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AUGUST 2017

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Matthew Vignali

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**MSPT VENETIAN
CHAMP WINS
WSOP BRACELET**

**MSPT PLAYERS
FIND SUMMER
SUCCESS**

**CANTERBURY
PARK'S
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**BLACK FRIDAY LEADS
BRIAN BERTHIAUME
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Letter from the Editor

FORMER CANTERBURY PARK FALL POKER CLASSIC LADIES CHAMP PASSES

BY CHAD HOLLOWAY

Poker is a great game. It gives people of all ages from a wide variety of backgrounds to meet and compete. Comradery is one of the biggest reasons people love to play. Unfortunately, players come and go, oftentimes without explanation.

Be it going broke, taking a break from the game, or simply moving on, sometimes players simply disappear. Other times, news reaches us that a player has been dealt their last hand. On June 19, we received word such was the case for Mary Ellen Hampton, 78, who passed away peacefully surrounded by her family.

Hampton, who hailed from La Crosse, Wisconsin, was an avid traveler, family woman, and a huge poker fan. In fact, we've even written about her in the past back when this publication was known as Minnesota Poker Magazine. That's because in 2010 she topped a field of 213 players to win the Canterbury Park Fall Poker Classic Event #7: \$300 Ladies Event for \$3,056.

A year later, Hampton traveled out to Las Vegas and placed 14th out of 187 entries in the Caesars Palace Winter Poker Classic \$130 No-Limit Hold'em, good for \$363. A regular at Ho-Chunk Gaming Wisconsin Dells, Hampton was often found giving players a run for their money at the \$1-\$2 no-limit tables. She was certainly no slouch on the felt.

Our condolences go out to Hampton's family and friends. As her obituary read:

"See you in heaven honey, get the poker table ready."



Mary Ellen Hampton



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Our Mission

MSPT Magazine is a monthly magazine dedicated to serving poker players and gaming facilities through MSPT news, results, tournament schedules, player profiles and professional tips. Coupled with our website, msptpoker.com, we are the Nation's #1 Poker Tour.

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MSPT Player Summer Success

MSPT PLAYERS FIND SUCCESS OUT WEST

BY CHAD HOLLOWAY

Over the summer, the 2017 World Series of Poker captured the attention of the poker world. Several MSPT regulars found success not only at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino, but all across Las Vegas.

For instance, Minnesota poker pro Kou Vang bested a 450-player field to win the Venetian DeepStack Extravaganza Event #59: \$1,100 NLH Bounty \$200K GTD for \$68,300. Unlike many tournaments, there was no chop and Vang won the tournament outright against runner-up Tanveer Dhanjal, who took home \$42,228.

Meanwhile, the Venetian \$600 Seniors Event—a tournament that drew 1,313 entrants and created a \$680,134 prize pool—saw both a former champ and a MSPT regular make the final table. It was there that MSPT Season 6 Canterbury Park champ Dan “DQ” Hendrickson and MSPT Season 5 Meskwaki runner-up Mike Holm were a part of a ten-way deal, with the former receiving \$35,000 for finishing eighth and the latter \$36,784 for seventh.

Also, finding success at Venetian was MSPT Season 7 Potawatomi champ Travis Lauson, who topped a field of 588 entries to win DeepStacks Event #91: \$600 NLH \$200K GTD for \$58,176. It was a welcomed win



Kou Vang

for the Wisconsinite that came one day after he busted the WSOP Main Event.

In the second-to-last hand of the tournament, which took place in Level 30 (50,000/100,000/10,000), German Zaga raised to 275,000 on the button and then called when Lauson moved all in for 5.75 million from big blind. Zaga was out in front with the $A\heartsuit 6\heartsuit$ against Lauson's $K\clubsuit Q\clubsuit$, but not after the flop came down $Q\clubsuit 9\heartsuit 3\heartsuit$. Neither the turn nor river made a difference, and Zaga fell in the very next hand when his $6\heartsuit 3\clubsuit$ failed to get there against Lauson's $10\heartsuit 10\heartsuit$.

“I busted out of the Main and looked at the schedule of what else was left to play in town before I left,” Lauson told MSPT Magazine. “My flight home was supposed to leave

Las Vegas Wins

Wednesday, but I got into the tourney knowing I would have to change my flight if I made it to Day 2. Needless to say, I had to change my flight.”

