



## 2015 WSOP OFFICIAL REPORT

### CHRISTIAN PHAM WINS NO-LIMIT DEUCE-TO-SEVEN LOWBALL EVENT

Minnesota Poker Pro Accidentally Signs Up for the Wrong Tournament, Wins Gold Bracelet Three Days Later

Former Champions Huck Seed, Robert Mizrachi, Frank Kassela No Match for 2-7 Rookie

### MEET THE LATEST WSOP GOLD BRACELET CHAMPION

Name: Christian Pham

Birthplace: Saigon, South Vietnam (USA)

Age: 40

Current Residence: St. Paul, MN (USA)

Marital Status: Single

Children: 2

Profession: Professional Poker Player

Number of WSOP Cashes: 4

Number of WSOP Final Table Appearances: 1

Number of WSOP Gold Bracelet Victories (with this tournament): 1

Best Previous WSOP Finish: 11<sup>th</sup> (2014)

Total WSOP Earnings: \$133,683 (plus \$240,162 on WSOP Circuit)

Personal Facts: Pham won a WSOP Circuit gold ring in the Main Event at Caesars Palace in 2013, which was his first series-related cash.

Christian Pham Pham made the best mistake of his life.

Three days earlier here at the 2015 World Series of Poker, Pham stepped up to the registration window at the Rio in Las Vegas and plucked down \$1,500 in cash, thinking he was registering for the next day's No-Limit Hold'em tournament. Unfortunately – or fortunately, as things turned out – he had the wrong event number in mind. Pham was placed into the No-Limit Deuce-to-Seven Lowball Draw tournament, a game he'd never played before.

Unaware of the error, Pham took his seat at the beginning of the tournament and then watched in horror as cards were dealt out in a different way than he was expecting. Pham had no idea what was going on, or what to do.

“They had started dealing already, so I couldn't do anything,” Pham explained later. “If they had not started dealing, I would have told the floorman and asked to be unregistered.”

Faced with no other alternative, Pham sat and watched. He folded most of his hands early on as he picked up more information about good starting hands and how to play. Pham proved to be a prodigal student. He paid attention to the finer details and nearly 12 hours after sitting down at a table and playing a poker game he'd never seen before, Pham ended the first day as chip leader.

“I'd played lots of poker before, but not this game,” Pham said. “I guess I learned fast.”

Indeed, he did.

After Day Two, Pham was still the chip leader.

After Day Three, he was a gold bracelet winner.

Pham won the \$1,500 buy-in Deuce-to-Seven Lowball Draw tournament, which was the 23<sup>rd</sup> gold bracelet even on the 2015 WSOP schedule. The Vietnamese-born poker pro now living in St. Paul, MN collected \$81,314 in prize money. This marked his third occasion to cash at the 2015 series, making not just his first time to play the game a memorable occasion, but his third time a charm.

In fact, Pham's two previous cashes took place in tourneys with huge fields. He finished in the top .1 percent (note the decimal) in the famed The Colossus event (53<sup>rd</sup> place out of 22,374 entrants) and then ended up in 215<sup>th</sup> place in the Millionaire Maker played just a week later. As the WSOP entered its third big weekend, Pham did more than just cash in this event, topping a considerably smaller but equally as determined field of 219 players on the road to a personal milestone and memorable victory.

The 40-year-old former delivery driver-turned professional poker player dominated play much of the way, particularly during the final two days when he enjoyed a significant chip advantage during both sessions. Only 20 percent of the field returned for the second day of action, and Pham continued to swat away opponents like flies on a hot summer night, until action was suspended until the third and final day.

Pham came into the three-handed finale in command of the lead, facing two tough opponents -- Daniel Ospina and Matthew Smith. Shortly after play began, Smith was eliminated, leaving Pham and Ospina to battle for the gold bracelet.

The heads-up match lasted nearly two hours, although Pham's position never appeared to be in serious jeopardy. During most of the final stages, Pham enjoyed at least a 2 to 1 chips advantage. However, runner up Ospina put up a good fight. Ospina, who enjoys both Canadian and Columbian residency (and currently lives in Peru), hoped to become the first winner at this year's series from South America, but came up just short.

When asked if he plans to play in more Deuce-to-Seven Lowball events, Pham appeared to be a converted man.

"We don't have this game in Minnesota (where Pham lives)," he said. "I learned the game at the table. I was figuring out what to do as I went along, and I also got lots of good cards. That helped, too.

"Now, I love this game," Pham said.

With Pham atop the money pyramid, the official order of finish was as follows:

**Second Place:** Daniel Ospina, an international player from Canada, Columbia, and Peru, finished as the runner up. The 27-year-old poker pro padded his poker bankroll with a \$50,260 consolation prize. Ospina now has 10 WSOP cashes and more than \$300,000 in winnings.

**Third Place:** Matthew Smith, a 33-year-old poker pro and fantasy sports specialist from Tampa, FL finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. His 12<sup>th</sup> WSOP career cash was worth \$33,163. Smith is known for winning the first "Millionaire Maker" competition held at DraftKings.

**Fourth Place:** Andrey Zhigalov took fourth place in what was his second time to cash at the WSOP. The Russian poker player earned \$22,634.

**Fifth Place:** The 1996 world poker champion Huck Seed finished 5<sup>th</sup>, which paid \$15,852. Seed was aiming for what would have been his fifth gold bracelet and first win since 2010, but he failed to challenge Pham for the lead at any point. Seed, from Las Vegas, now has 51 WSOP cashes and in excess of \$3.1 million in earnings at the series.

**Sixth Place:** Aleksandr Denisov was one of two Russians at the final table. The Muscovite took 6<sup>th</sup> place, paying \$11,385.

**Seventh Place:** Mike Leah, from Toronto (Canada) finished 7<sup>th</sup>. This was his 39<sup>th</sup> career cash, and the \$8,381 he collected places him just shy of \$1 million in career winnings. Leah won a gold bracelet at last year's WSOP Asia-Pacific event, in the High Roller Championship. He also owns two WSOP Circuit gold rings.

**Eighth Place:** David Matthews rounded out the final table with an 8<sup>th</sup>-place finish. The pharmacist from Winchester, VA pocketed \$6,320.

**OTHER IN-THE-MONEY FINISHERS:**

Other players who cashed in this event aside from those who made the final table included – Robert Mizrachi (9<sup>th</sup>) and Frank Kassela (14<sup>th</sup>).

2014 WSOP November Nine finalist Jorryt van Hoof finished 10<sup>th</sup>.

**FUN FACTS:**

The field included 216 males and 3 females.

The average age of participants was 39 years, slightly higher than the WSOP tournament average.

**EVENT DIRECT LINKS:**

For this event's results, visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/results.asp?grid=1136&tid=14223>

For Christian Pham's official player profile page, visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/players/playerprofile.asp?playerID=182352>

For the Live Reporting Log for this event, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/updates.asp?grid=1136&tid=14223>

For photos from this event, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/photos.asp?grid=1136&tid=14223>

For official winner photo, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/pdfs/reports/14223-winner-photo.jpg>

For the live stream archive of this event, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/videos/?vcat=23>

*(Note: Will appear 48 hours after event concludes)*

*Written by Nolan Dalla (WSOP Media Staff)*