



## WSOP CIRCUIT 2017-18 EVENT REPORT

Circuit Stop:	Choctaw Casino and Resort	Date:	12 January 2018
(Durant, OK)		Entries:	168
Event:	No-Limit Hold'em	Prizepool:	\$168,000
Buy-in:	\$1,125		

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### **MICHAEL SANDERS WINS \$1,125 NO-LIMIT HOLD'EM**

*Sanders earns third ring and \$45,361 after battling heads-up with his close friend and bracelet winner, Jonathan Hilton*

Michael Sanders added a third World Series of Poker Circuit ring to his trophy case in the early hours of Friday morning. He defeated 168 entries to win \$45,361, while adding another ring to his trophy case in the \$1,125 no-limit hold'em event.

Playing heads-up for a Circuit ring and a mid five-figure score is generally an intense, stressful environment, but during Sanders' heads-up battle, the atmosphere more closely resembled a home game. Sanders navigated a tough final table to get heads-up one of his close friends – bracelet winner Jonathan Hilton.

With several of mutual friends on the rail, the two casually shared some drinks and shared laughs as they battled for the title. In the end, Sanders' pocket nines bested Hilton's pocket fours to send the title Sanders' way.

The two have been friends for about a decade and while it may be awkward to deny a close friend a Circuit ring, Sanders held the opposite opinion.

"I think it's more comfortable," said Sanders. "For sure. We were just having drinks and firing away."

This isn't the first time the two have battled with a lot of equity on the line. They battled for a big pot during poker's most prestigious event last summer at the Rio.

"We actually played a monster pot in last year's Main Event late on Day 2," said the Arkansas poker pro. It was like a 200K pot. I had nine-six and he had five-six on a six-six-

ten flop. We got it in for a 200K pot, over 100 big blinds and I was just like ‘Chop it up, whatever.’ A seven came on the turn and I was like ‘Oh, I got some winners,’ and then a five came on the river. He felt so bad. We talked about it so much. It was just a weird thing. I still ended up cashing and he ended up getting ESPN time out of it, so it was all okay.”

Sanders has seven-figures in career tournament earnings and is second all-time on the Arkansas money list. The win only adds to his long list of poker accomplishments and also helped pull him out of a downswing.

“Well, I definitely bricked like 87 bullets of tournaments in the last week, so that feels better to not bust a tournament, yeah, for sure,” said Sanders. “That’s a good feeling after I just couldn’t win over and over, but I guess you never know.”

His original schedule was to play the first couple of events through the first weekend of the series and then head back to Arkansas. He was able to take care of some family obligations, which allowed him to stay through the duration of the series, win a third ring and take some momentum into the Circuit’s marquee event.

“At this point, I’m just trying to take any opportunity I can to play live tournaments,” said Sanders. “I haven’t gotten many lately, so I’m happy that I got to come here and play two weeks. I was going to go home in the middle of the week, so I’m glad I stayed. It worked out and I’ll play the main [event] tomorrow and hope to win.

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## MEET THE LATEST WSOP CIRCUIT RING WINNER

Name: Michael Sanders

Age: 32

Nationality: American

Profession: Poker Player

Birthplace: Seattle, WA

WSOP Bracelets: 0

Current Residence: Russellville, AR

Previous WSOP Circuit Rings: 2

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## DIRECT LINKS

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