On June 30, MSPT Season 5 Majestic Star champ Ken Baime topped a field of 254 players to win the Wynn Summer Classic \$360 buy-in No-Limit Hold'em \$50K GTD for \$16,397 after a three-way deal. Baime, who hails from Glenview, Illinois, took to social media to explain how he did it.

“My best comeback ever,” he wrote. “Down to 1.5 big blinds. Ran it back up. With 15 left, all in pre with AK and lose to KQ in large pot. Down to three big blinds. Ran it back up. With six left, down to four big blinds after lose big pot. Turn those four blinds into the chip lead when some of the guys suggested chopping, which Wynn facilitates wonderfully. Took between second and first money and the trophy.”

2016 MSPT Venetian champ Thomas Boivin came close to winning a WSOP gold bracelet on two separate occasions this summer. First, he finished runner-up in Event #43: \$1,500 No-Limit Hold'em Shootout for \$159,273. A week later, he placed third in Event #56: \$5,000 No-Limit Hold'em for \$264,306.

Another player who earned a second-place finish was Mike “East Coast Rossy” Ross, who finished runner-up to Ron Ware in Event #21: \$1,500 Eight Game Mix 6-Handed. While Ross didn't leave with the bracelet, he did receive a career-high \$89,948 payday.

A week or so later, TJ Ryan, the only player in tour history to win both MSPT Main Event and Regional titles, finished 7th out of 6,716 players in the WSOP Event #47: \$1,500 Monster Stack for \$163,087, nearly matching his prior lifetime earnings of \$169,860.

In the 2017 WSOP Main Event, a tournament that attracted 7,221 players, bracelet winner Christian Pham began Day 7 as the chip leader among the final 27 players. Unfortunately for him, the cards turned on him and he busted in 19th place



Ken Baime



Travis Lauson

for \$263,532, thus becoming the last Midwest player—he hails from Minnesota—in the field.

Another Minnesota player who made a deep run was Chris “Fox” Wallace, who placed 32nd for \$214,913. Other MSPT regulars to cash were Brandon Meyers (42nd for \$176,399), MSPT Poker Bowl runner-up Ankush Mandavia (126th for \$53,247), MSPT Season 7 FireKeepers champ Aaron Massey (209th for \$46,096), Phil Mader (273rd for \$40,181), and #MSPT100 champ Jason Ramos (1,000th for \$15,000).

Also, having a nice summer at the WSOP was Wisconsin's Rick Syverud, who notched four cashes totaling \$15,139. That included a summer best \$5,298 for placing 303rd in the Millionaire Maker.

Finally, Joseph Konstan of St. Paul, Minnesota topped a field of 202 entries to win the Golden Nugget Grand Poker Series Event #45: \$250 Big O for \$7,801.

Congratulations to all the Midwest players who found success in Las Vegas this summer! May your run good continue with us on Season 8 of the MSPT. 🍀

WHY SETTLE FOR TEQUILA?

STEP UP TO KIMO SABE



TRIPLE AWARD WINNER





MSPT
MID-STATES POKER TOUR

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Standings as of July 22, 2017

| Rank | Player Name | Points |
|------|-----------------|--------|
| 1 | Keith Heine | 2,200 |
| 2 | Mike Shanahan | 2,000 |
| | Nadar Kakhmazov | 2,000 |
| 4 | Jason Bender | 1,933 |
| 5 | Brayden Gazlay | 1,800 |
| 6 | Aaron Massey | 1,700 |
| | Maury Solano | 1,700 |
| | Jordan Young | 1,700 |
| 9 | Osama Aweida | 1,617 |
| 10 | Frank Lucarelli | 1,600 |
| | Jacob Balsiger | 1,600 |
| 12 | Jason Ramos | 1,550 |
| 13 | Mark Wadekamper | 1,500 |
| | George Dietz | 1,500 |
| | Chris Moon | 1,500 |
| | Ankush Mandavia | 1,500 |
| | Fred Garcia | 1,500 |
| | Ari Engel | 1,500 |
| | Justin Rice | 1,500 |
| | Chris ORourke | 1,500 |
| 21 | Jermaine Gerlin | 1,450 |
| 22 | Chris Meyers | 1,400 |
| | Luke Bohnen | 1,400 |
| | Wen Zhang | 1,400 |
| 25 | Jonathan Kim | 1,350 |



Keith Heine - Hillsboro, MO

◆All players who cash in a MSPT event are ranked for Player of the Year points. At the end of the calendar year, the top-ranked player will receive POY recognition, four MSPT \$1,100 Main Event buy-ins, \$250 toward a satellite or Main Event at every MSPT event the following season (max \$4,250), as well as a \$1,100 Main Event seat with \$400 travel to Venetian Mid-Season Championship - over \$10,000 value

◆MSPT Player of the Year points are awarded based on the total prizepool of the tournament

◆For more POY information, including how points are awarded, and to follow the race in 2017, visit www.msptpoker.com/pages/poy



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Thursday, August 10

Grand Casino Hinckley

Registration: 5 – 8:59 p.m.

