



MSPT

MICHIGAN STATE POKER TOUR

NATION'S #1
POKER TOUR
NOVEMBER 2017



Chris Meyers

WINS LARGEST TOURNAMENT IN MICHIGAN HISTORY FOR \$191,196

JEFF BIRT
WINS MSPT
RUNNING ACES

SEASON 8
FINALE PREVIEW
CANTERBURY PARK

JONATHAN LITTLE
ON RAISE
SIZING

GET TO KNOW
RED BULL
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Main Event**



MSPT
MID-STATES POKER TOUR

UPCOMING EVENTS



Meskwaki Casino
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Oct. 28 - Nov. 5, 2017
**18 or older event

**\$300,000
GUARANTEED!**



Golden Gates Casino
Black Hawk, CO
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**Regional & Main Event

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Wisconsin State Poker Championship
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Canterbury Park
Shakopee, MN
December 1-10, 2017
**18 or older event

**\$200,000
GUARANTEED!**

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with hole cards on MSPTPOKER.com**

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**Management reserves the right to alter or cancel promotion/tournament at any time*

Letter from the Editor

CONGRATS TO DENNIS STEVERMER ON WINNING 2017 FPC MAIN EVENT

BY MSPT POKER STAFF

In early October, Canterbury Park in Shakopee, Minnesota, which played host to the first-ever MSPT event way back in 2009, held its most recent Fall Poker Classic (FPC). The tournament series has grown into one of the Midwest's premiere events, and we wanted to give a shout out to some MSPT regulars who claimed titles.

- Jim Boone prevailed over a 273-entry field to win Event #3: \$235 Seniors (50+) for \$13,053
- Todd Breyfogle bested 203 entries to win Event #8: \$550 NLHE for \$25,596
- Adam Dahlin was last man standing out of 52 entries in the \$2,500 High Roller, good for \$43,857
- MSPT champ Ken Pates topped a field of 174 entries to win Event #12: \$340 NLHE for \$13,281
- Bill Criego of Prior Lake, MN bested 130 entrants to win Event #13: \$550 NLHE for \$16,706
- Tom Robison outlasted a 64-entry field to claim the Event #14: \$235 Limit Hold'em title and \$3,440 first-place prize.
- Tyree Johnson came out on top of a 143-entry field to win Event #15: \$340 NLHE for \$11,117
- St. Paul's Andrew Foss topped a field of 126 entries to win Event #16: \$340 NLHE for \$10,160
- Dennis Stevermer emerged victorious over a 375-entry field to win the Fall Poker Classic Main Event for \$85,477 after a heads-up deal with Todd Melander.

Finally, we want to give a nod to our very own Eric Anderson. The MSPT Event Manager was one of 704 entrants to participate in the Ultimate \$100k Guaranteed NLHE Event, and he ultimately finished runner-up to Alvaro Gordillo for \$11,500.



Eric Anderson



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President and Publisher

Bryan Mileski
Bryan@msptpoker.com

Editor-in-Chief

Chad Holloway
Chad@msptpoker.com

Art Director

Carolyn Borgen
Carolyn@msptpoker.com

Advertising Information

Chad@msptpoker.com

Story Ideas

Chad@msptpoker.com

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

December 2017

GREAT MN FREEZE OUT

January 2018

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February/March 2018

RACEBOOK OPEN DAILY

Event Preview

MSPT SEASON 8 FINALE TO TAKE PLACE AT MINNESOTA'S CANTERBURY PARK DEC. 1-10

BY MSPT POKER STAFF

Every December since 2009, Canterbury Park in Shakopee, Minnesota—a suburb minutes south of the Twin Cities—has hosted a MSPT Main Event. Season 8 is no different as an \$1,100 buy-in, \$200,000 GTD Main Event will be held December 8-10.

A series of satellites will feed into the Season 8 finale, which will mark the last opportunity for players to earn points on the Kimo Sabe Mezcal MSPT Season 8 Player of the Year Leaderboard.

The Main Event will feature two starting flights beginning with Day 1A at 4 p.m. on Friday, December 8. Then, on Saturday, December 9, Day 1B will take place at the same time. The surviving players will then return on Sunday, December 10 to play down to a winner on Day 2.

