



## 2015 WSOP OFFICIAL REPORT

**EVENT #48:** \$1,500 buy-in Seven-Card Stud

**ENTRIES:** 237

**PRIZE POOL:** \$441,450

**FIRST PLACE PRIZE:** \$112,591

**PLACES PAID:** 40

**DATES:** June 23-25, 2015

### **Eli Elezra Wins His Third Career Gold Bracelet**

Israeli-Born Poker Pro Triumphs in Seven-Card Stud Event at 2015 WSOP

Poker Classic Held at WSOP Each Year since 1973 Crowns another Legend

### **MEET THE LATEST WSOP GOLD BRACELET CHAMPION**

Name: Eli Elezra

Birthplace: Jerusalem (Israel)

Age: 54

Current Residence: Henderson, NV (USA)

Marital Status: Married

Children: 2

Profession: Professional Poker Player

Number of WSOP Cashes: 41

Number of WSOP Final Table Appearances: 12

Number of WSOP Gold Bracelet Victories: 3

Best Previous WSOP Finish: 1<sup>st</sup> (2007, 2013)

Total WSOP Earnings: \$1,293,323

Personal Facts: Prior to immigrating to the U.S., Elezra once served as an officer in the Israeli Army

*[Note: All statistics above include the results of this tournament]*

Eli Elezra won this third career gold bracelet at the World Series of Poker.

The Israeli-born poker pro, now residing in Las Vegas, put on yet another trademark performance in the \$1,500 buy-in Seven-Card Stud event, staging various comebacks on multiple occasions over the course of the three-day tournament to seize one of the most fulfilling victories of his long and illustrious career as a high-stakes cash game pro, albeit with significant tournament achievements, as well.

This year's \$1,500 buy-in Seven-Card Stud at the 2015 World Series of Poker drew 237 entries. The prize pool amounted to \$441,450. Elezra pocketed \$112,591 for first place, but the prize money seemed to be the least important thing about this victory.

Elezra, whose previous victories at the series took place in 2007 and 2013 took special pride in the Seven-Card Stud title, which he views as one of poker's most skillful games. Elezra also noted that since many experienced players participate in the Stud event, defeating such an accomplished field is a matter of special pride.

"This one was really special to me," Elezra said. "It's the game many of us grew up on and it's played by the most experienced players. When I won the Deuce-to-Seven (in 2013) that was very nice, but I really take extra pride in this one because so many well-known players have won it before me."

Seven-Card Stud has been a part of the World Series of Poker since 1973 and a part of the American poker tradition for a lot longer than that.

Dating back to its origins in 5-card stud, which was played in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, its close cousin 7-Card Stud was one of the most popular poker games in the United States, until the Texas Hold'em craze took over a decade ago. The game doesn't draw the big crowds it used to, but it still has its loyal followers – and on this night now one was more dedicated to the game than Elezra.

Elezra's last victory here at the Rio in Las Vegas took place when he came from behind to defeat Daniel Negreanu. Like that memorable finale, Elezra had to come from behind in this event also, particularly during the heads-up phase against Benjamin Lazer, who came in second for the second time in his career. Lazer also took the runner up spot in a tourney played back in 2012, making the gold bracelet an elusive prize.

Meanwhile, Elezra now has three titles to go along with widespread popularity as one of the game's most congenial and well-respected players. Usually talkative with others and commonly joyous at the table, Elezra remains a throwback to an earlier era when poker wasn't about cards as personalities. Like the game he won, also an old guard competition with rich traditions, Elezra used every trick in his bag of experience to outfox his opponents.

Aside from his widely-shown appearances on high-stakes poker shows and achievements at the WSOP, Elezra is a full-time cash game player who participates in some of the biggest cash games in Las Vegas. He's been on television dozens of times and is easily recognizable as one of the table's most talkative players and best storytellers. However, behind the friendly smile is a fiercely competitive player who loves to play and win.

"I really love this game," Elezra said. "Poker has been such a big part of my life. I know so many good people in it. This time, I had my wife with me and my son, who just turned 21. So, having him here with me for the first time when I won make this one really special to me."