Tournament: 5 – 9 p.m.

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Grand Casino Hinckley

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WSOP Gold Bracelet

MSPT VENETIAN CHAMP NADAR KAKHMAZOV WINS WSOP GOLD BRACELET

BY MSPT POKER STAFF

Earlier this summer, Russia's Nadar Kakhmazov topped a field of 3,273 entrants to win the MSPT Venetian for \$395,888 after a heads-up deal with Brayden Gazlay. The tournament not only proved to be one of the biggest no-limit hold'em events of the summer, but also the largest ever for both the MSPT and The Venetian.

Less than three weeks later, the 29-year-old Kakhmazov was at it again by winning a gold bracelet at the 2017 World Series of Poker (WSOP). It came when he bested a field of 574 players to win Event #36: \$5,000 No-Limit Hold'em 6-Handed for \$580,338.

"I am very happy," Kakhmazov told WSOP officials after the win. "I have wanted to do this for three years, but every time I lose two big pots, deep in the tournament. I played [some] other events, but had not [won] much for prizes, but now it's good this year."

Indeed, 2017 has proved to be a life-changing year for Kakhmazov. Prior to May, he had just \$162,144 in tournament earnings. His heater began in May when he placed eighth in the PokerStars Championship Sochi Main Event for \$62,743, which gave him some cash to travel to Vegas. The rest, as they say, is history!

In his WSOP win, Kakhmazov began heads-up play with a 3:1 chip lead against Chris "Big Huni" Hunichen. In what would be the final hand of the tournament, which took place in Level 30 (50,000/100,000/15,000) on Hand #114 of the final table, Hunichen raised to 225,000 holding the $Q\clubsuit 2\clubsuit$ and Kakhmazov called with the $Q\heartsuit 7\heartsuit$.

When the flop came down $6\heartsuit 10\heartsuit Q\heartsuit$, Kakhmazov checked and Hunichen bet 225,000. Kakhmazov responded with a check-raise to 650,000, Hunichen called, and the dealer burned and turned the $10\clubsuit$. Kakhmazov returned to checking and Hunichen bet 975,000. Kakhmazov then check-raised all in, and Hunichen asked for a count.

"Why you want count?" the PokerNews live updates quotes Kakhmazov as saying. "I have more than you. Want to know what I have? ... If you fold and show, I will show you."



World Series of Poker

Buy-in: \$5,000 ♣ 574 Entrants

| Place | Name | City, State | Prize |
|-------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Nadar Kakhmazov | Moscow, Russia | \$580,338 |
| 2 | Chris Hunichen | Columbia, SC | \$358,677 |
| 3 | Kenny Hallaert | Hansbeke, Belgium | \$238,855 |
| 4 | Sam Soverel | West Palm Beach, FL | \$162,257 |
| 5 | Faraz Jaka | San Jose, CA | \$112,484 |
| 6 | Christian Rudolph | Germany | \$79,611 |

Eventually Hunichen called off the 2.69 million he had behind and was looking for some help to chop the pot. Unfortunately for him, the $6\clubsuit$ paired the board on the river and Kakhmazov's seven kicker played.

Kakhmazov joins Nick Jivkov as the only player with both a MSPT title and WSOP gold bracelet. Jivkov's win came back in 2014 when he topped a field of 426 entrants to take down the MSPT Meskwaki for \$104,974. His bracelet came back in 2012 when he won Event #5: \$1,500 Pot-Limit Hold'em for \$189,818. 🍀

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Event Preview

2017 MSPT INDIANA STATE POKER CHAMPIONSHIP AT TROPICANA EVANSVILLE AUGUST 12-20

BY MSPT POKER STAFF

The MSPT is headed back to Tropicana Evansville August 12-20 for the 2017 Indiana State Poker Championship.

