



2016 WSOP OFFICIAL REPORT

JOHNNIE CRAIG WINS 2016 SENIORS WSOP CHAMPIONSHIP

Texan collects \$538,204 top prize in Event #27

Military retiree and Afghan and Iraqi veteran rakes in biggest pot of his life

2016 Seniors Championship draws largest field in history – 4,499 entries!

Movie producer Jamshid Lotfi finishes as runner up

MEET THE LATEST WSOP GOLD BRACELET CHAMPION

Name: Johnnie Craig

Birthplace: Galena Park, TX

Age: 54

Current Residence: Baytown, TX

Marital Status: Married

Children: 1

Profession: Restaurant Owner / Caterer

Number of WSOP Cashes: 2

Number of WSOP Final Table Appearances: 1

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

Best Previous WSOP Finish: 140th (2014)

Total WSOP Earnings: \$541,708

Personal Facts: Served multiple tours in Afghanistan and Iraq

Winner's Quote:

"I kept my head down during the final table. I was concentrating so much on the hands that I didn't realize how many chips I had until one time when I looked up, and then looked around the table, and I found out I had the chip lead!"

Johnnie Craig, 54, made history on Monday afternoon by winning the largest seniors poker tournament in history.

A whopping 4,499 players flooded into Rio in Las Vegas for this highly-anticipated annual poker competition open to all poker players age 50 and up. Attendance broke the all-time record which had been set in 2014 when 4,425 entrants established the previous high mark. The \$1,000 buy-in No-Limit Hold'em Seniors No-Limit Hold'em Championship has been one of the fastest-growing events on the schedule for several years.

The massive field was whittled down to a champion over four days and three nights and concluded on the ESPN main stage. Craig, from Baytown, TX collected \$538,204 in prize money, making this the biggest win of his career.

"I can't even describe this feeling – it's amazing," an elated Craig said afterward. "I had the feeling I was going to win, and it worked out."

Craig is a business owner from Baytown, TX near Houston. He owns and operates a restaurant and also does catering, including running a few snow-cone stands. Prior to working at his own business, Craig served 25 years in the U.S. military. He did multiple tours of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Craig considers himself mostly a recreational player. He plays at home with friends, so he's never experienced anything of this magnitude before. Craig has entered four WSOP events, cashing in two. Now, he also has a gold bracelet and more than half a million dollars in prize money – which can buy lots of snow-cones.

The senior's tournament was extended to an unscheduled fourth day due to the record field size. Day Three was dominated by Wesley Chong, from Reno, NV who was the chip leader much of the way until play became shorter handed.

Craig won his victory by coming out on top at a final table which included mostly amateur players, although many had previous WSOP experience.

"I felt really good coming into the final table. I was fourth in chips," Craig recalled. "I lost a pretty big hand off the bat, but I was still in the middle of the pack. From that point on, I decided I wasn't going to make any big moves unless I had a really big hand. I started to chip away and got the chip lead, then once I did that I began to apply pressure."

The ultimate moment of triumph came when Craig scooped the final pot of the tournament, holding a pair of pocket fours against Jamshid Lotfi, from Timonium, MD who finished as the runner up. As a consolation prize, Lotfi also collected the biggest poker prize of his life, amounting to \$332,413.

As for what accounted for his victory, Craig recalled reading a number of poker books and then attending a few poker boot camps, which are instructional in nature.

"Those got me here, the boot camps made all the difference in the world," Craig said. "They add years of experience to your play. I mean years of experience. Without that, I never would have made this final table."

This tourney attracted 4,499 entrants which created a prize pool totaling \$4,049,100. The top 675 finishers collected prize money.

The Seniors No-Limit Hold'em Championship was shepherded by poker legend "Oklahoma" Johnny Hale, who has been the event's grand patriarch since its inception. He opened the tournament on Friday, June 17th with the usual verbal fanfare and honorarium for many poker greats. The tournament concluded on Monday, June 20th.

