner or a multi-millionaire. No, the title of champion belonged to 44-year-old Abraham Araya.

Araya is currently laid off from his job as an airline flight mechanic. He formerly held a position working on the aircrafts of NBA teams, but when the economy took a turn for the worst, his company filed for bankruptcy and he was laid off.

"We had 12 teams we used to travel with. It was a great job," Araya said.

Fortunately for him, his poker game peaked at just the right time. In October of 2011 he won the T.J. Cloutier Poker Challenge (also at Choctaw) for \$83,659. Now, a few months later, he found himself in position for the biggest score of his life, and he didn't falter. His WSOP Circuit Main Event victory awarded him \$270,380, or as he put it, four or five years salary for an airline flight mechanic.

"Right now I can't believe it. It didn't sink in yet," Araya moments after his victory. "I can't tell you how amazing this feeling is."

Araya was born in East Africa and came to the United States 21 years ago to escape the war and pursue the American dream. With a beautiful wife, three children (Sabrina, Nathan and Thomas) and a fresh six-figure score, Araya is well on his way to making his dream come true – if it hasn't already.

With aspirations of using the winnings to take his children to see their grandparents in East Africa and taking his wife to relive their honeymoon in Hawaii for their tenth anniversary, one cannot help but be happy for Araya and his newfound success. But in order to achieve his dream, he had to work his way through a field like few Circuit stops have seen.

Attendance at Choctaw was tremendous. Center Stage, the concert hall where tournament play took place, saw a mid-week tournament draw 455 entrants, a turbo tournament that drew 407 entrants and a

Main Event satellite that drew a staggering 740 entrants. Overall, attendance in ring events at Choctaw was up 38 percent over last year's numbers.

Day 1A of the Main Event drew 647 entrants and Day 1B drew 331 for a total of 978 — 21 percent more than last year's Main Event field and second only to the 1,615 person field in Hammond earlier this year. The \$1.4 million prizepool paid the top 99 finishers.

486 players remained after Day 1, with Chris Tiller (167,500) and three-time Circuit champ, La Sengphet (144,000) leading the field. Unfortunately, neither player went on to make the money.

After nine hours of Day 2 play, the money bubble burst and all 99 players were guaranteed a piece of the prizepool. Play concluded four hours later and 30 remained with Araya well out in front.

"Last night I kind of felt I was going to win because I had the chip lead, but when I eliminated (Derek Browning in sixth) I *knew* I was going to win," Araya said.

His journey to the top took a slight detour as he came to the final table sixth in chips.

Seat 1 MARK BURFORD (Gloster, LA) 2,575,000 in chips
Seat 2 DANIEL LOWERY (Peter Pender, AR) 2,455,000 in chips
Seat 3 ABRAHAM ARAYA (Carrollton, TX) 1,560,000 in chips
Seat 4 DEREK BROWNING (Austin, TX) 3,700,000 in chips
Seat 5 JUSTIN GARDENHIRE (Ponca City, OK) 1,000,000 in chips
Seat 6 DEJUANTE ALEXANDER (Houston, TX) 1,350,000 in chips
Seat 7 WILL NGUYEN (Houston, TX) 3,860,000 in chips
Seat 8 JACK MILLER (San Antonio, TX) 2,050,000 in chips
Seat 9 MICHAEL SANDERS (Russellville, AR) 1,030,000 in chips

Ninth Place: DeJuante Alexander began the final table toward the bottom of the chip counts and looking for a spot to double up. He thought he found that spot when he bet his pocket jacks all in over the top of Derek Browning. Browning called holding [Kc][Qc] and we were off to the races. The flop brought a queen and Alexander was suddenly well behind Browning. With no help on the turn or river, Alexander was sent packing in ninth.

Alexander is a 27-year-old semi-professional cash game player from Houston, Texas. This was his fourth WSOP cash and first final table. He earned \$26,069.

Eighth Place: The 2011-2012 Circuit stop at Choctaw kicked off with a championship performance out of Justin Gardenhire in Event #1 when he worked his way through 1,218 entrants and earned his second WSOPC ring. A week later, Gardenhire found himself at the Main Event final table and things at Choctaw had a chance at ending exactly how they started. But first, he had to overcome being the final table short stack.