A series of satellites—all \$250 satellites at the venue guarantee 10 Main Event seats—will feed into the \$1,100 buy-in, \$250,000 guaranteed Main Event, which will take place the weekend of Aug. 18-20. The MSPT is primed to pass last year's record 340 entrants for what is sure to be the biggest Indiana State Poker Championship to date.

"Tropicana Evansville is one of the Midwest's hidden gems when it comes to gaming," said MSPT President Bryan Mileski. "It's situated right on the Ohio River, which makes it one of the more scenic stops on the tour. Poker players should definitely check it out this August."

The Main Event will feature two starting flights beginning with Day 1A at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 18. Day 1B will take place at the same time on Saturday, Aug. 19. The surviving players from each flight will then return for Day 2 at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday to play down to a winner.

The MSPT first visited Tropicana Evansville back in 2014, which is when Charlie Dawson topped a field of 225 entrants to win \$60,527. The following year, which was the inaugural Indiana State Poker Championship, Michael O'Neill bested 251 entries to win \$67,746. More recently, Earl Potter overcame a venue record 340 runners to win the title in Season 7 for \$82,450.

Tropicana Evansville is a combination Evansville hotel & riverboat casino owned and operated by Tropicana Entertainment. The property is a \$212 million entertainment complex located on the scenic banks of the Ohio River in southwestern Indiana. It includes a 2,700-passenger riverboat casino featuring over 1,000 slot games and 40 table games, including a dedicated poker room.

That will soon change though as Tropicana Evansville became the first casino in Indiana to be approved to move from a riverboat to a land-based property. That expansion is expected to be completed later this year.

Accommodations include the Tropicana Evansville Hotel with 243 standard rooms and 10 suites and the Le Merigot

boutique hotel with 91 Standard Rooms and five suites.

The Tropicana Evansville Casino has set aside a block of rooms for MSPT players at a fantastic nightly rate - just \$69/night on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday and just \$89/night on Friday/Saturday.

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The property showcases nine dining options, eleven bars and nightclubs and a gift shop. One of the most popular dining options is Cavanaugh's, which serves the finest cuisine paired with sweeping river views—the perfect place for the perfect dining experience. The casual upscale atmosphere of Cavanaugh's is the ideal place to meet friends or clients. Enjoy signature martinis, delicious appetizers or indulge in Cavanaugh's full dinner menu. You can also enjoy live entertainment nightly at Cavanaugh's piano bar.

There's also Max & Erma's, which serves all-American favorites including soups, salads, gourmet burgers, delicious sandwiches and treats, as well as Mama Mia's Italian Restaurant, which features homemade dough pizza by the slice. 🍷



Earl Potter

Event Recap

LOCAL ATTORNEY AND RECREATIONAL PLAYER MATTHEW VIGNALI WINS LARGEST TOURNAMENT IN WISCONSIN STATE HISTORY

BY MSPT POKER STAFF

The MSPT's latest \$350 Regional Event at Potawatomi Hotel & Casino in downtown Milwaukee turned out to be a record-setting affair. A monster 1,658 entrants (421 on Day 1A, 524 1B, and 713 1C) made it the largest poker tournament ever held in Wisconsin.

The previous record was 1,272 entries set by the World Series of Poker Circuit at Potawatomi back in February, though they set it with four flights as opposed to three. The distinction of winning the largest poker tournament in Wisconsin history goes to 47-year-old local attorney and recreational poker player Matthew Vignali, who struck a heads-up deal and instead of taking home the original \$80,648 prize, earned \$70,240 for his performance.

"I'm pretty exhausted but very excited," said Vignali, whose prior best cash was just \$1,299. "I play recreationally, I don't travel the circuit or anything. I just play locally, and I always play in the MSPT and WSOP Circuit when they come to Milwaukee. I'm just a recreational player."

Vignali, who fired two bullets into the tournament, is married with three kids. He said the money came at the perfect time as he just received his son's Marquette University tuition bill.

He started Day 2 with 85,000 and managed to double up on the fourth hand. That helped him make a deep run, but late in the evening he lost two coin flips and was on the verge of elimination. That is when lady luck smiled upon him.

"A couple of times, with the blinds at 60K/120K, I was down to 300K," he explained. "Then I tripled up with king-queen against aces and another hand."

On Day 2, 294 players returned to action, but with only 171 getting paid more than a hundred of them left empty handed. They included Mike Kamenjarin, Day 1A chip leader Bryan Skreens, and reigning MSPT Wisconsin State Poker champ Andy Rubinberg.

