

2016/2017 World Series of Poker Circuit

Season 13

Horseshoe Baltimore

Baltimore, Md.

Event #9

The Main Event

Buy-In: \$1,500 (+\$175)

Total Entries: 449

Prize Pool: \$673,500

May 5-8, 2017



Mike Cordell Dominates Horseshoe Baltimore Main Event

Bracelet winner from Arkansas picks up nearly \$150k, third WSOP Circuit ring

BALTIMORE, Md. (May 9, 2017) — In what was a commanding performance down the stretch, Mike Cordell took down the WSOP Circuit Horseshoe Baltimore Main Event on Monday evening. Already a two-time winner on the Circuit, Cordell outlasted a field of 449 entries to collect the top prize of \$148,141 and his third gold ring. He also punched his ticket to the season-ending Global Casino Championship to be held in August.

Cordell is a 46-year-old professional poker player from Little Rock, Arkansas. He grew up shooting pool in his local bars, and one of them happened to have a little poker game running in the back room. It was there that he was introduced to the game for the first time, though he readily admits he was no good at all to begin with.

“Of course, I got my brains beat in,” Cordell said of his early sessions. “So I started reading some books and learning more. It’s a progression. It just takes time; you have to keep playing.” And keep playing, he did.

When he came of age, Cordell took his first trip to Tunica to play in a real brick-and-mortar poker game, and he eventually started splashing around in a few tournaments in 2002, too. He ended up parlaying a couple satellite wins into significant tournament results, including a \$50k score early in 2005.

As he started to find little bits of success, Cordell convinced himself to take a break from his job as a truck driver to see if he could make it as a poker pro. The rest of the story is still being written, but the first few chapters are a pretty good read, so far. “I’ve been broke a few times, but I ain’t worked since then,” he said, flashing just a hint of a gambler’s smile.

Cordell matched that previous-best result with another \$50k score a couple years later, but he had yet to break through in a real, defining way. “I was cashing in some events,” he said, “But I wasn’t really putting in enough time get wins.”

Part of the issue was that he just didn't *have* much time to grind the Circuit. Cordell's father passed away in 2010, and he took a step back from the game to look after his mother, who'd been blind for Mike's whole life. Without a job and without the time to play much poker, things were tough for a while.

Cordell still managed to find a few isolated opportunities to sneak away for his fix, though, including planning a visit to the 2016 World Series of Poker. But in the days leading up to the series' opening event, his mother passed away, and her only son was forced to plan for a funeral instead of a flight.

"I had the trip scheduled, though," he remembered. "And I'm grieving about it, but she wouldn't want me to just mope around the house expecting her to be there."

It's hard to imagine playing focused poker with that kind of emotional weight on one's shoulders, but Cordell went ahead and took the trip to Sin City, as much for the distraction as anything else, it seems. Less than two weeks after his mother's funeral, he was nine players away from a gold bracelet at the final table of the Series' 10th event, the \$1,500 six-max.

"She was there with me the whole way," Cordell said of his mother. "I just had this peace about me."

At the end of the day, he defeated Pierre Neuville in the heads-up match to score the bracelet and almost \$350,000 in cash. The breakthrough victory came with tears of both joy and sorrow for Cordell. Metaphorical tears, at least. The big, stoic man typically shows very little emotion of any sort, but he did manage to crack a little bit of a smile as he posed for his most recent set of winner's photos in Baltimore.

"I mean, I won the tournament, so it feels good," he began, flatly. He seemed to sense that the question was still lingering half-answered, so he completed the thought. "I know I don't show it, but I'm ecstatic." And then the smile came.

The path to victory was a relatively smooth one for Cordell this time. Surviving Day 1 is the first hurdle of a WSOP Circuit Main Event, and he did so with a smallish stack of 43,500 chips. Day 2 is "moving day", and Cordell did just that, too. And Day 3 is when the closers thrive, and boy, did Cordell ever fill that role, too.

Maurice Hawkins, the WSOP Circuit's all-time winningest player, had control of most of the Day 2 action, but Cordell began to nip at his heels as the field shrunk to three tables. By the time it was at two tables, Cordell had leapfrogged into the top spot, and he really didn't relinquish the lead from there on out. He was a freight train down the stretch, in fact.

When the final nine players took their seats at the final table, Cordell had twice as many chips as the second-place stack of Hawkins. When the night ended with six players remaining, Hawkins wasn't among them anymore, and Cordell had more than half the total chips in play — that is to say, more than the other five players had combined.

Day 3 was much more of the same, with Cordell enjoying a relatively easy day with few causes for concern. “I’ve got all the chips,” he said in his postgame interview. “It’s tough to be scared of anybody when you’ve got all the chips.”

Chips are great to have, obviously, but pocket aces help, too. Cordell found them during six-handed play, eliminating Josh Vizcarra and his pocket fours as the first casualties of Day 3. Harrah’s Cherokee Main Event Champion Van Truong fell in fifth place shortly thereafter, and Cordell eliminated Rob Garrett in fourth place to extend his chip lead over the pack.

Three-handed play was an ICM dream for the eventual champ. While Alex Queen and Jeremy Stein basically battled to avoid a third-place finish, Cordell relentlessly whittled away at their stacks until both were in push/fold territory.

“When we got three-handed, they just let me run over them pretty much,” he said. “And, of course, I got lucky on the last hand.”

More on that last hand in a moment, but Cordell actually had a chance to end the tournament during three-handed play, calling a shove and a re-shove to put both opponents at risk with his middling jack-seven offsuit. He flopped a jack and the only flush draw of the three, but Queen ended up winning the main pot when his king-queen turned a king and Cordell could not improve. Queen tripled up, and Cordell won the side pot to eliminate Stein in third place.

