

2016-17 World Series of Poker Circuit

Season 13

Rio Hotel and Casino

Las Vegas, Nev.

Event #2

No-Limit Hold'em

Buy-In: \$365

Total Entries: 255

Prize Pool: \$76,500

February 20-21, 2017



James Alexander Wins First WSOP Circuit Ring at the Rio

The former cash-game specialist finds redemption after improving his tournament game.

Las Vegas, Nev. (21 February, 2017) — Nearly four years ago, James Alexander was thrust into the poker world's biggest spotlight, playing beneath the bright lights of ESPN cameras with poker's most prestigious prize on the line. It was Day 7 of the World Series of Poker Main Event, and Alexander was, by his own admission, a bit out of his element. Even so, he left with an impressive 19th-place finish, and the self-awareness to know that he performed so well in spite of, not because of, his level of expertise in tournament poker.

Recently, Alexander has dedicated himself to improving this part of his game, and today those efforts were vindicated. He earned his first major tournament victory at the WSOP Circuit at the Rio Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas when he won Event #2: \$365 No-Limit Hold'em. He earned his first Circuit ring an \$18,744.

After his victory sank in, Alexander reflected on the road that brought him to this point: "I've played poker for a long time. I have a lot of good friends who play poker. I never played tournaments at all. It was always cash games. To be honest, I didn't know anything about tournaments. So I kind of got lucky in 2013 [in the WSOP Main Event]. I had no tournament experience and I looked like such a donk on tv. And my friends have given me enough shit for enough years, that this summer I thought, 'you know, I'm going to learn tournaments. I'm gonna really give it a shot.' So this summer I got six cashes [at the WSOP], and a couple final tables. I learned so much."

Alexander decided to put that knowledge to good use, and recently started playing Circuit events. This is only the third Circuit tournament he's entered, and he already has a ring for his trophy case.

At times, it looked like he was going to come up just short. When heads-up play began, he was at a significant chip disadvantage to Paul Hendee, and at one point was down about 6-1. But he clawed back, and Hendee eventually had to settle for second place. "It was kind of bittersweet that we ended up playing heads," Alexander said. "There was no doubt, we were the two guys who wanted it the most. I feel for him."

Also finishing in the money were Circuit regulars Jon Lactaen (16th place), Joshua Evans (18th), Marshall White (23rd), and Kindah Sakkal (27th).

Event #2 was the third event to play to completion at the WSOP Circuit at the Rio. The \$365 event drew a field of 255 players, generating a prizepool worth \$76,500. The final 27 players finished in the money. Full results are available on WSOP.com.

The tournament began at noon on Monday, February 20. The final day began at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 21, and the last hand was dealt around 8:10 p.m.

After this event, Nate Bandy holds the lead in the Casino Champion race. The player who accumulates the most overall points during the 12 ring events at the Rio 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. Bandy has 50 points. Two other players have 50 points, but Bandy holds the tie-breaker (money earned). More information on the points system is available on WSOP.com.

Here are the winners so far at the Rio:

EVENT #1: \$365 No-Limit Hold'em Re-entry – Nate Bandy bested a field of 1,498 players for \$75,364.

EVENT #2: \$365 No-Limit Hold'em – James Alexander bested a field of 255 players for \$18,744.

EVENT #3: \$365 Mixed No-Limit Hold'em / Pot-Limit Omaha – Mordechai Kirschenbaum bested a field of 180 players for \$15,124.

All rings at the Rio are furnished by Jostens, the official ring supplier of the 2016-17 WSOP Circuit season.

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