On his final hand, he went back and forth with Lowery and got all his chips in the middle. Gardenhire was at risk holding [Kd][Jc] against Lowery's [Ah][As]. The flop came [Kc][Qs][Ts], giving Gardenhire a pair and a straight draw, but taking away his two pair outs. The [6s] on the turn took away even more outs and Gardenhire paced around the table. The river brought a blank and he was eliminated in eighth place.

Gardenhire is a 30-year-old professional poker player from Ponca City, Oklahoma. This was his eighth WSOP cash and fourth final table. He came up short of ring number three, but took home \$32,771 for his tremendous play.

Seventh Place: Will Nguyen is a student from Houston, Texas and he is the fifth of six children in his family. At 24 years old, Nguyen was the youngest player at the final table. This was his first WSOP cash, and unfortunately for Will Nguyen, he wouldn't win.

On a [7s][5d][3s][Td] board, Nguyen moved all in on a king-high bluff to push Derek Browning off his hand. It backfired as "Sick Call" Browning called and tabled pocket fours for one pair. Nguyen tabled his king-high bluff with a smirk. He never improved on the river, and a pile of chips went Browning's way making him the chip leader. Meanwhile, Nguyen took a hit he would not be able to overcome. He was eliminated in seventh a few hands later. He earned \$41,679.

Sixth Place: Derek Browning didn't hang on to Nguyen's chips for long. In a re-raised pot, he moved all in on a board of [Jh][5h][3d] with pocket aces. His opponent, Araya, called holding [7h][6h] for a flush draw and a gut-shot straight draw. Browning was noticeably distraught over what he deemed a loose call considering the amount of chips both players had. The [8d] on the river upgraded Araya's straight to an open-ended one with one card to come. The [9h] fell on the river giving Araya the winning flush and sending Browning from chip leader to busted in the course of a few hands.

Browning is a 35-year-old manager of a Walgreens. This was his first WSOP cash and final table. He lives in Austin, Texas now, but he was born in Flint, Michigan and enjoys rooting on all Detroit-based teams – Lions, Red Wings, Tigers and Pistons. He earned \$53,675.

Fifth Place: Araya's heater sent another player packing when his ace jack outdrew the ace queen of Mark Burford all in pre-flop. Burford's fifth place finish awarded him \$69,698.

Burford was the only Circuit ring winner at the table (Bossier City \$555 No-Limit Hold'em). This marked his sixth WSOP cash and second final table. He is a 38-year-old poker pro from Gloster, Louisiana.

Fourth Place: On Jack Miller's final hand he moved all in with king jack and was called by the ace seven of Lowery. A six-high straight ran out on the board, but Lowery's seven gave him a higher straight and knocked Miller out in fourth. He was awarded \$92,252. With his elimination, the three remaining players were guaranteed a six-figure payday and Lowery's stack got healthy enough to make a run at gold.

This was Miller's second cash at the 2011-2012 Circuit series at Choctaw and his first final table. He is a self-proclaimed Christian man who loves his family. He is 44 years old and resides in San Antonio, Texas.

Third Place: Michael Saunders also fell victim to Araya's heater. Holding pocket sevens, Saunders moved all in and Araya called. Araya was well behind with pocket fours, but the flop came [Qd][Qh][4c] and it his streak of doing no wrong continued. Saunders' hopes for a seven fell on deaf ears as the turn and river brought no help. He earned \$123,430.

Saunders is an established tournament player with more than \$250,000 in lifetime earnings, but he has yet to break through and win a piece of hardware. This was his first WSOPC final table. He is 27 years old and lives in Russellville, Arkansas.

Second Place: When we reached heads up play, Araya had a sizeable chip lead, but Lowery was by no means out of it. At about a 3.5-to-1 chip disadvantage, Lowery re-raised all in from the button holding [Ah][8c] and Araya made the call with [5d][5s]. After having drawn out on ace queen with ace jack and pocket sevens with pocket fours, Araya seemed a lock to win this modest race. The board ran out [9d][9s][4h][Js][Qh], eliminating Lowery one spot shy of Circuit immortality.

Daniel Lowery is a 38-year-old saw mill owner and operator. He is "very" married to his beautiful wife and has three wonderful children, Christian (14), Jenna (11) and Reagan (7). This was his seventh WSOPC cash and third final table. He was awarded \$167,230.