Once the money bubble burst, the in-the-money finishes came quick and included former MSPT champ Ken Pates (164th - \$626), MSPT Grand Falls Regional runner-up Jason Bender (102nd - \$819), Day 1C chip leader Michael Castro (40th - \$1,493), 2016 Minnesota Poker Player of the Year Saad Ghanem (37th - \$1,493), and final table bubble boy Bob Van



Matthew Vignali

Syckle (11th - \$6,259).

The final table began with Michael Berry holding an eight-figure stack of 10.5 million while his next closest competitor, Vignali, had less than half that. Still, the attorney was not deterred.

"When I got to the final table I felt pretty relaxed and pretty good," said Vignali. "Things had been swinging my way and I felt like I'd been playing real good all tournament, not making many mistakes. I felt pretty confident actually."

The short-stacked David Papais fell in the first hand of the final table, and before long he was joined on the rail by Jeff Olson, Ken Garbowicz, and Miroslav Semanisin.

It took a while for the next elimination to occur, but it happened when Joan Sandoval, the last woman remaining in the field, got her stack of 3.4 million all in on a 4♦K♣6♠ flop holding the K♥J♠. Unfortunately for her, Day 1B chip leader Alexander Hill held the A♥A♦ and neither the 8♥ turn nor Q♣ river helped her. Sandoval earned \$16,370 in her first-ever MSPT cash.

Potawatomi Casino

Not long after, both Berry and Michael Filippo hit the rail, which set up a heads-up match between Vignali and Hill with the former holding 27 million to the latter's 6 million. It didn't take long for Hill to get it in with the 6♣4♣ and Vignali called with the J♥8♥. Hill ended up making two pair to double, and from there he inched back towards even stacks.



Joan Sandoval

That is when the two agreed to a deal that saw them each lock up \$60,000 and leave \$10,240 on the table to play for. It's worth noting that chops are allowed in MSPT Regional Events, but not in Main Events.

In the first post-deal hand, Vignali jammed the button and Hill called off, a decision he immediately regretted.

Vignali: A♥9♥

Hill: K♦9♦



Potawatomi Casino

Buy-in: \$350 ♣ 1,658 Entrants

| Place | Name | City, State | Prize |
|-------|--------------------|---------------|----------|
| 1 | Matthew Vignali | Kenosha, WI | \$70,240 |
| 2 | Alexander Hill | Madison, WI | \$60,000 |
| 3 | Michael Filippo | Itasca, IL | \$37,555 |
| 4 | Michael Berry | Waterloo, WI | \$28,407 |
| 5 | Alex Crawford | New Lenox, IL | \$21,667 |
| 6 | Joan Sandoval | Green Bay, WI | \$16,370 |
| 7 | Miroslav Semanisin | Baraboo, WI | \$13,000 |
| 8 | Ken Garbowicz | Green Bay, WI | \$10,108 |
| 9 | Jeff Olson | Sussex, WI | \$8,185 |
| 10 | David Papais | Darien, IL | \$6,259 |

Vignali was way out in front, and he took a hammerlock on the hand after the 10♣A♠8♣ flop paired his ace. The 8♠ turn left Hill drawing dead, and he finished runner-up after the J♣ was run out on the river.

The MSPT will return to Potawatomi Casino one final time in Season 8. From November 11-19, the state's premiere gaming venue will play host to the 2017 MSPT Wisconsin State Poker Championship, an \$1,100 buy-in Main Event featuring a \$200,000 guaranteed prize pool. ♠



