

End of Day One – WSOP 2003 –

I crashed after the dinner break, and I'm not even playing. This WSOP tournament will be so incredibly grueling that white flags will be raised at every stage. 839 players kicked off the 2003 WSOP officially, which means there will be 63 places paid and a 2.5 USD million paycheck awarded to the winner. This doesn't represent an increase from last year, it's a darn explosion. The World Series of Poker has changed from a marathon to a double triathlon. Will a good player win this year? Well, if not, he or she sure will be by the time it's finished.



If ever there was a standing ovation needed, it is for the Binion's tournament staff after Day 1 of the World Series of Poker. The biggest standing joke in the halls was what was the over under on what time the tournament would start. I mean the scheduled start time was 1pm, but with 839 runners and a line to sign up that stretched out the door, players in the know were talking about showing up at 2pm, just to see how long it would be from there. Imagine the surprise when the tournament clock started ticking down at ten minutes to one with all the dealers in their places and sitting there with decks in their hands and chips apportioned to every seat. The buzz went like wildfire. „What do you mean they're dealing at 1pm, whether the players are in their seats are not? They can't start on time!“ Well, they did. And it went without a hitch. Tables broke on schedule all day long, and to my knowledge there was not one decision taken that made any player feel like they received anything but a square shake. The news on the grapevine is that Binion's might decide to

play Day 3 all the way down to 45 players. This might be necessary to ensure the tournament being able to finish on Friday, and to keep Day 4 from going all the way through to Day 5. It'll be a long Day 3, however, and I'll take the over on 4am. The amphetamine salesmen on Fremont street had better order in some extra supplies.

Day 1 results are in. Phil Hellmuth and Phil Ivey leap out of the top 20 list like unstoppable freight trains. Phil was down very low on chips for most of the day, his head hung over and not a peep from the king of gab. But late in the day is the bewitching hour always, and those who know this tournament inside and out, guys who excel in five day tournaments, the sweetest sounds to ever hit their ears are those two words that are announced after the dinner break and for the next four hours. Running Antes. Running antes mean that each player has to ante in addition to posting the blinds, and the effect is that it makes the pots bigger to start out, every pot is all of the sudden worth stealing, and guys like Phil can power it through. Hellmuth finished the day with a smile behind his gold rimmed glasses, and I look for the mouth to loosen up on Day 2, when you'll probably be able to hear him from across the room. Phil Ivey goes tournament favorite, in my book. I know there's 384 players still left in, but if you want to make Ivey more than a 25-1 shot, I'm buying. King of the steal? Ivey just robs them all day long. I make it a 90% certainty that table 63 will be chosen as the TV table, where Ivey will get to mix it up all day long with the likes of Howard Lederer and Daniel Negreanu.

Both the Nguyens, Scotty and Men, have chips that they won't give up anytime soon. Scotty is a former world champion, and Men Nguyen has been knocking the door forever and is already having a ripping World Series. Don't overlook Marcel Luske, the flying Dutchman. He may be unfamiliar to Americans, but in Europe he's been hotter than a firecracker, and as a guy who plays a lot of hands and is always on the steal, Marcel is a

very dangerous chip accumulator. The best player from the Internet this year may be the previously unknown Priyanand Hallan, better known as simply Pre. Pre qualified on Ladbrokes.com to play in this series, and he's shown his mettle online as a most dangerous English player who is never scared to make the second raise for all his chips without a thing in his hand. Unfortunately, though, Pre picked an inauspicious time to start playing live games.

I watched Annie Duke for a while yesterday, at a table near the downstairs door. She sits on her feet and is high at the table while flat calling a sunglasses checker shirt goatee wearing big boy on the turn for a dime. When Annie leads out on the river for a medium size bet, your man just looks hot like a firecracker, and folds. Annie and Lucy Rokach were at the same table for a good part of Day 1 with twelve angry young men. Anyone who feels threatened by women at the table is in big trouble because they may be the two toughest female no limit Hold'em players in the history of the game, and don't believe in lying down easy.

Over? This one has just begun. It's anyone's ballgame, and the cream is rising, always rising.

written by Jesse May