The final table will be broadcast LIVE (15-minute delay) worldwide on msptpoker.com using RFID technology allowing all viewers to see the hole cards. In addition, the entire Main Event will be live reported in the MSPT live blog.

“Every year, the MSPT Player of the Year race comes down to our season-ending Main Event at Canterbury,” said MSPT President Bryan Mileski. “This year’s race, which will see the winner walk away with a \$10,000 prize package, is as tight as ever, so we’re expecting another exciting finish.”

The MSPT last visited Canterbury Park for a Main Event back in April, which is when Mark Wadekamper topped a field of 475 entries, the largest major tournament in state history, to win \$110,220.

Last December, Jonathan Kim topped a field of 464 entrants—making it the second-largest major poker tournament in state history at the time — to win the title for \$107,659 and close out Season 7. Amazingly, Kim nearly defended his title,

but ultimately finished runner-up to Wadekamper.

In April of 2016, Carl Carodenuto defended his title against a field of 376 entries to win \$90,805. That followed his December 2015 win when he topped a field of 470 entrants to capture a \$116,103 prize.

Other MSPT Canterbury champs from the past include Dan “DQ” Hendrickson (April 2015 for \$106,182), Mike Wilmes (April 2014 for \$108,984), Adam Younis (April 2013 for \$95,328), and inaugural champ John Dragich (2009 for \$34,765).

Canterbury Park Racetrack and Card Casino is Minnesota’s only thoroughbred and quarter horse racing facility. There is also year-round wagering on simulcast horse racing and hosts a variety of other entertainment and special events at its facility.

In addition, Canterbury Park’s Card Casino hosts “unbanked” card games 24 hours a day, seven days a week, offering both poker and table games. The card casino offers year-round tournaments, jackpots, table-side food and beverage service, and the friendliest staff in Minnesota.

Opened in 2000, the Canterbury Card Casino is an integral part of the success of the facility, attracting gaming enthusiasts to Shakopee year-round. Blackjack and other table games are offered with limits ranging from \$5 to \$300. There are 31 poker tables featuring Texas Hold’em, 7-Card Stud, and Omaha Hi-Lo Split with limits from \$2/4 to \$50/100. There are also various bad beat jackpots.

Through popular promotions and big-money tournaments Canterbury’s Card Casino has become a Twin Cities’ gaming destination.

For more information about Canterbury, please visit us at www.canterburypark.com. 🎰



WHY SETTLE FOR TEQUILA?

STEP UP TO KIMO SABE



TRIPLE AWARD WINNER





MSPT
MID-STATES POKER TOUR

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Standings as of October 31, 2017

Rank	Player Name	Points
1	Chris Meyers	3,300
2	Keith Heine	2,967
3	Mike Shanahan	2,700
4	Keith Block	2,500
5	Jason Ramos	2,250
6	Altaf Motiwala	2,200
7	Al Hedin	2,100
8	Nadar Kakhmazov	2,000
9	Jason Bender	1,950
10	Dapreesch Scates	1,800
	Brayden Gazlay	1,800
12	Carter Myers	1,700
	Satish Thakur	1,700
	Aaron Massey	1,700
	Maury Solano	1,700
	Jordan Young	1,700
	Millard Hale	1,700
18	Loki Abboud	1,683
19	Jonathan Kim	1,650
20	Rob WazWaz	1,617
	Osama Aweida	1,617
22	Chris Moon	1,600
	Frank Lucarelli	1,600
	Matthew Rolling	1,600
	Kim Schinco	1,600
	Jacob Balsiger	1,600



Chris Meyers - Buffalo, NY

♣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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MSPT stats page at
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Event Recap

JEFF BIRT WINS LARGEST-EVER MSPT RUNNING ACES FOR \$81,402

BY MSPT POKER STAFF

In late September, the MSPT Running Aces Main Event became the largest major tournament in property history with 383 runners, besting the previous record of 367 set back in 2013. After two long days of play, 50-year-old local businessman and part-time poker player Jeff Birt emerged victorious to claim an \$81,402 first-place prize.

“I thought I played pretty well,” said Birt, who is married with two daughters. “I was short stacked, I just had to pick the right spots, be patient, and let the cards come to me. It’s been a long time coming. It was a good time, enjoyable.”

