



**2012 World Series of Poker Presented by Jack Link's Beef Jerky  
Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino  
Las Vegas, Nevada**

**Official Report  
Event #37  
Eight-Game Mix  
Buy-In: \$2,500  
Number of Entries: 477  
Total Net Prize Pool: \$1,085,175  
Number of Places Paid: 48  
First Place Prize: \$271,312  
June 19-22, 2012**

## **TOURNAMENT HEADLINES**

David Baker Wins First WSOP Gold Bracelet

Houston Poker Pro Wins Eight-Game Mix Title

Highly-Regarded Tournament Grinder Collects \$271,312 in Prize Money

Greg Mueller Finishes Second – Barely Misses Third Gold Bracelet Victory

Marathon Tournament Stretches in Fourth Day

Russian Konstantin Puchkov Hits the Seven-Cash Mark (2012) – Tied with Terrance Chan and Jesse Martin

## **TOURNAMENT OVERVIEW**

This is the story of not one man, but two.

It is the story of a friendship. It is the story of sportsmanship. It is the story of doing the right thing, even when it's most difficult, and perhaps even painful.

Sadly, it is also a story that's far too rare in our world – not just in poker, but in all competitive deeds, be they in sports or business or anything else that places people in conflict with each other.

This story of two men and their enduring friendship, manifested in a display of extraordinary sportsmanship began on a Tuesday evening, inside the Rio in Las Vegas.

These two men took their seats in the \$2,500 buy-in Eight-Game Mix event at the 2012 World Series of Poker. They sat pretty much unnoticed among the other 477 players gathered together on this night, all with one single utterly selfish objective in mind – to outlast each of their opponents and rake in every last chip in the tournament, a feat ultimately rewarded with a six-figure payoff as well as the game's supreme symbol of achievement – the WSOP gold bracelet.

The first day passed. Both men remained very much alive among the final 150 or so players who were fortunate enough to return for Day Two.

Then, the second day passed. Again, both men found themselves among the survivors.

On the third day, these men – longtime friends and colleagues, but also fierce competitors on the poker tournament circuit – sat across from each other at the final table of the gold bracelet event. Several more hours passed. One by one, others in chairs around them began to disappear. By 4 a.m., there were only two men remaining at the table. But there was only one gold bracelet to be won.

The two men were David Baker and Greg Mueller.

The irony of outlasting several hundred of the world's best poker players on the game's grandest stage and playing for a gold bracelet against a close friend is but a dream in the minds of just about everyone who aspires to fulfill poker's ultimate fantasy. But for Baker and Mueller, the dream came true. Mueller would later say that when the final table was down to five-handed, he secretly hoped to have the opportunity to play heads-up against Baker -- not because he thought his friend would be an easier match. To the contrary, Mueller knew Baker would be tougher and an even greater challenge.

Indeed, Mueller got his wish. In fact, he got much more than that. The two-time gold bracelet winner, chasing not only a third personal victory, but perhaps even greater destiny as Canada's greatest poker player, saw this moment as his opportunity to not only notch another victory in his belt, but add to a growing list of poker accomplishments that would unquestionably gain the respect of everyone in the game.

Mueller came close to victory. Oh, he came so very close. At one point during the heads-up match, Mueller had Baker down to the felt and was within a hand or two of busting his final adversary and snatching up a third WSOP title. Victory was within his grasp. He could taste it, touch it, and feel it. Victory seemed but moments away.

But then, during the overtime portion of an unscheduled fourth day, everything fell apart. For Mueller, cards that had been coming -- suddenly disappeared. Draws that were hitting -- started missing. A chip stack that was soaring instead went tumbling over to the other side of the table, finding another home in the stack of Baker.

Finally, the duel ended when Mueller missed yet another draw, which was the final fateful excruciating moment of a one-hour nightmare during which he went from huge chip leader and prospective triple gold bracelet champion to the rail and a runner-up finish.

Defeated and devastated, Mueller stood up from the table. Before he could reach out his hand across the table, Baker had already extended his. Baker could feel Mueller's pain. Impervious to the celebration of his own hard-fought and long overdue victory, Baker seemed more interested in consoling Mueller.

