

2015/2016 World Series of Poker Circuit

Season 12

Harrah's Atlantic City

Atlantic City, NJ

Event #8

No-Limit Hold'em Six Max

Buy-In: \$300 (+\$65)

Total Entries: 165

Prize Pool: \$49,500

March 22-23, 2016



Joe Rodriguez Wins First Gold Ring and \$13,860

Long island pro stages impressive comeback during marathon heads-up battle

Atlantic City, NJ (March 23, 2016) — Joe Rodriguez is the champion of Event #8 at Harrah's Atlantic City, defeating a field of 165 entries to win his first gold ring. In addition to the jewelry, Rodriguez earned the top prize of \$13,860 and 50 points toward the race for seats in the WSOP Global Casino Championship.

The champ is a 26-year-old pro from Long Island, and he's been playing poker full time for about two years. "My friend introduced me to the game when I was 19, and I thought it was stupid at first," he said. "After playing for a little bit, though, I found out there's a lot more to it. It's a hard game."

It certainly can be. Rodriguez's luck ran afoul midway through Day 1 when a nasty two-outer knocked him back down to starting stack. He proceeded to bluff off half of his remaining chips a couple orbits later, dropping all the way down to 4,500 chips. Things turned around in the second half of the day, though, and by the time the field was reduced to six players, Rodriguez was second in chips and breathing down the neck of the leader.

The final table began on Tuesday afternoon, and Rodriguez's strategy played out well. "I just watched everyone take each other out," he said. Just over an hour after play began, Rodriguez was heads up with DJ MacKinnon for the ring, facing a significant chip disadvantage. MacKinnon was in a familiar spot too, two seasons removed from a runner-up finish in the same six-max event right here at Harrah's.

"Against a player like DJ?" Rodriguez shook his head. "I didn't think I ever really had a chance. I just knew that I had to keep going. It took me a while to figure him out. At first, I thought he was really, really tight, but I just had to adjust to him heads up."

Early in the duel, Rodriguez found a lucky double with ace-eight against ace-king, drawing nearly even and setting the tone for what would be a grueling heads-up match. Nearly five hours later, they were still battling, having traded the chip lead back and forth several times.

As is so often the case in tournament poker, it all came down to flip, with Rodriguez holding ace-king and MacKinnon pocket tens. An ace on the turn all but ended MacKinnon's hopes for his second gold ring, and a safe river card secured Rodriguez's win.

Event #8 was the eighth of 12 gold ring events on the WSOP Circuit schedule at Harrah's Atlantic City. The \$365 six-max event drew a field of 165 entries, generating a prizepool worth \$49,500. The final 18 players finished in the money.

The tournament began at 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 22, and play was suspended with nine players remaining in the middle of Level 19. Day 2 began at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 23, and the last hand was dealt around 8:00 p.m.

The player who accumulates the most overall points during Harrah's Atlantic City's 12 ring events earns the title of Casino Champion and receives automatic entry into the WSOP Global Casino Championship. Additionally, all players who cash in ring events earn points that apply toward the season-long race to claim one of the limited at-large bids. More information on the points system is available on WSOP.com.

All rings at Harrah's Atlantic City are furnished by Jostens, the official ring supplier of the 2015-2016 WSOP Circuit season.

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