

WSOP Weekend Wrap-up: The amateurs strike back

The story line for much of this year's World Series of Poker has been the manner in which the professional players have flexed their muscles. But after seeing the pros capture nine of the first 10 bracelets that were up for grabs, the amateurs made a bit of a comeback over the weekend.

South Carolina native Jimmy Schultz earned his first WSOP bracelet with a victory in Event #12, a USD 1,500 Limit Hold'em Tournament, while Phillip Tom of Las Vegas also earned his first bracelet by outlasting a short field of 360 players in the USD 5,000 No-Limit Hold'em Shootout Event #11.

Schultz probably had the most heartwarming story of the World Series thus far. Next week will mark the one-year anniversary of a devastating fire at a Super Sofa warehouse in Charleston, S.C. where nine firefighters lost their lives, the worst death toll for U.S. firefighters since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Schultz, a 37-year-old mortgage broker who now lives in Ohio, wore a Charleston Fire Department hat and shirt throughout the tournament. When he clinched his victory and first-place prize of USD 257,936 he immediately announced that he would donate 25 percent of his winnings to the Charleston Fallen Firefighters Fund. One of the firefighters who perished in the blaze – Capt. Louis Mulkey – was a friend of Schultz and the two used to play poker regularly.

„I am 100 percent privileged to [make the donation] for Louis and the other folks and all of their families,“ said Schultz, who was playing in his first WSOP event. „I can't wait to get back home because this was all for them. This was for a lot of other people rather than just me. It's not about me. It's all

about them. I said that coming in. I prayed about it and I am just thrilled to death that I can do something for my community to make it a little bit better for those folks in Charleston County.“

As for Tom, the 55-year-old financial advisor and investor uses a Benjamin Franklin silver half dollar as a card protector, minted in 1953, the year he was born. Tom, who collected USD 477,990, lives next door to the former owners of Binion's Horseshoe, which owned the WSOP through 2003. Oscar Goodman, Mayor of Las Vegas, also lives a few houses away.

Rivera outlasts a robust field to win USD 10K Mixed Championship

The first „Mixed Games World Champion“ was crowned over the weekend and his name is Anthony Rivera, a 22-year-old professional from Las Vegas. Rivera, who was wearing a „Friends Don't Let Friends Play No-Limit“ T-shirt, took home first place in the USD 10,000 Mixed Games World Championship, which was the first major poker tournament in history to include eight games.

To no one's surprise the event attracted a stellar field. No less than 76 of the 192 entrants were former WSOP gold bracelet winners with four of them appearing at the final table (Sammy Farha, Eli Elezra, James Mackey, and Jeff Madsen). Several other bracelet winners cashed in the event, including Gus Hansen (10th), Tom Schneider (12th), Johnny Chan (13th), Lee Watkinson (14th) and Doyle Brunson (21st). The total prize pool amounted to more than USD 1.8 million and Rivera cashed in for USD 483,688.

„This was a very tough field, but it did not intimidate me,“ said Rivera, who is a frequent high stakes player throughout Vegas, but was making just his second WSOP appearance. „I am used to playing with many of these players. I know many of them pretty well. I know I can play all the games well enough

to win.“

The runner up was James Mackey, who won last year's USD 5,000 buy-in No-Limit Hold'em championship. At the time, he was the third youngest gold bracelet winner in WSOP history. Matt Glantz, the chip leader heading into Day 3, took third. This was his sixth time to cash at the WSOP. He was the runner up last year in the USD 3,000 buy-in No-Limit Hold'em event.

Most Candid Quote of the Weekend Award

The one was a no-brainer. It goes to the father of Matt Keikoan, a 40-year-old from San Rafael, Calif. who dropped out of San Francisco State University to begin playing poker as a professional. When asked about his son's decision to become a college drop out in order to pursue a career in poker, Mr. Keikoan had this to say: „We were thoroughly pissed off because he left college and wanted to become a professional poker player. But, it turned out well.“

Considering his son had just cashed in for the seventh time in a World Series event and added USD 550,529 to his career winnings by capturing the USD 2,000 No-Limit Hold'em Event #7, Mr. Keikoan's comment could also go down as the Understatement of the Weekend as well.