Mueller departed the stage. He showed no sign of anger. He didn't throw any cards or chairs. He didn't mutter any curse words. But the painful look on his face said it all. Mueller was crushed.

"It looked like someone stuck a knife in his chest" was how one observer described Mueller's look.

Most poker tournament reports would end there. Normally, the winner would spend the next several minutes posing for the cameras, being interviewed by the press, and enjoying a moment in the spotlight.

But this is where the story of these two men, their friendship, and the ultimate act of sportsmanship actually begins.

As Baker was finishing up with the customary photographs and interviews, Mueller entered back onto the stage. To any casual observer, it seemed an odd sight to see the "loser" returning to the scene of the crime, so to speak. After all, the second-place finisher – once the gravity of losing is realized – often disappears. Sometimes runners up are not seen for hours, or even days.

But this moment was different.

Mueller approached Baker, and shook his hand again. Next, he hugged Baker and then Baker's girlfriend. He shook the hands of many of Baker's friends and followers. He then smiled and talked of how happy he was that Baker had finally won his first gold bracelet. If not paying attention, one would have thought Mueller had just strolled into the room from another tournament to congratulate his colleague.

Later, Mueller explained that he simply wanted to "be there" for his friend. He wanted to share a special once-in-a-lifetime moment of triumph for someone special. He put aside his own pain and disappointment, never showing the least bit of regret about what had happened just moments earlier. Mueller went on to describe that he thought it was important to demonstrate that even though he'd lost, he was glad his friend had won. That victory was a special moment to be shared together.

There was nothing contrived about the way this happened. It wasn't planned. There were no cameras around to record this special bond between two ultimate professionals.

But in the end, it was noticed. One couldn't help but notice it -- perhaps because of how rare and precious moments like these are in a society that sadly, and all-too frequently invokes a mantra that it's not really about how you play the game, but whether you win or not -- no matter what the human cost.

Hopefully, there's a lesson here for us all. While poker can be a series of bitter and bloodthirsty battles, while the game entails a cut throat culture of incessant clashes, behind all those dollars won and lost, and beneath and the egos and confidences battered and rejuvenated, there are some very endearing and everlasting friendships -- unbreakable bonds between people that no victory or defeat will ever change.

Indeed, there were two champions who played on the stage on this day. The way this tournament ended is a subtle reminder that poker remains a game -- not just of cards and chips -- but of people, including some very good people, indeed.

Las Vegas, NV (June 23, 2012) – David Baker finally achieved the poker thrill of a lifetime on Friday afternoon, winning the latest World Series of Poker tournament, held at the Rio in Las Vegas.

Baker won the \$2,500 buy-in Eight-Game Max event, which was the 37th of 61 gold bracelet tournaments on this year's schedule. He collected \$271,312 in prize money. The competition required players to play a mix of eight of poker's most popular games – including Hold'em, Omaha High-Low Split, Razz, Seven-Card Stud, Seven-Card Stud High-Low Split, Deuce-to-Seven Triple-Draw Lowball, Pot-Limit Omaha, and No-Limit Hold'em. By almost universal consideration, it is poker's best test of all-around talent and skill.

No doubt, Baker has plenty of both. The professional poker player from Katy, Texas (a suburb of Houston) had already proven himself to be one of tournament poker's most steady performers in recent years. Prior to this event, he'd cashed 27 times at the WSOP since 2006 – placing him among the top ten within that time frame. He'd also already earned in excess of \$1 million at the WSOP before this victory, a testament to the notion that it wasn't so much a question of if Baker would win a gold bracelet, but when.

"When" finally arrived on a Friday on a main stage of the Pavilion arena, which was filled to capacity with poker action. Baker made a remarkable comeback against two-time former gold bracelet winner Greg Mueller, who ended up finishing second. The two friends played a cordial but intense heads-up match, with Baker finally getting a well-deserved victory.