Prior to the win, Birt had just one MSPT cash, that being \$7,626 for finishing 11th in the Season 7 finale at Canterbury Park. All told he had \$50,691 in tournament earnings, but more than doubled that over the weekend.

“This is my passion,” he said of poker. “It took over the game of golf. I suck at golf.”

Day 2 saw 68 players return to action, but with only 45 slated to get paid, 23 would leave empty handed including Kou Vang, Max Havlish, and last year’s runner-up Vic Peppe. Once Joseph Michael busted on the bubble in 46th place, the in-the-money finishes included defending champ Luke Bohnen (41st - \$2,035), 2016 Minnesota Poker Player of the Year Saad Ghanem (35th - \$2,220), World Series of Poker bracelet winner John Reading (25th - \$2,590), and two-time champ Peixin Liu (19th - \$3,478).

Another player to fall was Keith Heine, who not only earned \$4,070 for finishing in 18th place, but also 200 POY points. He already sat atop the Kimo Sabe Mezcal MSPT Season 8 Player of the Year leaderboard, and he extended his lead to 2,967 points over the likes of Keith Block (2,500 points), Jason Ramos (2,250 points), and Al Hedin (2,100 points), who all failed to cash at Running Aces.

From there, two-time champ Jeremy Dresch (16th - \$4,070), Day 1A chip leader Sam Topalovic (15th - \$4,810), MSPT Grand Falls champ Ahmed Taleb (15th - \$4,810), and Robert O’Connell (11th - \$5,920) all hit the rail.

The first final table elimination came when Harold Brenden, who was fresh off finishing fifth in the MSPT Grand Falls, got his short stack all in preflop with ace-queen against both ace-jack and five-six. The ace-jack flopped Broadway,



Jeff Birt

and that was all she wrote for Brenden, who jumped up to 1,100 POY points.

Not long after, Day 1B chip leader Alex Moua followed him out the door after check-raising all in with middle pair on the flop only to run into the top pair of Stan Webb. Next to go was the short-stacked Durwin Matuska, who shoved his last two bigs with top pair of jacks, got called by the king-queen of Tony Lacey, and saw a queen spike on the turn.

Freddie West earned his first MSPT cash of \$12,210 after

Running Aces

busting in seventh place, the result of three-betting all in with queen-jack only to run into the pocket kings of Vlad Tkachuk. Likewise, Steve Wazwaz, the cousin of poker pro and MSPT regular Rob Wazwaz, notched his first cash on the tour. He finished in sixth place for \$15,540 after his ace-ten failed to overcome Webb's Big Slick.

After a failed bluff, Xong Lee was left short and moved all in holding ace-ten and was called by Webb, who once again looked down at ace-king. The better ace won and Lee had to settle for fifth place and \$20,351 in prize money.

Tkachuk bowed out next. The experienced player wasn't afraid to make moves and apply aggression, but unfortunately for him he ran into bigger hands time and again. Eventually he shoved the button with queen-nine suited only to run into the ace-queen suited of Birt in the big blind. The board ran out clean and Tkachuk took his leave in fourth place for \$27,011.

Three-handed play lasted quite a while with players taking turns holding the chip lead. Eventually the blinds and antes got up there (Level 32: 80,000/160,000/20,000) when Webb got it in on the flop with a spade flush draw against Birt's bottom two pair. The spade escaped Webb, and he headed to the exit to collect \$36,631 for his third-place finish.

Heads-up play began with Birt holding 4.675 million in chips to Wisconsin truck driver Tony Lacey's 2.965 million. Still, it didn't take long for things to come to a head when



Running Aces

Buy-in: \$1,100 ♣ 383 Entrants

Place	Name	City, State	Prize
1	Jeffrey Birt	Bloomington, MN	\$81,402
2	Anthony Lacey	Lacrosse, WI	\$50,325
3	Stan Webb	Mitchellville, IA	\$36,631
4	Vlad Tkachuk	Ukraine	\$27,011
5	Xong Lee	Monticello, MN	\$20,351
6	Steve Wazwaz	Brooklyn Park, MN	\$15,540
7	Freddie West	Andover, MN	\$12,210
8	Durwin Matuska	Crosby, MN	\$9,620
9	Alex Moua	Lake Elmo, MN	\$7,030
10	Harold Brenden	Rapid City, SD	\$5,920

both players made a pair of aces on the turn. The chips went in and thanks to his kicker, Birt claimed the title.