Three of the eight players at the final table were former gold bracelet winners -- including Elezra, Allen Cunningham (who finished 3<sup>rd</sup>), and Matt Grapenthein (who finished 8<sup>th</sup>).

Following Elezra's finish in the top spot, the descending order of results was as follows:

**Second Place:** Benjamin Lazar (Kingston, NY) -- \$69,532

**Third Place:** Allen Cunningham (Las Vegas, NV) -- \$44,846

**Fourth Place:** Gylbert Drolet (St. Nicolas, QB – Canada) -- \$32,495

**Fifth Place:** Kenn Wittock (Gilbert, AZ) -- \$23,891

**Sixth Place:** Byron Ziebell (Hales Corners, WI) -- \$17,821

**Seventh Place:** Jean "Prince" Gaspard (Evanston, IL) -- \$13,486

**Eighth Place:** Matt Grapenthien (Chicago, IL) -- \$10,352

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

Aside from the final table finishers, other *notable* gold bracelet winning players who cashed included – Eric Buchman (10<sup>th</sup>), Vladimir Shchemelev (14<sup>th</sup>), Barry Greenstein

(16<sup>th</sup>), Brendan Taylor (21<sup>st</sup>), Bill Chen (23<sup>rd</sup>), Perry Friedman (34<sup>th</sup>), and Mike Leah (40<sup>th</sup>).

Tom McCormick, a.k.a. “The Shamrock Kid” cashed in this event, which marks his 51<sup>st</sup> career in-the-money finish. At the WSOP, only Tony “Top Cat” Cousineau has more cashes without a gold bracelet victory.

Linda Kenney-Baden, the famed defense attorney from New York City (defended Phil Spector in murder trial) cashed for the second time in a WSOP event in this tournament.

## **FUN FACTS:**

The gender breakdown of participants was 303 males and 24 females.

The average age of participants was 48 years, older than the customary entrant by about 13 years. In fact, this is the oldest tournament demographic, other than the Seniors Event(s). Players ranged in ages from 21 to 81.

There were players from 19 countries represented.

Ten years ago, Seven-Card Stud was the most popular game in casinos on the East Coast, primarily in big gambling destinations such as Atlantic City and Foxwoods. In fact, SevenCard Stud games outnumbered hold'em games several times over. Some East Coast casinos did not even spread Hold'em, since Seven-Card Stud was the game of choice. But everything changed in 2003, most crediting (or blaming) the cosmic shift on Chris Moneymaker's victory, which instantly created millions of new players curious about No-Limit Hold'em. Seven-Card stud has been steadily declining in popularity since then. However, it remains popular enough to merit inclusion on the WSOP schedule. Its cousin - Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split, a.k.a. Eight-or-Better, is actually more popular now as a tournament game.

Seven-Card Stud made its debut at the 1973 WSOP. “Puggy” Pearson was the very first stud champion.

The Ladies World Poker Championship featured Seven Card Stud during its first 20 years. It switched to No-Limit Hold'em due to the reversing popularity of games.

Six players in WSOP history own two gold bracelets in Seven-Card Stud. They are Johnny Moss, Bones Berland, Marty Sigel, Ted Forrest, Mel Judah, and Rod Pardey Sr.

Two players own three WSOP gold bracelets in Seven-Card Stud – Artie Cobb and Men “the Master” Nguyen. Note: Artie Cobb's fourth gold bracelet came in Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split, which more precisely gives him four wins in Stud-related events.

Other prior Seven-Card Stud winners include two poker legends -- Stu Ungar and Chip Reese.

**EVENT DIRECT LINKS:**

For this event's results, visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/results.asp?grid=1136&tid=14248>

For Eli Elezra's official player profile page, visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/players/playerprofile.asp?playerID=682>

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

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/updates.asp?grid=1136&tid=14248>

For photos from this event, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/photos.asp?grid=1136&tid=14248>

For official winner photo, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/pdfs/reports/14248-winner-photo.jpg>

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

<http://www.wsop.com/videos/?vcat=48>

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

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