Note: David Baker (Katy, TX) is not to be confused with David "Bakes" Baker (Las Vegas, NV), who won a gold bracelet earlier this year. This is David "ODB" Baker as in, "Original David Baker" but he's deserving of a much more exceptional nickname now.

## **MEET THE LATEST WSOP CHAMPION – DAVID BAKER**

Name: David Baker

Current Residence: Katy, Texas (suburb of Houston)

Profession: Professional Poker Player (8 years)

Previous Occupation: Salesman

Marital Status: Single (serious girlfriend)

Children: None

Number of WSOP Cashes: 28

Number of WSOP final table appearances: 7

Number of WSOP gold bracelet victories (with this tournament): 1

Best Previous WSOP finish: 3<sup>rd</sup> (three times)

Total WSOP Earnings: \$1,336,681

## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE WINNER

**Question:** *David, you had 27 WSOP cashes before today. Now, you finally broke through. How does it feel?*

**Baker:** It feels amazing. I've always known that if I just kept getting there and kept giving myself shots that I would run well late in the tournament, and that's basically what happened. I got short in this one – actually I had a lot of chips starting at the final table, and things didn't really go my way kind of midway through the final table. I think my experience really helped to when I got short. I really focused in on the fact that I wasn't desperate, I didn't have to make marginal decisions, and I made some really good decisions with the shorter stack and took advantage of a good run and then stayed alive versus Greg and was really excited to come back today. I was really confident even though he had a big chip lead on me and he's a fantastic player. I really felt that if I could just win a couple pots early that I would have a really good chance of taking it home. I had a lot of people who don't really understand the dynamics of how fast things can change say, 'how are you going to overcome such a big lead?' I basically looked at it as I had 900,000, and so one of two things had to happen: Either he had to win 900,000 first to bust me, or I had 900,000 and I had the chip lead. So, whoever had the 900,000 first was going to be a favorite to get it. That was my first goal, just win 900,000 before he did, and I did. Then I caught some good cards, and I definitely got better cards than him in the last 30 minutes. He was kind of hamstrung by his hands and I had some real good opportunities and I finally ran good light. So, I'm thrilled.

**Question:** *Your girlfriend was there all day yesterday, she was on the rail, standing there cheering you on. There's something that has to be said for that commitment. And, all day today. What does it mean to have someone supporting you? Does that really add to your game or maybe inspire you in some way?*

**Baker:** Yeah, it was amazing. Her support has been amazing from the beginning. Actually, she's sweated this tournament more than she's sweated any other tournament. She was pretty much here all three days. Having her here every time something went bad to be able to go over and have her calm me down and keep me focused was great. And to be able to celebrate the excitement was great. She does everything to make sure I can just focus on what I'm doing and she's awesome.

**Question:** *The format of the Eight-Game Mix -- you've had a ton of cashes spreading all across the different games. Does it mean anything extra to you to get your first bracelet in an event that requires you to be well-rounded?*

**Baker:** Yeah for sure. This is definitely a premiere event and obviously the WSOP players committee and the best players on the committee think that Eight-Game is the test of the best poker skill or they wouldn't have made it the 50K. So, obviously they feel that that's the best representative of playing at poker. Obviously, it means a ton to do that. Last year I played the 50K and I got a table away from the money and I think that experience helped me here because I played basically five days with the best players in the world in the eight-game. I think that that experience helped me through this. Final table is a H.O.R.S.E. format each of the last two years, so I think being in there and seeing how the dynamics of how the game's changing and the chips and the stack sizes and things like that worked at a final table. I think that helped, as well.

**Question:** *How did the break between Day Three and Day Four affect you? Were you in favor of that last night?*

**Baker:** Yeah I was. I was really in great shape yesterday as far as momentum-wise. So, on that side I felt it kind of hurt me, but on the plus side I really felt like it just gave me a chance to refocus. Greg's one of my best friends in poker. The last thing I really want was one of us to make huge mistakes to bet that weren't representative of us, and play a good match and whoever ran best and played best would win. At that time we had been playing for three days and 13 hours that day. I was definitely ready to go even though I had the momentum I felt last night, I was ready to take a break and just start over.