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MID-STATES POKER TOUR

MSPT EARNINGS

Leaders as of July 22, 2017

| Rank | Player Name | Amount |
|------|--------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Nadar Kakhmazov | \$395,888 |
| 2 | Thomas Boivin | \$352,153 |
| 3 | Carl Carodenuto | \$347,283 |
| 4 | Aaron Massey | \$335,633 |
| 5 | Richard Alsup | \$319,823 |
| 6 | Brayden Gazlay | \$316,782 |
| 7 | Peixin Liu | \$312,352 |
| 8 | Mukul Pahuja | \$304,491 |
| 9 | Blake Bohn | \$284,063 |
| 10 | Jason Zarlenga | \$272,194 |
| 11 | Jeremy Dresch | \$268,671 |
| 12 | Kou Vang | \$237,733 |
| 13 | Angelina Rich | \$234,829 |
| 14 | Mike Shanahan | \$229,029 |
| 15 | Travis Lauson | \$216,934 |
| 16 | Maury Solano | \$209,244 |
| 17 | John Hayes | \$206,648 |
| 18 | Keven Stammen | \$199,635 |
| 19 | Hao "John" Sun | \$199,444 |
| 20 | Andrew Rubinberg | \$198,708 |
| 21 | Thupten Thondup | \$198,015 |
| 22 | Brett Blackwood | \$188,314 |
| 23 | David Gonia | \$184,253 |
| 24 | Mark Sandness | \$181,373 |
| 25 | Keith Heine | \$177,961 |
| 26 | Jonathan Kim | \$176,430 |
| 27 | Matt Kirby | \$176,265 |
| 28 | Nick Jivkov | \$173,155 |
| 29 | Drake Bronk | \$171,889 |
| 30 | Dan Sun | \$170,588 |
| 31 | Bill Rogers | \$170,206 |
| 32 | David Mowery (WI) | \$169,837 |
| 33 | David Lee (TN) | \$166,822 |
| 34 | Rodger Johnson | \$161,260 |
| 35 | Jacob Balsiger | \$157,169 |
| 36 | Ryan Hartmann | \$157,058 |
| 37 | Dan Hendrickson | \$155,192 |
| 38 | Daniel Goepel | \$153,311 |
| 39 | Jason Mirza | \$152,443 |
| 40 | Michael Rudolph | \$147,122 |
| 41 | Josh Reichard | \$143,184 |
| 42 | Harry Tisdale | \$142,637 |
| 43 | Alex Aqel | \$138,385 |
| 44 | Mark Hodge | \$137,549 |
| 45 | Matt Alexander | \$137,222 |
| 46 | Michael Ferrarotti | \$136,868 |
| 47 | Jason Bender | \$135,919 |
| 48 | Jason Seitz | \$135,232 |
| 49 | Nicholas Pupillo | \$135,144 |
| 50 | Phanora Prom | \$134,786 |



Nadar Kakhmazov - Russia

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THU: 8am-3pm

High Hand
\$100/\$50/\$50 Hourly

FRI: 8am-3pm

\$75 Aces Cracked & \$50 Splashed
\$1,500 Maximum Payout

SAT: 8am - 3pm

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Event Preview

MSPT HEADS BACK TO GRAND FALLS CASINO AUGUST 19-27 FOR \$150K GTD MAIN EVENT

BY MSPT POKER STAFF

The MSPT is headed back to Grand Falls Casino in Larchwood, Iowa, located just outside Sioux Falls, South Dakota! From August 19-27, Grand Falls Casino will play host to an \$1,100 buy-in, \$150,000 guaranteed Main Event.

The stop, which requires players be 21 or older to play, will feature a series of \$65 Super Satellites and \$220+\$30+\$10 Satellites. There will also be a \$40 Omaha Hi/Lo Spread Limit bonus tournament at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, August 21.

Then, on Friday, August 25 at 4:00 p.m., Day 1A of the Main Event will get underway. Day 1B will take place at the same time on Saturday, August 26, and then the surviving players from both flights will return on Sunday, August 27 at 11:00 a.m. to battle down to a winner.

“Grand Falls is not only a luxurious property, they offer some of the best amenities on the tour, including a world-class golf course,” said MSPT President Bryan Mileski. “It’s minutes down the road from Sioux Falls, which is home to the popular Falls Park. On top of it all, there’s great poker action to be had.”

The entirety of the Main Event will be live reported in the MSPT’s live blog, which can be found on msptpoker.com once the tournament begins. Simply look for the neon green button

that reads “Live Updates.”

The latest visit marks the sixth time the MSPT has visited the property. The first took place back in 2012 when Dan Sun topped a field of 215 entrants to win \$60,486 and become the MSPT’s first back-to-back champion. Other winners of the MSPT Grand Falls Casino include Josh Smith, who topped a field of 218 to win \$59,221 in August 2013; MSPT Pro Blake Bohn, who outlasted 200 other entrants to win in August 2014 for \$54,607; and Alan Curl, who topped a field of 238 entrants to win it in 2015 for \$64,655.

In Season 7, Fishing Hall of Famer Ted Takasaki topped a field of 187 runners to capture a \$52,360 first-place prize. More recently, the MSPT visited the venue earlier in Season 8 for the first-ever Grand Falls \$350 Regional, which drew 426 entrants and saw Travis Gant emerge victorious to take home \$29,782.