Aside from the winner, here's a brief report of the other top finishers who made the final table:

Second Place: Jamshid Lotfi, from Timonium, MD finished as the runner up. The Iranian-born movie producer (he's produced 20 movies) cashed for the first time ever in a WSOP event. He pocketed \$332,413 in prize money.

Third Place: Roger Sippl, from Woodside, CA, came in third in what was his third time to reach the money in a WSOP event. He also cashed in the Seniors Championship in 2013. Sippl collected the biggest poker win of his WSOP career, which amounted to \$245,389. Sippl is a published poet and novelist. He's also successfully taken three companies public.

Fourth Place: Abe Somerville, from Sierra Madre has two cashes at the WSOP and both are in in the Seniors Championship, back to back. In 2015, Somerville finished in 82nd place out of more than 4,100 players. This year, he did even better, coming in 4th out of nearly 4,500 opponents. Somerville, from Sierra Madre, CA collected \$182,536 in prize money.

Fifth Place: Wesley Chong, from Reno, NV cashed for the second time in a WSOP event, after finishing in-the-money in the 2014 Main Event Championship (481st). Chong's highest finish ever paid \$136,829.

Sixth Place: Paul Runge, from La Pine, OR racked up his first-ever cash at the WSOP. Sixth place paid \$103,366.

Seventh Place: Eugene Solomon, from Ft. Meyers, FL came in seventh place in his first-ever cash at the WSOP. Solomon collected a payout totaling \$78,699.

Eighth Place: Mike Lisanti, from Winnipeg, MB (Canada) was the lone non-American among the final nine. In his fourth time to cash at the WSOP, Lisanti raked in \$60,392. He made a final table in another WSOP event back in 2008, when he finished ninth.

Ninth Place: Alan Cutler, from Chicago, IL works as a CPA and now has \$46,713 to account for after coming in ninth place. Cutler, making his seventh WSOP cash made his second final table appearance. He also won a WSOP Circuit gold ring in 2013.

This was the 27th official event on this year's schedule. This leaves 42 gold bracelet events still to go at the 2016 WSOP.

OTHER NOTABLE IN-THE MONEY FINISHERS:

Peter Vilandos, a three-time gold bracelet winner (1995, 2009, 2011), finished in 10th place. He now has nearly \$2.5 million in lifetime WSOP earnings.

Toto Leonidas, a gold bracelet winner (2003), finished in 12th place.

Fred Berger, a gold bracelet winner (2002), finished in 45th place.

Among the other gold bracelet winners who cashed in this event beyond the top-100 were – "Gentleman" John Gale, Louis Asmo, Randy Holland, Ken "Teach" Aldridge, Barbara Enright, Billy Baxter, Jay Heimowitz, Gary Gibbs, Steve Zolotow,

Robert Varkonyi, the 2002 world poker champion, cashed in 172nd place.

Last year's November Nine finalist Neil Blumenfield, finished in-the-money.

FUN FACTS:

The ages of participants ranged from 50 to 95. The eldest player in the field was Herman Moonves.

The breakdown of player nationalities for this event was 4,068 Americans and 431 players from elsewhere. The top five nations represented was the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and Germany.

The breakdown of participants by gender was 93.6 percent males and 6.4 percent females.

EVENT DIRECT LINKS:

For this event's official final results (listing all players who finished in-the-money), please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/results.asp?grid=1232&tid=14927>

For Johnnie Craig's official player profile page, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/players/playerprofile.asp?playerID=171651>

For the live reporting logs for this event, please visit:

<http://www.wsop.com/tournaments/updates.asp?grid=1232&tid=14927>

To access licensed images from this all other 2016 WSOP gold bracelet events, please visit:

www.pokerphotoarchive.com

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

<http://www.wsop.com/videos/?vcat=2>

(Note: Will appear 48 hours after event concludes)

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