**Question:** *Obviously Greg's a very good Limit Hold'em player, that's what he's known for. Were there any games you were trying to stay out of his way or were you trying to find an edge in certain games?*

**Baker:** It's funny because everybody thinks that Greg's the Limit Hold'em guy, but actually that's what I've done for the last eight to 10 years – just playing Limit Hold'em. Even though he's probably one of the top class limit players in the world, especially the tournament-wise, I wasn't looking at that because I can hold my own in that game. Obviously, the No-Limit Hold'em, even though I feel very comfortable and confident in that, I didn't want one situation to come about and cost me everything when I felt really comfortable in everything else. I kind of tried to stay out of the way in No-Limit Hold'em. We almost played a big hand the last hand of No-Limit but we folded. Other than that I just kind of stayed out of the way. PLO, I know that he wants to stay out of the way - he doesn't like it. And I don't really like it that much. I probably could've tried to do a little bit more in that game, but it looked like we both were just trying to get through the PLO part which is most of the time what happens in the eight-game, unless you get someone who's a big bet expert that comes. But we played small pots in PLO, we played pretty small pots in No Limit, and then we just played the Limit games and I won some big crucial hands and that was it.

**Question:** *Let's talk about life away from poker. Can you imagine doing anything else as far as a career goes?*

**Baker:** I was in sales. I had a couple different sales jobs. I worked for 10 years doing different sales things. Then I started making more money playing poker and having more fun and started travelling and enjoying it. I love it. Actually I love my job, so I think it's funny when some of the young kids are like, 'Oh if I win I'll never play again.' Go get a real job

and then come and say that because I had a real job for 10 years and this is great. This is why we get up every day and come in here for an opportunity like this. Just hoping that it comes along. For us mere mortals, not Phil Ivey, it comes along once or twice a year. You just hope to take advantage of it -- and I'm so glad I did.

## **ODDS AND ENDS**

This was classified as WSOP schedule Event #37, since it's the 37<sup>th</sup> gold bracelet of 61 to be awarded this summer in Las Vegas. The tournament was played over four days, starting on Tuesday at noon and concluding on Friday.

The total duration of the final table was about six hours on Day Three. That was followed up by an unscheduled Day Four, which added two more hours to play. So, the total time was about eight hours.

The final table included four former gold bracelet winners – Greg Mueller (2 wins), Donnacha O'Dea (1 win), Chris Viox (1 win), and Konstantin Puchkov (1 win).

The runner-up was Greg Mueller, from Vancouver, BC. Mueller had the chip lead during most of the final table session, but lost his advantage heads-up against Baker. The two top finishers are close friends and later stated they looked forward to the heads-up match, no matter that the outcome.

Konstantin Puchkov cashed for the seventh time at this year's WSOP, to date. His finish ties him with two other players for the lead in cashes. The all-time record for most cashes at a single WSOP currently stands at 10.

Irishman Donnacha O'Dea (5<sup>th</sup> place) was one of the first international poker players to start participating at the WSOP. His first visit was in 1983. He has since become a living legend and is responsible, in part, for the initial growth of the game in Ireland and the U.K, as one of poker's early pioneers. O'Dea made two WSOP Main Event Final tables. Last year, his son Eoghan also made the final nine. Hence, the O'Dea's are the first (and only) father-son combo to make world championship final table appearances in history.

The official WSOP gold bracelet ceremony takes place on the day following the winner's victory (or some hours later when the tournament end very late). The ceremony takes place inside Brasilia. The ceremony begins at the conclusion of the first break of the noon tournament. The ceremony usually starts around 2:20 p.m. The national anthem of the winner's nation is played. The entire presentation is open to public and media. Video and photography is permitted by both public and members of the media.

