



**2012/2013 World Series of Poker Circuit
Season Nine
Harrah's Cherokee
Cherokee, North Carolina
Event #1
No-Limit Hold'em
Buy-In \$300 (+65)
Total Entries: 872
Prize Pool: \$261,600
April 4-5, 2013**

Nicolas Vaca-Rondon Wins WSOP Circuit Debut in North Carolina

Opening Event at Harrah's Cherokee Draws 872 Entrants

Epic Final Heads-Up Match Exceeds Six Hours

Cherokee, NC (April 6, 2013) – There were several winners in the first-ever World Series of Poker Circuit event held in North Carolina. The biggest winners included:

1. Nicolas Vaca-Rondon, who won the opening event and \$51,005 in prize money. He also was presented with his first gold ring.
2. Harrah's Cherokee, which put on a magnificent opening-day extravaganza. Demonstrating their unwavering commitment to be the poker epicenter in the South, this newly-renovated and greatly-expanded hotel-casino truly rolled out the red carpet for poker players.
3. Poker players throughout the South. Now, for the first time ever, poker players in North Carolina and several nearby states have a poker palace they can call their own. Look for more big time events to be held at Harrah's Cherokee in the future, including the WSOP Circuit as a regular seasonal stop.

Indeed, this was a win-win-win for everyone on what was unquestionably a historic day for everyone who loves poker here in the South.

First and foremost, the opening event not only sold out. Turnout was so heavy, that alternates had to be taken. About 200 players got in late, due to the huge anticipation for the WSOPs arrival. A whopping 872 players entered Event 1.

Action began on Friday. After 14 hours of play, only 46 players made the cut and came back for Day Two. One of the shorter stacks belonged to Nicolas Vaca-Rondon.

As the remaining players competed and whittled the field down to a final table of nine players, most attention was focused on Peter Le, who was aiming for a second gold ring victory. He won

his first title last season at Horseshoe Bossier City. By the time the final table was set, Le held nearly half of the total chips in play.

Le's good fortune continued as the number of players was reduced one by one, all the way down to the final three. Then, Le was forced to depart center stage and make way for a new star – Vaca-Rondon.

Actually, the eventual champion had to share the spotlight. That's because the final act of the poker melodrama lasted a mind-numbing six hours, one of the longest finales of the season. Vaca-Rondon faced a formidable final foe named Brian Walsingham. If that name sounds familiar, it should. Walsingham is a two-time gold ring winner.

Things appeared scripted for Walsingham's third WSOP Circuit victory. The importer and semi-pro poker player from Atlanta made all the right moves. However, the cards didn't cooperate. He had Vaca-Rondon all-in and drawing slim on multiple occasions. Each time, the young poker pro originally from Columbia would manage to river a miracle and add to Walsingham's growing sense of frustration.

Three key hands took place in the final 90 minutes. First, Vaca-Rondon managed a split holding A-7 versus the dominant A-J. Then, the eventual winner rivered a two-outer when he spiked an 8 to go with pocket eights, versus Walsingham's pocket tens. The final indignity or triumph (depending on one's perspective) occurred with Vaca-Rondon rivered a pair of aces (versus Walsingham's underpair) on what turned out to be the final hand of the tournament.

There was something truly ironic about the instant of victory. A tournament that had begun two days earlier with a room swamped with 872 players had come full circle. By the time Vaca-Rondon departed the stage in total exhaustion, several poker players had crept into the room, staring in disbelief that the second day's action has reached a 19th hour.

Vaca-Rondon won his first major tournament. But the achievement was no surprise. The 25-year-old poker pro who says he lives in hotel rooms going around the country playing poker just came off a three-cash series at the previous WSOP Circuit stop. Vaca-Rondon posted three top-20 finishes at The Lodge, in Black Hawk, CO – which ended a few weeks ago.

The tournament generated a nice-sized prize pool totaling \$261,600. The top 90 finishers collected prize money. The final table finishers were as follows:

1	Nicolas Vaca-Rondon	BOGOTA, CO	\$51,005
2	Brian Walsingham	WINSTON, GA, US	\$31,523
3	Nghia Le	SUWANEE, GA, US	\$23,220
4	Benjamin Sears	PORTSMOUTH, VA, US	\$17,328
5	Christopher Hardee	CAMDEN, SC, US	\$13,101
6	Warren Sheaves	CHAPEL HILL, AB, US	\$10,032
7	Christopher Standefer	HIXSON, TN, US	\$7,780
8	Michael Jukich	ARLINGTON, VA, US	\$6,108
9	Theodore Manios	GREENVILLE, SC, US	\$4,855

Tournament Notes

- This was the first gold ring event ever played at Harrah's Cherokee and in the state of North Carolina.
- North Carolina amended its gaming laws last year, which allowed for the addition of live poker tables for the first time. That also enabled the WSOP to stage its first-ever event in the state.
- This region has never hosted any tournament of this size or stature. Most of the surrounding states do not offer poker – including South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky, and Virginia. This contributed to a huge opening day turnout.
- The two-day tournament began with 872 players – the most we have seen in a single entry non-Main Event this season. That number ties it for the fifth largest non-Main Event ring event this season. After 14 hours of play on Day One, only 44 survivors remained.
- There were 44 players that started Day Two. It took about eight hours to play down to the final table of nine.
- The final table included two gold ring winners – Peter Le (1 win) and Brian Walsingham (2 wins).
- The final table lasted about more than six hours and ended at 10:30 am on an unscheduled third day.

Nicolas Vaca-Rondon picked up 50 player points for his victory. The top 90 finishers all received points. The player who accumulates the most overall points in Harrah's Cherokee's twelve combined gold ring tournaments will earn the title Casino Champion and shall receive automatic entry into the \$1 Million 2012-13 WSOP National Championship Presented by Southern Comfort 100 Proof. The qualifier will join the winner of the \$1,675 buy-in Main Event (April 12-15), who also wins an automatic seat.

All players who cash in gold ring events receive points that apply to both the Casino Championship race (good for Harrah's Cherokee gold ring events only) and the season-long race to claim one of the 60 at-large National Championship bids to be awarded to the top point earners throughout the season. More information on the points system is available on WSOP.com.

The 2012-13 WSOP Circuit at Harrah's Cherokee runs through April 15, 2013.

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