Queen is an accomplished tournament pro in his own right, and he put up the best fight he could with his short stack. It took just 12 hands for Cordell to collect the rest of the chips, though, sealing the victory in fitting fashion by cracking Queen’s pocket aces with king-jack. He calls it lucky.

A man of fairly few words, Cordell was predictably succinct in describing his emotions after the win: “It’s great when it runs that way, you know. Feels good to run good.”

The Main Event was the ninth of 12 gold ring events on the WSOP Circuit schedule at Horseshoe Baltimore. The \$1,675 no-limit hold'em event attracted 449 entries, creating a prizepool worth \$673,500. The final 45 players finished in the money.

The tournament began with two starting flights on Friday, May 5 and Saturday, May 6. Day 1A drew 199 entries and advanced 31 players, and Day 1B drew 250 entries and advanced 50 players. Both flights began at 11 a.m. and logged 15 levels of play.

The combined Day 2 restarted with 81 players on Sunday, May 7 at 12 p.m. The money bubble burst during Level 18, and play concluded for the night with six players remaining at the end of Level 25. Day 3 began Monday, May 8 at 12 p.m., and the tournament concluded before 5 p.m.

The final table was reached during Level 23 with 8,000/16,000 blinds and a 2,000 ante. Here were the seating assignments, chip counts, and stack sizes in big blinds:

Seat 1: Alex Queen	1,180,000	74 bb
Seat 2: Josh Vizcarra	340,000	21 bb
Seat 3: Jeremy Stein	760,000	48 bb
Seat 4: Ryan Tamanini	245,000	15 bb
Seat 5: Van Truong	925,000	73 bb
Seat 6: Maurice Hawkins	1,046,000	65 bb
Seat 7: Richie Smith	1,450,000	91 bb
Seat 8: Rob Garrett	855,000	53 bb
Seat 9: Mike Cordell	2,460,000	154 bb

Final Table Results

1st place: Mike Cordell (\$148,171)

Hometown: Little Rock, AK

WSOP earnings: \$380,078 (1 bracelet)

WSOP Circuit earnings: \$204,679 (3 rings)

2nd place: Alex Queen (\$91,562)

Hometown: Bethlehem, PA

WSOP earnings: \$409,880

WSOP Circuit earnings: \$172,817

3rd place: Jeremy Stein (\$66,905)

Hometown: Washington D.C.

WSOP earnings: \$25,832

WSOP Circuit earnings: \$106,931 (1 ring)

4th place: Rob Garrett (\$49,677)

Hometown: Canton, MA

WSOP earnings: \$0

WSOP Circuit earnings: \$74,528

5th place: Van Truong (\$37,460)

Hometown: Raleigh, NC

WSOP earnings: \$0

WSOP Circuit earnings: \$356,106 (1 ring)

6th place: Josh Vizcarra (\$28,671)

Hometown: Elgin, TX

WSOP earnings: \$34,662

WSOP Circuit earnings: \$171,130 (1 ring)

7th place: Maurice Hawkins (\$22,266)

Hometown: West Palm Beach, FL

WSOP earnings: \$323,311

WSOP Circuit earnings: \$1,225,905 (10 rings)

8th place: Richie Smith (\$17,538)

Hometown: Edgewater, MD

WSOP earnings: \$0

WSOP Circuit earnings: \$18,222

9th place: Ryan Tamanini (\$14,009)

Hometown: Dundalk, MD

WSOP earnings: \$0

WSOP Circuit earnings: \$23,941

Other ring winners who finished in the money include Dennis Phillips (42nd place), Daniel Pearlman (38th), Ryan Jones (36th), Alan Cutler (31st), James Dorrance (26th), James Sloat (24th), John Richards (14th), and David Aker (12th), along with bracelet winners Alexander Ziskin (37th) and Justin Liberto (29th).

Here is the list of gold ring winners from Horseshoe Baltimore:

#	Event	Entries	Winner	Earnings
1	\$365 Monster Stack	411	Nick Verderamo	\$ 27,126
2	\$365 No-Limit Hold'em (30-minute levels)	291	Dennis Tsai	\$ 20,950
3	\$365 Pot-Limit Omaha	138	John Richards	\$ 11,589
4	\$365 No-Limit Hold'em Re-Entry	657	Cory Smith	\$ 40,414
5	\$365 No-Limit Hold'em	165	Roland Israelashvili	\$ 13,364
6	\$365 No-Limit Hold'em Six-Max	186	George Rowe	\$ 15,348
7	\$580 No-Limit Hold'em	154	Trevor Foley	\$ 20,789
8	\$365 No-Limit Hold'em (30-minute levels)	140	Robert Hankins	\$ 11,759
9	\$1,675 Main Event	449	Mike Cordell	\$ 148,171
10	\$365 No-Limit Hold'em Turbo	169	Daniel Pearlman	\$ 13,689
11	\$365 No-Limit Hold'em	179	Nikhil Kumar	\$ 14,500
12	\$365 No-Limit Hold'em Turbo Double Stack	185	Ronald McDonald	\$ 14,429

With four cashes, two final table appearances, and one win, Dennis Tsai won the title of Casino Champion for Horseshoe Baltimore. The 30-year-old local finance professional took some time off work to grind the series, and his decision turned out to be quite a profitable one. In addition to the ring for Event #2, Tsai earned \$30,726 and accumulated 80 points to win the race in a tiebreaker over John Richards. His performance earns him a seat into the season-ending WSOP Global Casino Championship in August.

All players who cashed in ring events at Horseshoe Baltimore earned points that apply toward the season-long race to claim one of the limited at-large Global Casino Championship bids, awarded to the top point earners throughout the season. More information on the points system is available on WSOP.com.

All rings at Horseshoe Baltimore are furnished by Jostens, the official ring supplier of the 2016/2017 WSOP Circuit season.

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