"I know a lot of people would've shipped it with a lot of hands I laid down, but that's not my style," Birt said of his up-and-down journey. "I try to pick the better spots. The very next hand you could have pocket aces and double up, so I don't always believe in getting it in. I had a couple of lucky spots, but I think I played well." 🎰



Final Table

NOVEMBER 10-12

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MSPT

MID-STATES POKER TOUR

MSPT EARNINGS

Leaders as of October 31, 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	\$327,977
6	Brayden Gazlay	\$316,782
7	Peixin Liu	\$315,830
8	Mukul Pahuja	\$304,491
9	Blake Bohn	\$284,063
10	Jeremy Dresch	\$272,741
11	Jason Zarlenga	\$272,194
12	Kou Vang	\$241,330
13	Mike Shanahan	\$239,157
14	Angelina Rich	\$234,829
15	Chris Meyers	\$233,529
16	Keith Heine	\$220,019
17	Travis Lauson	\$216,934
18	Maury Solano	\$209,244
19	John Hayes	\$206,648
20	Hao "John" Sun	\$201,718
21	Keven Stammen	\$199,635
22	Andrew Rubinberg	\$198,708
23	Thupten Thondup	\$198,015
24	Brett Blackwood	\$190,588
25	David Gonja	\$184,253
26	Mark Sandness	\$181,373
27	Jonathan Kim	\$181,055
28	Matt Kirby	\$176,265
29	Nick Jivkov	\$175,317
30	Drake Bronk	\$171,889
31	Dan Sun	\$170,588
32	Bill Rogers	\$170,206
33	David Mowery (WI)	\$169,837
34	David Lee (TN)	\$166,822
35	Rodger Johnson	\$161,260
36	Josh Reichard	\$158,532
37	Jacob Balsiger	\$157,169
38	Ryan Hartmann	\$157,058
39	Dan Hendrickson	\$155,192
40	Daniel Goepel	\$153,311
41	Jason Mirza	\$152,443
42	Michael Rudolph	\$147,122
43	Jason Ramos	\$144,392
44	Harry Tisdale	\$142,637
45	Alex Aqel	\$138,385
46	Mark Hodge	\$137,549
47	Matt Alexander	\$137,222
48	Michael Ferrarotti	\$136,868
49	Jason Bender	\$136,738
50	Rob WazWaz	\$135,251



Nadar Kakhmazov - Russia

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Event Recap

CHRIS MEYERS WINS LARGEST MAJOR POKER TOURNAMENT IN MICHIGAN HISTORY; TAKES DOWN MSPT FIREKEEPERS FOR \$191,196

BY MSPT POKER STAFF

The 2017 MSPT Michigan State Poker Championship at FireKeepers Casino was once again a record-setting affair. For the second time in 2017, the tournament eclipsed a \$1 million prize pool and became the largest poker tournament ever held in Michigan.

The 1,067 entries beat the spring record by a single player, and it was set in just three flights without the use of unlimited re-entries nor “best stack forward.” Speaking of the spring tournament, Buffalo, New York’s Chris Meyers was there, ultimately finishing in fifth place for \$42,333.

Meyers, a 35-year-old married poker pro, returned for the 2017 MSPT Michigan State Poker Championship and found redemption by taking down the title, good for a career-high \$191,196.

“I feel good,” Meyers said after the win. “I’ve put in a lot of work honestly. This was on my list, to win a MSPT. I made the final table last time, came up a little short. I thought I played well last time, and I ran really well this time to get it done. When you run good at a certain casino, you feel comfortable, like it’s meant to be. I had a good feeling about this one.”

Not only that, Meyers earned 1,900 points on the Kimo Sabe Mezcal MSPT Season 8 Player of the Year leaderboard, which along with the 1,400 he earned in the spring brought his total up to 3,300 with four stops to go. His next closest competitor is Keith Heine with 2,967 points.

When asked if he’ll be going for the POY title, he didn’t hesitate: “Absolutely. I’m going to hit as many as I can.”

As for the prize money, Meyers plans on making a pit stop on his drive back to Buffalo.