## **2012 WSOP STATISTICS**

Through the conclusion of Event #37, the nationality of gold bracelet winners has been:

United States (28): Chip Saechao, Brent Hanks, Leif Force, Cory Zeidman, Andy Bloch, Herbert Tapscott, John Monnette, Brian Hastings, David "Doc" Arsht, Brandon Schaefer, Adam Friedman, Matt Matros, Andy Frankenberger, Phil Hellmuth, Cliff Goldkind, Ben Scholl, Randy Ohel, Joe Cassidy, Brian Meinders, Gabe Scott, Ylon Schwartz, Larry Wright, Allyn Jaffrey-Shulman, Carter Phillips, David "Bakes" Baker, Max Steinberg, Chris Tryba, David "ODB" Baker

Canada (3): Ashkan Razavi, Simon Charette, Timothy Adams

France (1): Aubin Cazals

Bulgaria (1): Nick Jivkov

The Netherlands (1): Vincent van der Fluit

Belgium (1): Michael Gathy

Japan (1): Naoya Kihara

Great Britain (1): Craig McCorkell

Through the conclusion of this tournament, the national origin (birthplace) of winners has been:

United States (27): Brent Hanks, Leif Force, Cory Zeidman, Andy Bloch, Herbert Tapscott, John Monnette, Brian Hastings, David "Doc" Arsht, Brandon Schaefer, Adam Friedman, Matt Matros, Andy Frankenberger, Phil Hellmuth, Cliff Goldkind, Ben Scholl, Randy Ohel, Joe Cassidy, Brian Meinders, Gabe Scott, Ylon Schwartz, Larry Wright, Allyn Jaffrey-Shulman, Carter Phillips, David "Bakes" Baker, Max Steinberg, Chris Tryba, David "ODB" Baker

Canada (2): Simon Charette, Timothy Adams

Thailand (1): Chip Saechao

Bulgaria (1): Nick Jivkov

France (1): Aubin Cazals

Iran (1): Ashkan Razavi

The Netherlands (1): Vincent van der Fluit

Belgium (1): Michael Gathy

Japan (1): Naoya Kihara

Great Britain (1): Craig McCorkell

Through the conclusion of this event, the home state of the 26 American winners has been:

Nevada (8): Brent Hanks, Andy Bloch, Randy Ohel, Joe Cassidy, Allyn Jaffrey-Shulman, Carter Phillips, David "Bakes" Baker, Chris Tryba

California (4): Chip Saechao, John Monnette, Phil Hellmuth, Max Steinberg

Pennsylvania (3): Brian Hastings, David "Doc" Arsht, Ben Scholl

Texas (3): Ylon Schwartz, Larry Wright, David "ODB" Baker

Florida (2): Leif Force, Cory Zeidman

New York (2): Matt Matros, Andy Frankenberger

Alabama (1): Herbert Tapscott

Ohio (1): Adam Friedman

Washington (1): Brandon Schaefer

Maryland (1): Cliff Goldkind

New Jersey (1): Brian Meinders

Oklahoma (1): Gabe Scott

Through the conclusion of this tournament, the breakdown of professional poker players to semi-pros and amateurs who won gold bracelets is as follows:

Professional Players (28): Brent Hanks, Leif Force, Andy Bloch, Aubin Cazals, John Monnette, Ashkan Razavi, Vincent van der Fluit, Brian Hastings, Brandon Schaefer, Adam Friedman, Matt Matros, Andy Frankenberger, Phil Hellmuth, Randy Ohel, Michael Gathy, Simon Charette, Joe Cassidy, Gabe Scott, Ylon Schwartz, Timothy Adams, Larry Wright, Carter Phillips, David "Bakes" Baker, Max Steinberg, Naoya Kihara, Chris Tryba, Craig McCorkell, David "ODB" Baker

Semi-Pros (4): Cory Zeidman, Nick Jivkov, Brian Meinders, Allyn Jaffrey-Shulman

Amateurs (5): Chip Saechao, Herbert Tapscott, David "Doc" Arsht, Cliff Goldkind, Ben Scholl

*Note: Various categories and statistics will be updated with each gold bracelet event as they are completed.*

-- by Nolan Dalla

*Note: All results are now official and may be reprinted by media. If you are posting these results on a website, we would appreciate providing a link back to: [WSOP.com](http://WSOP.com). Thank you.*

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