First Place: Abraham Araya is a 44-year-old from Carrollton, Texas. Before being laid off, he worked as an aircraft mechanic for a company that serviced the planes NBA teams. He loved his job, but was laid off when his company filed for bankruptcy.

He does not consider himself a professional poker player despite more than \$350,000 in earnings in the last few months.

With his victory, the Choctaw Casino Resort Circuit finale is in the books. The casino champion was Raja Kattamuri. Kattamuri recorded two wins (\$555 No-Limit Hold'em Heads up and \$555 No-Limit Hold'em), a runner-up finish (\$345 No-Limit Hold'em Six Handed) and a sixth place finish (\$345 Pot-Limit Omaha) putting himself head and shoulders above the rest of the field in Circuit points. Kattamuri is a 26-year-old engineer from Dallas, Texas.

This is the eleventh of 12 ring events that took place at Choctaw Casino Resort. Winners of all ring events received a Circuit gold ring, first-place prize money and ranking points toward the \$1,000,000 Circuit

National Championship taking place in Las Vegas this spring. In addition, the winner of the Main Event, Araya, received an automatic bid into the National Championship.

Choctaw Casino Resort is located in Durant, Oklahoma and received extensive renovations over the last few years, not the least of which is the addition of the 330-room Grand Tower. The resort now boasts more than 400 rooms and 110,000 square feet of gaming space.

Like all Choctaw Casinos, a portion of the proceeds from Choctaw Casino Resort in Durant go to fund healthcare, education and housing for Choctaw Tribal Members.

The WSOP can be followed on Twitter @WSOP or "liked" on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/worldseriesofpoker>.

For more information, contact Lukas Willems, WSOP Media Coordinator, at lukasmwillems@gmail.com.

Results:

<u>FINISH</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>HOMETOWN</u>	<u>PRIZE</u>
1	Abraham Araya	CARROLLTON, TX, US	\$270,380
2	Daniel Lowery	PETER PENDER, AR, US	\$167,230
3	Michael Sanders	Russellville, AR, US	\$123,430
4	Jack Miller	San Antonio, TX, US	\$92,352
5	Mark Burford	SHREVEPORT, LA, US	\$69,968
6	Derek Browning	Austin, TX, US	\$53,675
7	William Nguyen	Houston, TX, US	\$41,679
8	Justin Gardenhire	PONCA CITY, OK, US	\$32,771
9	Dejuante Alexander	HOUSTON, TX, US	\$26,069
10	Drew Dumanski	Richardson, TX, US	\$20,989
11	Larry Grayson	ROWLETT, TX, US	\$20,989
12	Hugo Perez	PLANO, TX, US	\$20,989
13	James Matthews	FORT WORTH, TX, US	\$17,104
14	Steven Gurney-Goldman	New York, NY, US	\$17,104
15	Daniel Sindelar	Las Vegas, NV, US	\$17,104
16	Brian Green	CHICO, TX, US	\$14,102
17	Raymond Wright	Denver, CO, US	\$14,102
18	Reginald Roberts	OZARK, MO, US	\$14,102
19	Katherine Bowen	Judson, TX, US	\$11,754
20	Joseph Hall	Spring, TX, US	\$11,754
21	Wilfredo Carrion	Justin, TX, US	\$11,754
22	Bahman Jahanguiri	Plano, TX, US	\$9,904
23	Andrew Robinson	Round Rock, TX, US	\$9,904
24	Bradley Lipsey	FRANKLIN, TN, US	\$9,904
25	Ryan Ramos	AUSTIN, TX, US	\$8,438
26	Enrique Perez	Houston, TX, US	\$8,438
27	John Brown	DALLAS, TX, US	\$8,438
28	Vern Laing	SHERMAN, TX, US	\$7,271
29	Dustin Schoonover	Frisco, TX, US	\$7,271
30	Sylvain Guinepain	Norman, OK, US	\$7,271
31	Clinton Baker	KATY, TX, US	\$6,332
32	Rickie Merritt	ARLINGTON, TX, US	\$6,332
33	Billy Sewell	Flower Mound, TX, US	\$6,332
34	Shirley Saunders	Frisco, TX, US	\$5,578
35	Richard Lee	SAN ANTONIO, TX, US	\$5,578