“I’m going to hit up Cleveland,” he said. “My plans include the Cavs opener on Tuesday. I’m going to upgrade my seats a little bit. We’ll see how close we can get to the court.”

Day 2 saw 192 players return to action, but of those only 108 were slated to get paid. Among those to fall short of the money were two-time MSPT champs Jason Zarlenga and Blake Bohn, MSPT Maryland Live! winner Greg Himmelbrand, and former champ Aaron Massey, who missed out on making his fourth MSPT FireKeepers final table in a row.

After Steven Stout bubbled in 109th place – the result of his Big Slick suited failing to get there against the pocket nines



Chris Meyers

of Dave Cronk – the in-the-money finishes came quick. Among those to walk away with a prize were last year’s runner-up Cy Church (106th - \$2,170), 2016 MSPT Iowa State Poker Champ John Sun (97th - \$2,274), defending MSPT Michigan State Poker Champ Brett Blackwood (91st - \$2,274), 2016 World Series of Poker Circuit Horseshoe Hammond Main Event champ Dylan Linde (79th - \$2,584), Day 1A chip leader Nick Bogus (50th - \$3,204), Day 1B chip leader Dan Underhill (37th - \$3,514), and MSPT Season 4 Player of the Year Pat Steele (27th - \$5,891).

Likewise, Day 1C chip leader Jeff Mackey exited in 20th

FireKeepers Casino

place for \$8,475, and not long after Mike Shanahan followed him out the door in 18th. Back in May, Shanahan won the record-setting MSPT FireKeepers for \$216,829. Thanks to another deep run, he earned 700 POY points, which vaulted him into third place on the Kimo Sabe Mezcal MSPT Season 8 Player of the Year Leaderboard with 2,700 points.

Meyers began the final table as the big stack, and in the very first hand he extended it by looking down at pocket aces and getting it all in against Spencer Wright, who held pocket queens. The aces held and Meyers was on his way.

Two hands later, the last woman in the field, Santa Zawaideh, hit the rail, and just a few hands after that James Miller fell to Millard Hale, who turned right around and eliminated Djon Palushaj.

With six players left, Brian Reinert got it in with king-jack only to run into the king-queen of Hale. The kicker made the difference and Reinert, who was only in town on a business trip, finished in sixth place for \$38,239.

Meyers then flopped a set of fours to dispatch Jake “The Snake” Reeser, who had flopped top pair. Next to go was Jerry Delisle who opted to call off with king-queen after Hale had four-bet with aces. They held and Hale closed the gap between him and Meyers.

Altat Motiwala’s elimination in third place—the result of calling off with top pair of queens to Meyer’s disguised runner-runner wheel—set up an entertaining heads-up match



FireKeepers Casino
Buy-in: \$1,100 ♣ 1,067 Entrants

Place	Name	City, State	Prize
1	Chris Meyers	Buffalo, NY	\$191,196
2	Millard Hale	Kalamazoo, MI	\$117,818
3	Altat Motiwala	Kalamazoo, MI	\$87,847
4	Jerry Delisle	Hazel Park, MI	\$65,110
5	Jake Reeser	Davison, MI	\$49,607
6	Brian Reinert	Atlanta, GA	\$38,239
7	Djon Palushaj	Oakland, MI	\$29,971
8	James Miller	West Olive, MI	\$22,737
9	Santa Zawaideh	Birmingham, MI	\$18,603
10	Spencer Wright	Jeddo, MI	\$14,468

filled with big hands.

Hale managed to take over the chip lead briefly, but eventually Meyers regained it and whittled him down. After 70 hands at the final table, things came to a head when Hale flopped top pair and Meyers turned two pair. The chips went in and Hale, a World Series of Poker Circuit ring winner, missed the river, which meant he had to settle for second place and a \$117,818 consolation prize. 🍀



Final Table



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Things to Do

FIVE THINGS TO DO DURING DECEMBER'S MSPT CANTERBURY PARK

BY CHAD HOLLOWAY

Season 8 of the MSPT will come to a close next month with our \$1,100 buy-in, \$200,000 GTD Main Event at Canterbury Park December 8-10. If you attend, we hope to see you at the felt, but if per chance you find yourself with some free time, be it from busting or making it through on Day 1A, here are some things you can do to stay busy.

