

**2013/2014 World Series of Poker Circuit
Season 10
Choctaw Resort and Casino
Durant, OK
Event #1
No-Limit Hold'em
Buy-In: \$300 (+\$65)
Total Entries: 533
Prize Pool: \$159,900
January 9-10, 2014**



Sean Stevens Wins Choctaw Opener

2014 kicks off with 533-player no-limit hold'em tournament, victor earns \$34,380.

Durant, OK (January 10, 2014) — Sean Stevens won the first Circuit of the new year late Friday night at Choctaw Casino Resort in Durant, OK. His win in the \$365 No-Limit Hold'em tournament earned him a smooth \$34,380, but didn't come without a fight.

Stevens matched up against Krzysztof Stybaniewicz, a Polish-born player, heads-up in the year's first finale. What began as a normal bout between proficient pros turned into a marathon for the ages.

First, Stybaniewicz held the lead, then Stevens chipped up, then chips found their way back to Stybaniewicz. Before the rail knew it, the heads-up battle was going on its second hour – then its third, then its fourth. Finally, a victor was crowned during the fifth hour of two-handed play and Stevens consoled his adversary with a firm handshake and a “good game”.

“I generally like to stretch the game out as long as I can,” Stevens told the WSOP. “Me prolonging the game, small playing, pot controlling, keeping the pots small, it allows me to control my own destiny kind of.”

Whether he controlled the outcome of the tournament remains to be decided, but regardless, the 37-year-old Vegas pro broke through for his first ring and took the early lead in the Casino Championship.

Stevens is a member of the old guard of online poker and even earned SuperNova Elite honors on PokerStars prior to Black Friday. He's said life since April 15th, 2011 has been filled with lots of traveling – often a burden for his wife and two children.

“She is very supportive,” Stevens said of his wife who works as a dealer for the WSOP in the summer. “She is in the poker business so she understands the travel and the variance and the stuff that goes with it.”

Support from his wife along with some good old fashioned talent has made for a good 2013/2014 Circuit season for Stevens. His win at Choctaw marks his fourth cash and third final table. Additionally, it moves him over \$50,000 in earnings since September of 2013.

With a loving wife, two beautiful children and five-figure scores piling up, it's hard to believe it wasn't always smooth sailing for Stevens.

"I had a drinking problem and was in and out of rehab in my 20s," he admitted to the WSOP.

Stevens sought help for his problems and turned his life around in time for his 30s. He even went as far as earning a Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) certification and reached out to others in need.

Eventually, it became too hard to split time between his low-paying counselor position and the more-lucrative pastures of the no-limit hold'em felt and Stevens made the decision to forgo exercising his CASAC certification.

Stevens doesn't live the typical fast life of a successful grinder traveling the Circuit. He uses his scores to support his wife and children and provide them with food and a roof over their heads. The road is filled with many temptations, but Stevens is headstrong and has proudly been sober for more than eight years.

Event 1 was the first of 12 gold ring events on the WSOP Circuit schedule at Choctaw Casino Resort. The \$365 No-Limit Hold'em tournament attracted 533 players generating a \$159,900 prize pool. The top 54 players were paid.

Day 1 began Thursday at 12 p.m. and lasted 21 levels. Day 2 began Friday at 2 p.m. with 14 players remaining. The nine-handed final table started at about 4 p.m. and concluded just after 11:30 p.m.

Notes on the Event

- At 533 players, this year's field was more than 10 percent larger than last year's opening \$365 event.
- Thursday's 9 a.m. \$65 mega satellite for Event 1 drew 212 players.
- The Choctaw Resort Circuit series marks the 12th of 22 events scheduled for the 2013/2014 season.

The player who accumulates the most overall points during Choctaw Casino Resort's twelve combined gold ring tournaments earns the title Casino Champion and receives automatic entry into the WSOP National Championship to take place at Caesars Atlantic City this spring.

All players who cash in ring events receive points that apply toward the Casino Champion's race and the season-long race to claim one of 50 at-large National Championship bids awarded to the top point earners throughout the season. More information on the points system is available on WSOP.com.

Here is the list of gold ring winners from Choctaw Casino Resort:

EVENT #1: Sean Stevens defeated 533 players (\$365 NLH) for \$34,380

With the first tournament wrapped, 11 more ring events remain at Choctaw Casino Resort.

For more information about the World Series of Poker Circuit, be sure to follow us on Twitter @WSOP or check out WSOP.com.

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