36	Christopher Walker	Plano, TX, US	\$5,578
37	Hossein Guivehchi	Richardson, TX, US	\$4,966
38	Jesse Maupin	ROCKWALL, TX, US	\$4,966
39	Theodore Gill	Ardmore, OK, US	\$4,966
40	Claude Collins	Broken Bow, OK, US	\$4,966
41	Brian Davis	Oklahoma City, OK, US	\$4,966
42	Terry Sierakowski	Cypress, TX, US	\$4,966
43	Jeffery Foust	BLUE SPRINGS, MO, US	\$4,966
44	Jeffrey Gibralter	ROCKWALL, TX, US	\$4,966
45	Robert Lay	MOORE, OK, US	\$4,966
46	James Coyle	PLANO, TX, US	\$4,468
47	Preston Derden	HOUSTON, TX, US	\$4,468
49	Greg Henry	CHOCTAW, OK, US	\$4,468
50	Dora Coyle	PLANO, TX, US	\$4,468
51	Cristobal Romano	Irving, TX, US	\$4,468
52	Daniel Snowden	ARKANSAS CITY, KS, US	\$4,468
53	Cary Moomjian	Frisco, TX, US	\$4,468
54	Christopher Cokins	Austin, TX, US	\$4,468
55	Daniel Hood	GRAPEVINE, TX, US	\$4,070
56	Mohammad Khan	BOSSIER CITY, LA, US	\$4,070
57	Bob Slezak	OMAHA, NE, US	\$4,070
58	Seth Baker	ALLEN, TX, US	\$4,070
59	Alfred Theriac	Shreveport, LA, US	\$4,070
60	Bronson Tucker	Round Rock, TX, US	\$4,070
61	Earl Merritt	PONDER, TX, US	\$4,070
62	Kunal Patel	FRIENDSWOOD, TX, US	\$4,070
63	Linda McDonald	SUWANEE, GA, US	\$4,070
64	Chris Swan	Los Gatos, CA, US	\$3,742
65	Randal Postlewait	Oklahoma City, OK, US	\$3,742
66	Kevin Haines	Mc Kinney, TX, US	\$3,742
67	Jon Jaworski	Houston, TX, US	\$3,742
68	Christopher Champeaux	Fayetteville, AR, US	\$3,742
69	Randall Newell	Fort Smith, AR, US	\$3,742
70	Jeremy Barber	Krum, TX, US	\$3,742
71	Roy Carter	Lewisville, TX, US	\$3,742
72	Corbin White	New York, NY, US	\$3,742
73	Dwight Sellars	Fort Worth, TX, US	\$3,444
74	Andrew Wilmot	The Colony, TX, US	\$3,444
75	Dennis Myers	FRISCO, TX, US	\$3,444
76	Scott Hanson	AUSTIN, TX, US	\$3,444
77	Justin Wainscott	Austin, TX, US	\$3,444
78	Phillip Hui	SAN ANTONIO, TX, US	\$3,444
79	Allen Mutschler	Rockwall, TX, US	\$3,444
80	Darin Burks	Wylie, TX, US	\$3,444
81	Justin Jones	Rockdale, TX, US	\$3,444
82	Russell Ivy	Carrizo Springs, TX, US	\$3,173
83	Mark Streckfus	Houston, TX, US	\$3,173
84	Eric Juncker	Bethany, OK, US	\$3,173
85	Raymond Jennings	SOUTH ROXANA, IL, US	\$3,173
86	James Jewell	FORT WORTH, TX, US	\$3,173

87	Michael Fletcher	Moore, OK, US	\$3,173
88	Eric Lee	Durant, OK, US	\$3,173
89	John Nies	New Braunfels, TX, US	\$3,173
90	John Nowak	PLANO, TX, US	\$3,173
91	Fred Taylor	North Richland Hills, TX, US	\$2,917
92	Larry Wright	MC QUEENEY, TX, US	\$2,917
93	Carl Lee	Mesquite, TX, US	\$2,917
94	Christopher Walters	Odessa, TX, US	\$2,917
95	Randall McCrary	Bonham, TX, US	\$2,917
96	Michael Hulme	CHICKASHA, OK, US	\$2,917
97	David Holder	Norman, OK, US	\$2,917
98	Rodolfo Beltran	The Woodlands, TX, US	\$2,917
99	Alex Ryan	Arlington, TX, US	\$1,459
100	David Olson	DALLAS, TX, US	\$1,458