Attend a Timberwolves Game

For all the basketball fans out there, the Minnesota Timberwolves will be hosting a game against the Dallas Mavericks at the Target Center on Sunday, December 10 at 6 pm CT. Unless you're close to making the final table, your schedule should allow you to check out players like Karl-Anthony Towns, Andrew Wiggins, and Jimmy Butler in action.



Let Them Eat Skate

On Saturday, December 9 at 7 pm, the Minnesota RollerGirls will be at the Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul for "Let Them Eat Skate," which will see the Garda Belts vs. Rockits as well as the Atomic Bombshells vs. Dagger Dolls.

The first 200 people through the doors, which open at 6 pm, will receive a special limited edition Minnesota RollerGirls t-shirt. Tickets range from \$34-\$193.

Oh, and for dedicated fans, you can visit Tom Reid's Hockey City Pub after the game to rub elbows with your favorite roller girls.

Catch a Concert

On Thursday, December 7 at 7 pm, Papa Roach will be per-

forming at Myth in nearby St. Paul. Tickets range from \$35-\$249. Don't miss your chance to hear their top songs including Last Resort, Scars, and Between Angels and Insects.



Family Fun Superhero Style

If you're looking for something to do with the family, we recommend taking them to Marvel Universe Live! at St. Paul's Xcel Energy Center with showings from Thursday through Sunday.

It's a live-action show featuring more than 25 Marvel characters including Spider-Man, Iron Man, Captain America, and the Hulk. Think a Cirque du Soleil show meets a monster truck exposition. There's fun and spectacles for all ages.

The show will run at 7 pm on Thursday and Friday, as well as Saturday, though with added 11 am and 3 pm show times. On Sunday, the show will take place at 1 pm and 5 pm. Tickets range from \$15-\$105.

Beer Me

Not far from the casino is Badger Hill Brewing Company, located at 4571 Valley Industrial Blvd. The taproom is open Friday and Saturday from Noon until 11 pm, and on Sunday 11:30 am until 10 pm. If you like beer, this is the place for you.



For hops fans, we recommend either the Traitor IPA or Hop Hill Pale Ale. For a more balanced take, try the High Road or MSB. Others worth checking out are their White IPA, Foundation Stout, and the Kölsch-style Minne-Ale. 🍷



DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

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Player Profile

JIMMY RAY IS FORT WAYNE'S FAVORITE POKER PEEP

BY CHAD HOLLOWAY

If you've ever played poker in or around Fort Wayne, which includes FireKeepers Casino in Battle Creek, Michigan, chances are you've come across 39-year-old Jimmy Ray.

Ray had the quintessential Midwest upbringing – his parents are still married—along with a younger sister. Upon graduating high school in 1997, he went to college and was just one class shy of obtaining his Associate's Degree when he discovered poker. He hasn't worked a day since.

"I played some poker in high school with friends I worked with on Fridays after we got paid, but it was a dealer's choice game, not hold'em," says Ray. "In 2002 is really when I started playing and trying to learn the games by reading anything I could find and talking to people that I could gain good information from."

Ray, who can often be found at local casinos and charity poker rooms, is in poker for the long haul.

"I can't see poker not being part of my life," he says. "I plan to play as long as I can. There is a pretty big poker scene in my area. When I started playing, it was all underground home games, but then with the addition of the charity rooms, those home games went away."

One of the reasons he enjoys the game so much is that it helps scratch his competitive itch. You see, fresh out of high school in July of 1997, Ray broke his neck in a motorcycle accident, one that has confined him to a wheelchair.

While the accident took a toll on his body, he emerged with his mind sharp as ever. He showed that one year ago in the 2016 MSPT Michigan State Poker Championship when he finished in fifth place for \$37,663. It was a fond memory, though not his favorite.



Jimmy Ray

"My favorite poker memory was either doing a three-way chop in a \$200 buy-in, 200-person tournament and getting more than first place money," he reveals. "Or my first Las Vegas World Series of Poker trip and winning three \$10,000 Main Event seats in satellites, which allowed me to play the WSOP main for the first time." 🍀

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Strategy presented by Jonathan Little

JONATHAN LITTLE ON RAISE SIZING, CALLING OFF W/ WEAK ACES, AND COMBATING TABLE BULLY

BY CHAD HOLLOWAY

In September's MSPT Running Aces Casino—a tournament that drew a venue record 383—just a dozen players remained in Level 23 (10,000/20,000/3,000). That is when David Nelson (275,000) raised to 55,000 from the cutoff with the A♦8♦. Freddie West (400,000) called from the button, and Alex Moua (1,000,000) moved all in from the small blind.