Inspired by the lavish casino resorts of Las Vegas, Grand Falls sets a new standard of entertainment and fun for the Sioux Falls, South Dakota region. The resort’s world-class golf course will be constructed on 155 acres of rolling terrain directly adjacent to the casino. Inside the casino, players will find more than 750 slots machines, 27 gaming tables including blackjack, craps and roulette, and an eight-table poker room.





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Strategy presented by Jonathan Little

JONATHAN LITTLE ANALYZES SCOTTY NGUYEN'S BUSTOUT HAND FROM MSPT VENETIAN

BY CHAD HOLLOWAY

On Day 1C of the MSPT Venetian Main Event, a tournament that attracted 3,273 entrants, the blinds were 500/1,000/100 when a hand broke out between MSPT Season 5 Tropicana Evansville champ Charlie Dawson and 1998 World Series of Poker champ and Poker Hall of Famer Scotty Nguyen.

It began when Dawson (28,000) raised to 2,500 from the button and Nguyen (11,500) just called from the big blind. When the flop came down $9\clubsuit 2\clubsuit 4\clubsuit$, Nguyen led out for 8,000 and left himself 1,000 behind. Dawson responded by moving all in and Nguyen called off his remaining stack.

Nguyen: $J\heartsuit 9\heartsuit$

Dawson: $A\spadesuit 4\heartsuit$

Nguyen was ahead with top pair, but Dawson picked up outs on the $3\heartsuit$ turn. Unfortunately for Nguyen, the $5\clubsuit$ spiked on the river to give Dawson a winning wheel. We caught up with famed poker coach Jonathan Little to get his thoughts on the hand.

MSPT: What are your thoughts on the stop-and-go play? Is it something you employ on a regular basis?

Little: I don't view this as a traditional "stop-and-go" where you call a preflop raise and then lead all in on most boards because I don't think Scotty was planning to shove on any flop. In general, you should use a stop and go when you think your opponent will call your preflop raise every time but will defend poorly against a lead on many flops. In today's game, I don't think many players make overly tight folds on the flop, fearing the worst. As we see in this hand, Dawson made an easy call with middle pair. Based on the pot odds, he should probably call with any pair, any draw, and any two overcards, which will be a large portion of his range. That said, if he thinks Scotty is only pushing when he connects with the board, he can call off much tighter.

Do you like the way Scotty played the hand? Do you support how he played it or do you think he would've been better served to three-bet jam preflop?

Little: Scotty has a tricky stack such that he can't know for



Scotty Nguyen

sure if Dawson plans to call his preflop all in every time or if he will fold some portion of the time. If Scotty can make Dawson fold some portion of the time, he should go all-in. Forcing your opponent to fold hands that have some equity is a significant success. Given the stack sizes, I don't think Scotty can make Dawson fold too often, so pushing with a hand that is likely behind at the moment is not a good idea. Instead, he should call with his decently strong jack-nine suited and see what develops.

It is perfectly fine to call with a wide range of hands from the big blind, especially when there are antes in play and when you are facing a small preflop raise. In fact, you can often profitably defend with almost any two cards from the big blind when you have 15 big blinds with antes in play when facing a min-raise, assuming your plan is to only continue when you flop a hand that should have reasonable equity.

What is the best way, if any, to guard against a stop-and-go play?

Little: If you start with a reasonable range, you will usually flop a decent amount of equity. This allows you to profitably call the stop-and-go with much of your range, negating the potential profitability of the stop-and-go. 🍀

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GET TO KNOW CANTERBURY PARK SHIFT MANAGER & TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR CARIS NORBERG

BY CHAD HOLLOWAY

At Canterbury Park, home to the first-ever MSPT event, few have worked longer and harder than poker shift manager and tournament coordinator Caris Norberg, who has been there since day one.

The oldest of four kids, Norberg grew up in the Minneapolis suburbs and attended Mankato State University where she studied social studies for secondary education. At the time, she wanted to be a high school teacher, but after moving to San Diego she discovered poker.

“There were a few casinos in San Diego area,” she explains. “I was a small stakes gambler already. Blackjack mostly, occasionally slots and bingo. One night we ventured near the poker area and the manager was very engaging and introduced us to the poker games. I learned limit hold’em and hi/lo stud. I was hooked! I loved that the game was like a riddle, always changing, and that you didn’t have to be the best player to play.”

