



## WSOP CIRCUIT 2017-18 MAIN EVENT REPORT

Circuit Stop:	Thunder Valley	Date:	22 January 2018
Event:	No-Limit Hold'em	Entries:	599
Buy-in:	\$1,675	Prizepool:	\$898,500

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### **HAFIZ KHAN WINS 1<sup>ST</sup> CIRCUIT RING CLOSE TO HOME**

*Online poker legend wins first career Circuit ring after two-year hiatus*

Hafiz Khan has taken down the second ever World Series of Poker Circuit Main Event at Thunder Valley for \$188,686 and the humility and passion was ever-present. The 43-year-old Stockton, California native has been away from the poker scene for two years before making his return, and it seems he has had a good start these last 12 months. Khan booked his first official Circuit win and added a shiny new ring to his mantle, bringing his live recorded earnings to \$2.6 million. He also earned himself a seat into the 2018 Global Casino Championship for a shot at a WSOP gold bracelet.

Roland Shen came in to heads-up play with a 10-to-1 chip lead but Khan was resilient and made a comeback for the ages. The pair went back and forth, but the combination of Khan's experience and some luck turned things around. It was a comeback to a win that Khan believed was meant to be. "I kinda had a feeling. I've been telling my friends that I'm going to win this tournament. I felt good and I was running good."

Khan was the chip leader to end Day 1B and ended up leading overall. He spent the majority of Day 2 as the chip leader as well, knocking players out left, right and center and doubling his chip-leading stack in just the first level. "People have been telling me all week while I'm walking in the halls. They just grab me and tell me I'm gonna win" said Khan. When asked how he felt about winning a tournament after a long break he said, "It feels really good. I always go to the World Series every summer - I haven't really had much success, so it feels good to win a tournament, and I ran good."

Khan is also well-known by his online handle 'hafizzle' and has had much success coming up in the poker world over the last 10 years. Before Black Friday, Khan was arguably one of

the most successful online poker players to surface. His online earnings are well above \$3 million, based on listed results attached to his online handles, and of course his live earnings speak volumes. His first ever live tournament came in 2008 in the Bahamas after he won a satellite into an \$8,000 major event. He ended up going heads-up with Elky Gropellier and chopped it for \$1.4 million, eventually falling in second place. He won a couple of more bigger tournaments later in his career, and boasts multiple six-figure scores.

Coming into the final table, Khan was third in chips and felt he had an edge, along with the confidence based on his past experience. "My strategy was to play solid - make sure I have it. Online you get to play so many more tournaments. When I first started (to play poker) I used to play online a lot. It's hard to get heads-up in a live tournament, but online you can do it every day. I think that helps out. Compared to other players I probably had more experience short-handed." Khan attributes his success to growing his game by starting out as an online player. Although he clearly worked on his game over the years, he also appreciates how good he has had it. "I always had a lot of success and it's always been easy for me. I guess it got tougher the last couple years. I didn't even know how to grind really, because it was always so easy for me."

Khan has a degree in Information Technology and has been thinking about going back to where it all started. "I was having, like, a mid-life, spiritual consciousness change. I was thinking about getting a real job, going back into tech. I was thinking about that but I just couldn't wrap my mind around that. I just couldn't do a nine-to-five, going back to that, and waking up at six in the morning again."

When asked what he has been doing during his two-year hiatus, Khan explained he's just been taking it easy. "I hang out a lot with my friends, my girlfriend. I like to travel a bit, watch Netflix" he laughed. He continued that the break was necessary since he has spent the last 10 years playing poker. "I have a small group of friends and they've been really positive" Khan proudly stated.

Future plans for Khan include more Circuit stops, as this was officially the first Main Event he has ever played, and the World Series again this summer in Las Vegas. "I didn't even know the Circuit events get this big. They're good. They're fun. They're not all, like, European pros and the Germans", laughed Khan. "The people are friendly" he continued.

"I missed the game, so I finally decided I'm a poker player. That's what I'm good at. I'm back."

Roland Shen finished in second place and pocketed an impressive \$116,706 for his biggest career score. Monster Stack champion Michael Scott (5th - \$47,647) also had a big week, booking his biggest score in the Monster Stack and then more than doubling that in the Main Event.

Final Table Results:

1st: Hafiz Khan - \$188,686  
2nd: Roland Shen - \$116,686  
3rd: Gregory Guth - \$85,340  
4th: Elisa Nakagawa - \$63,326  
5th: Michael Scott - \$47,647  
6th: John Chase - \$36,344  
7th: Steven Michaelis - \$28,105  
8th: Vijay Ramani - \$22,031  
9th: Josh Prager - \$17,503

## **MEET THE LATEST WSOP CIRCUIT RING WINNER**

Name: Hafiz Khan  
Nationality: USA  
Birthplace: Stockton, CA  
Current Residence: Stockton, CA

Age: 43  
Profession: Poker player  
WSOP Bracelets: 0  
Previous WSOP Circuit Rings: 0

Personal Facts: "Too much poker"

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