Nelson wasted little time in calling off the 220,000 he had behind and West got out of the way. Moua then showed the A♥Q♣. The board ran out 8♣Q♠J♠A♠9♣ and Nelson earned \$5,920 for his 12th-place finish. It seemed like a peculiar spot for Nelson to call off, so we decided to consult famed poker coach and author Jonathan Little to get his thoughts.

MSPT: Given Nelson's stack size, do you agree with his raise or should he have folded/shoved?

Little: I would have pushed all in before the flop. Hands like small/medium pocket pairs and AxXx would much prefer to force the opponents to fold many of their marginal hands that have a decent amount of equity, such as KxTx and Qx9x. By raising to a "normal" amount, many marginal hands that have equity will call whereas they would fold to an all-in.

What are your thoughts on Nelson making it 55,000? Wouldn't a min-raise to 40,000 have the same affect?

Little: Your preflop raise sizing should depend on how you expect your opponents to react. If you expect your opponents to call a min-raise with all sorts of junk and then play reasonably well after the flop, as many great players would do, raising to a larger size becomes better because you will steal the pot before the flop more often by cutting down your opponents' implied odds. That said, once your stack becomes very short, as Nelson's was, if I decided to not push all in, I would min-raise.

With ace-eight suited, it seems Nelson is either dominated or in rare instances flipping when he calls off. What's your analysis?

Little: I generally agree that the point of raising is so you can fold the worst hands in your range to an all-in. While A♦8♦ may or may not be near the bottom of Nelson's open-

ing range, it will usually fare quite poorly against a reasonable three-bet pushing range. That said, given he instantly called, he probably had the read that Moua was pushing with all sorts of garbage, in which case calling becomes reasonable.

Moua had been playing the bully and it seemed Nelson decided to take a stand. What is your strategy when dealing with table bullies or overly-aggressive players?

Little: If the table bully is not aware of what is going on at the table, I tend to play a tight strategy and just wait until I have a hand that should be a large favorite (perhaps 8-8 and A-J or better in Nelson's spot). If the bully is aware that he should not play too wildly against tight players, you have to loosen up a bit in order to get action when you happen to wake up with a strong holding.

PokerCoaching.com is an interactive poker learning experience from two-time WPT Champion Jonathan Little. Try it for free at PokerCoaching.com/mspt.



Alex Moua



David Nelson

Industry Insiders

ROBBIE THOMPSON BRINGING VEGAS EXPERIENCE TO MIDWEST'S GRAND FALLS CASINO

BY MSPT POKER STAFF

Poker floors catch a lot of flak. They have to make on-the-spot decisions, navigate high-pressure situations, and often bear the brunt of player angst. One man who's done it all with a smile is 47-year-old Robbie Thompson, known to many as "Red Bull Robby."

Poker Origin

Hailing from Egan, South Dakota (Pop. 270), where he has lived in the same house ever since he was three years old, Thompson used to work manual labor, attended USD for a year, and then in 1993 took a job at a local casino as a blackjack dealer. He has been in the gaming industry ever since.

"After a couple years in the pit, I made my move to poker," said Thompson. "I was leaving my shift one day and my manager asked if I would deal poker that night. She knew that I played, so without any training I sat in the box to a 7-Card Stud hi-lo game and the rest is history."

In 2001, Thompson took a job at Minnesota's Canterbury Park, and a year later left to become a traveling dealer. He dealt his first World Series of Poker (WSOP) in 2004, and two years after that his first WSOP Main Event final table. Any dealer will tell you that's kind of a big deal.

With a solid résumé, Thompson began dealing on the EPT and WPT before applying for the final table announcer at the 2008 WSOP.

"I told them I had mic experience and seeing how I like to sing karaoke, I wasn't lying," he said with a laugh. "I ended



Robbie Thompson

up getting the job. I was able to back up my BS and it was an easy transition with all the final table experience I had. I held that job for nine years."