Keikoan needed to come from behind as Theo Tran, who dominated play during much of the tournament, held nearly twice as many chips as the player in second place heading into the final table. Despite the huge chip lead, the fearless Tran ended up as the fourth-place finisher after steaming off his entire stack late at the final table when he went to the felt in less than a dozen hands after having nearly 60 percent of the total chips in play. In turn, the final table concluded in a lightning-fast 6 hours and 20 minutes.

As a result of his win, Keikoan, who won USD 154,194 with his 63rd place finish at the 2007 Main Event, can expect to see the stakes in his regular golf game with Erick Lindgren

increase. The two new WSOP bracelet holders have squared off on the links for several years.

„We would play for all the money in our pockets until the sun went down,“ added Lindgren, who, along with Gavin Smith, was seen cheering on Keikoan at the final table. „Sometimes we would be hitting golf balls when it was dark. Now, we can play a little higher.“

Funniest Quote of the Weekend

„If they gave away gold bracelets for finishing high but not winning, I'd be Erik Seidel.“ – Canadian Greg Mueller after finishing second in the USD 5,000 Event #11. Mueller has gone deep in many major tournaments in his career but has yet to win one.

The definition of a ,bad beat‘

This one comes from Event #7 and involves Tran. The 23-year-old Las Vegas resident was heads-up in a pot with Scott Montgomery with 24 players left when he was dealt A-A against Montgomery's 5-5. Incredibly, Montgomery flopped quad-fives, yet still ended up losing the hand.

The flop came 5-5-4 with two spades. The turn brought the deuce of spades. The river delivered the three-of-spades, giving Tran a straight flush (A-2-3-4-5) with the ace-of-spades in his hand. Perhaps most incredible of all – Montgomery did not go broke on the hand. Tran bet the river for a modest number of chips, and Montgomery could only make the call (instead of raising), despite having four-of-a-kind.

Women celebs go bust

There were 1,190 entries in to the USD 1,000 Ladies No-Limit Hold'em Championship and some of the biggest names in the field didn't stick around very long.

Jennifer Tilly, who won the event in 2005, was eliminated in

the first hour of play and was joined on the rail by fellow actresses Mimi Rogers, Camryn Manheim and Cheryl Hines as well as country singer Mindy McCready.

Heading into Monday's action, 61 players remained. Shavonne Mitchell (94,000), Alice Talbot (92,700) and Roslyn Quarto (86,100) held the top three spots on the chip leaderboard.

Moving up the charts

Some of the most familiar names from World Series past continue to make headway in the history books.

Marco Traniello, the Italian-born pro and husband of Jennifer Harman now has more WSOP cashes than any other poker player since 2005 with 16 (except for Humberto Brenes who shares the same number) after placing 53rd in Event #12.

Also in that event, three-time WSOP gold bracelet winner Dewey Tomko finished 68th marking his 42nd-career WSOP cash. He now ranks 11th on the all-time list, one behind „Miami John“ Cernuto. Eight-time gold bracelet winner Erik Seidel finished in the money in Event #11, giving him his 47th-career WSOP cash. He now ranks seventh on the all-time list in that category.

,Dude, by yourself a stud book'

Other than the Ladies tournament, three other events had started but were not yet decided as action got underway on Monday.

The most prominent is #14, a USD 10,000 World Championship Seven Card Stud event. The eight-person final table has been set and it's a tight race with the top five players all within 95,000 chips of each other.

David Oppenheim is the leader with 508,000. Siedel is within striking distance, sitting in the seventh position with 273,000 chips. Phil Ivey was on the bubble and placed ninth,

which was good for USD 37,130, while Daniel Negreanu (who recommended to Jordan Rich that he „invest USD 27 and buy some kind of stud book“ in this video blog) took home USD 33,417 with an 11th place finish.