Norberg made friends with those in the casino industry, and in 1998, she decided to deal poker. That led to an opportunity to be part of the Canterbury Card Room opening crew, which ultimately brought her back home.

“At Canterbury, I started as a dealer and became a floor person after a few years,” says Norberg. “As a floor, I was also a tournament director and looked forward to working with Jimmy Sommerfeld every Fall Poker Classic. He was a lot of fun and a great mentor. He let me pick his brain every time I worked with him. Almost immediately tournaments became my passion.”

Nowadays, Norberg supervises the graveyard and day shift poker staffs while coordinating all the tournaments.

“I love this because it gives me such a variety of responsibilities and really keeps me busy,” she says. “On the tournament side of things, I’m basically in charge of all the nuts and bolts. I play a key role in scheduling all the events throughout the year, developing blind structures and buy-ins, and then setting up protocols and programming for the tournament directors and staff. My biggest job is to provide a fun entertaining event for the players and help make the

tournament directors look good.”

According to Norberg, working at one of the Midwest’s premiere cardrooms with a solid staff makes here job enjoyable.

“Our motto is ‘Fun and Games’ and we really encourage our employees to get to know the players by name, build a rapport, and have fun with them,” she explains.

“Also, Canterbury offers such a huge variety of things to do. There’s cash games with limits for everyone, from \$2/\$4 to \$50/\$100, cash comps, tableside food service 24 hours a day, massages while you play, and outlets for phone chargers. There’s also a variety of daily no-limit hold’em tournaments at many different buy-in levels.”

Speaking of tournaments, the MSPT has been a staple at Canterbury Park since 2009, and it’s a favorite among players.

“They love MSPT,” says Norberg. “They love the approachable buy-in for a huge prize pool and a player-friendly blind structure. There are lots of MSPT events around the Midwest within a short drive. You guys have done a really great job branding and promoting.” 🍀



Caris Norberg

Player Profile

BLACK FRIDAY LEADS POKER PRO BRIAN BERTHIAUME TO THE MSPT

BY CHAD HOLLOWAY

If you've ever played a MSPT Main Event and found yourself seated next to a tattooed man with playing cards on his arm, there's a good chance that man is South St. Paul's Brian Berthiaume.

A regular on the MSPT, Berthiaume has four cashes over the last three seasons for a total of \$33,770 in MSPT earnings. That includes one final table appearance when he placed sixth in the Season 6 MSPT Canterbury Park Main Event for \$21,584.

Outside the tour, the 30-year-old Berthiaume, who is married with three kids (Domini, 9; Malia, 8; and Gavin, 4) has two nice scores thus far in 2017. The first came back in January when he finished 15th in a WPTDeepstacks for \$13,293, and the other in April when he took 10th in the Running Aces Spring Poker Classic Main Event for \$8,058.

Berthiaume, who studied business in college, hasn't had a 9-5 job since 2009. For the past eight years, he's been making a living playing poker. We caught up with him to learn a little more about his poker journey.

MSPT: Can you tell us a little about your poker background?

Berthiaume: I started playing poker in 2007 during the online boom. My friend, Matt Clauson, showed me the way. When I was 21, he and I tag teamed a big Sunday tournament on Full Tilt taking fifth out of 4,006 players for \$34K. We basically split the money. He took his and bought a house. I left mine in and built it up to six figures. In 2008, I was ranked in the top 5% and had 9/10 stars. I thought I had it all figured out until Black Friday hit.

What role does poker play in your life now?

Berthiaume: I envision being around the live poker scene for a long time. The GPI only shows me for the last 20 months. I have more cashes than that. Small ones, nothing major. My major wins came online. I basically stopped playing poker from 2011-2015 because of Black Friday. I started playing full time live poker in 2015 because I finally got tired of waiting around for online to be regulated. I'm gonna travel to as many MSPT events until they call me champion, so you'll be seeing me for a long time.

What's the poker scene like in Minnesota?

Berthiaume: I absolutely love playing in Minnesota. The



Brian Berthiaume

MSPT has helped grow the poker community throughout the years. I wish they were here more than four times a year. I'm lucky enough to live less than 45 minutes from two card rooms. Between the two there's always some tournament to look forward to.

The tournament directors do a lot to cater to the players in Minnesota. It's really appreciated because, as I travel more, I've noticed not every TD is nice. The players in those card rooms are studs. I'd rank Minnesota players up there pretty high when it comes to poker. The people atop the Minnesota money list are heavy hitters. 🍵



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