Indeed, Thompson, who also announced some EPT final tables, was a fixture at WSOP final tables, usually with a Red Bull in his hand (hence the nickname) and uttering catchphrases such as "BANG" and "POW." He saw hundreds of bracelets awarded, and was essentially the Bruce Buffer of poker.

"I have had many fond memories working the WSOP, but

Grand Falls Casino

some stand out more than others,” he offered. “I once worked a 21-hour shift covering the 2010 WSOP \$50,000 Poker Players Championship. They even have picture of me resting on the table with mic in hand about to fall asleep. If you have ever watched David Back play, you would understand why.”

He continued: “Doing any final table with Phil Ivey was memorable, especially the two bracelets I presented to him. I believe he is the best I have ever seen. Just his presence at the table is intimidating. Never have I seen another player that has such an aura about him. He is the definition of smooth.”

He also had a run in with the other Phil.

“I gave Phil Helmuth a one round penalty deep in the Main Event one year. It was as play ended for the day, and he was supposed to start the next day on penalty after he blew up at a player and called him all kinds of names. Needless to say, he managed to whine to the right person and had it lifted by the time play resumed. I learned not only do these pros expect special treatment, unfortunately they get it. I can honestly say that they didn’t get it from me.”

Transitioning to Grand Falls

“I have got the opportunity to travel all over the world because of my career,” he said. “In 2017, after getting sick of traveling and some circumstances that were out my control, I took a job at Grand Falls Casino as a poker room supervisor. Ironically enough, it was for Renee Thomas, the same lady that put me in as a dealer for the first time some 25 years earlier.”

Thompson, who has two lovely daughters, MaKenna and Morgan, is happy to bring his experience to Grand Falls, which is situated just outside Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

“The people here are some of the friendliest I found,” he said. “They are also very accommodating to my guiding career, and I am happy to be close to home amongst family and friends.”

Thompson, who lives with his girlfriend, Dori, and her two kids, Kooper (6) and Kaylee (4), is a big outdoorsman, which he says is his true passion. He does it all including hunting, fishing, camping, canoeing, hiking, and kayaking. For the past 15 years, he’s also been a pheasant hunting guide and has trained hunting dogs on the side (he has four of his own).

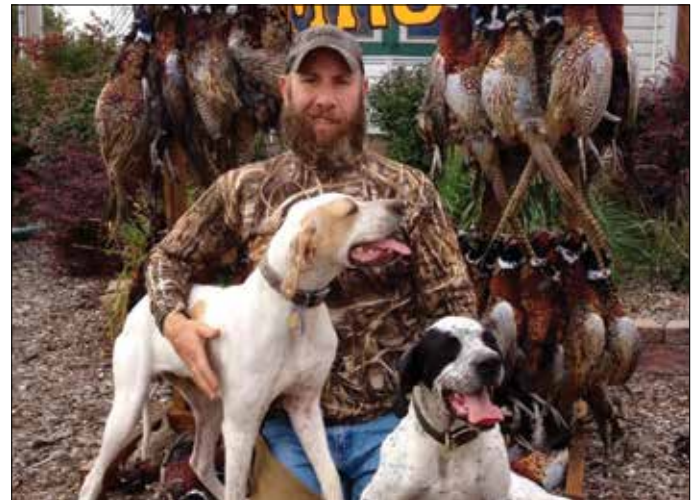
“I enjoy making diamond willow walking sticks, canes, and shooting sticks,” he added when asked about his hobbies. “Others include karaoke, playing cards, pool, and teaching the next generation about the great outdoors.”

A Media Darling

While he doesn’t use it often, Thompson is also on Twitter @RedbullRobbie. Funny story about that, it was originally



Robbie Thompson with Ivey



Robbie Thompson Hunting

set up as a parody account by members of the poker media before they allowed Thompson to claim it as his own.

“I was popular with the media from the start,” explained Thompson, who said he averaged a dozen Red Bulls a day (which he got for free) during the WSOP. “The media gave me the name Red Bull Robbie after seeing how many I would drink in a day. They even did a by the numbers segment on me where they counted 17 one day.”

The next time you’re at Grand Falls Casino playing poker, especially during one of the Mid-States Poker Tour (MSPT) stops, be sure to say hi to the legend that is Red Bull Robbie! 🍷

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