

2013/2014 World Series of Poker Circuit

Harrah's Cherokee

Event #11

Main Event Championship

No-Limit Hold'em

Buy-In: \$1,500 (+175)

Total Entries: 665

Total Prize Pool: \$997,500

April 11-14, 2014

Jason Sandling Wins Cherokee Main Event and \$204K

Stay-at-home dad pockets largest career tournament score, gold ring, and National Championship seat

Circuit regulars and ring winners Tripp Kirk and Ralph Massey finish sixth and seventh, respectively.

Cherokee, North Carolina (April 14, 2014) – After three arduous days of tournament poker and an appearance at one of the most decorated final tables of the Circuit season, Jason Sandling rose above the competition to win the 2013/14 WSOP Circuit Main Event at Harrah's Cherokee for \$204,487.

Sandling, a stay-at-home father who views poker as a hobby, had just one Circuit cash to his name before the Main Event. That cash came in Event 8: \$365 No-Limit Hold'em just a few days earlier and was for \$2,500. Now, Sandling is the newest Circuit champion, owns his first gold ring, and is guaranteed a seat to the National Championship.

Sandling came into the final table with the second largest chip stack and did his best to remain toward the top of the chip counts. While players around him seemingly dropped left and right at this quick, six-hour final table, Sandling remained steadfast in his quest for tournament glory. Sandling found himself all in for his tournament life just one time over the course of the final table, and when the money went in he had his opponent and later heads-up foe William O'Neal, drawing dead. From there, Sandling went on a tear and locked up a victory.

"I was second in chips coming in," said Sandling. "I just kind of picked my spots and chipped up pretty early. I never got into any super big confrontations. Just always chipped up."

Sandling, of course, was joined at the final table by couple familiar faces on the Circuit. Headlining the final day was 2011/12 Harrah's St. Louis Main Event champion Tripp Kirk. Kirk came into the final 11 holding the chip lead and looked poised to go on a run for his second Circuit Main Event title. Kirk eventually fell in sixth place when he moved all in before the flop holding king-queen. Sandling snapped him off with pocket kings and the cowboys held up.

Also present at the final table was Circuit ring winner Ralph Massey. Massey grabbed hold of the chip lead early on in the final table but lost several key runs that ultimately led to a seventh place finish. The hand that crippled him occurred when he four-bet ace-queen into O'Neal's ace-king. Big slick started and finished as the best hand, leaving Massey with less than one small blind. He was eliminated from play the next hand.

Eventually, Sandling found himself heads up with O'Neal and holding a substantial chip lead. After winning the first large confrontation with O'Neal, Sandling simply leaned on his opponent until he fell. In the end, Sandling's ace-four held up against O'Neal's all in ship with queen-eight and Sandling was crowned the victor.

"I'm going to pay some bills and save some for taxes," said Sandling, as he celebrated his victory with his wife.

Sandling is guaranteed a seat in the National Championship, which will play out in Atlantic City on May 22-24.

final tables this year, once again securing his place at the National Championship. Interestingly enough, Mendoza has final tabled 5 of the 24 Circuit events ever held at Harrah's Cherokee.

The Main Event (officially listed as Event #11) was a four-day \$1,500 (+175) No-Limit Hold'em tournament, which attracted 665 entries. The event had two starting flights and players were allowed to fire two bullets.

Play began on Friday at noon and concluded on Monday night. The total prize pool came to \$997,500. The top 72 finishers were paid. All players who cashed received WSOP Circuit National Championship ranking points – used to potentially qualify for a seat in the season-ending championship, to be played in Las Vegas.

Some of the notables who cashed included Robert "Uncle Krunk" Panitch (62nd), Andrew Rothfolk (43rd), Adam Teasdale (39th), Phillip Hui (35th), Nancy Birnbaum (34th), Daniel Lowery (16th), and Bill Childs (15th).

A total of 52 players advanced from Day 1A and 85 players from Day 1B. These 137 players combined for the second day of play and played down to the final 11. The nine finalists and their chips counts were as follows (Blinds at the final table began at 20,000/40,000 ante 5,000):

SEAT 1: Travis Turner – 720,000
SEAT 2: Tripp Kirk – 1,310,000
SEAT 3: Erik Gorman – 1,965,000
SEAT 4: Jason Sandling – 2,155,000
SEAT 5: Zack Caldwell – 1,625,000
SEAT 6: Harold Evans – 1,270,000
SEAT 7: Robert Park – 950,000
SEAT 8: Ralph Massey – 2,185,000
SEAT 9: William O'Neal – 1,135,000

The final table featured 2011/12 Harrah's St. Louis Main Event winner Tripp Kirk. Kirk came into the final day with the chip lead and ultimately finished in sixth place. Also present was Circuit ring winner Ralph Massey. Massey's final table appearance resulted in a seventh place finish. The final day of play kicked off at 12 pm and crowned a champion around 6:30 pm.

About the Final Table:

1st: Jason Sandling - \$204,487
Hometown: Clayton, NC
Age: 34
Occupation: Stay-at-home dad
Circuit Earnings: \$2,500

2nd: William O'Neal - \$126,533
Hometown: Evans, GA
Age: 47
Occupation: CPA
Circuit Earnings: \$14,744

3rd: Erik Gorman
Hometown: Matthews, NC
Age: 37
Occupation: Glassblower
Circuit Earnings: \$26,186

4th: Zack Caldwell

Circuit Earnings: \$0

5th: Harold Evans - \$52,020

Hometown: Evansville, IN

Age: 55

Occupation: Car Dealer

Circuit Earnings: \$37,291

6th: Tripp Kirk - \$39,730

Hometown: Atlanta, GA

Age: 29

Occupation: Professional Poker Player

Circuit Earnings: \$509,277

7th: Ralph Massey - \$30,743

Hometown: Chicago, IL

Age: 32

Occupation: Professional Poker Player

Circuit Earnings: \$75,635

8th: Robert Park - \$24,100

Hometown: Atlanta, GA

Age: 27

Occupation: N/A

Circuit Earnings: \$0

9th: Travis Turner

Hometown: Morristown, TN

Age: 34

Occupation: Auto Sales

Circuit Earnings: \$5,101

Additional Notes on the Final Table:

-There were two gold ring winners at the final table. Tripp Kirk owns two rings and was searching for number three, while Ralph Massey was in the hunt for his second.

-Bill Childs, father of 2007 WSOP Main Event final table member Lee Childs, finished in 15th.

-Three-time ring winner Phillip Hui held the chip lead on Day 1A. He was ultimately eliminated in 35th place.

Here is the list of gold ring winners from Harrah's Cherokee:

EVENT #1: Mark Saporito defeated 700 players (\$365 NLH) for \$43,048.

EVENT #2: Kevin Sherrill defeated 894 players (\$365 NLE) for \$52,295

EVENT #3: Harold Mahaffey defeated 257 players (\$365 PLO) for \$18,888

EVENT #4: Kaivon Hakimi defeated 1,665 players (\$365 NLH Re-Entry) for \$85,185

EVENT #5: Bruce Nguyen defeated 484 players (\$365 NLH) for \$31,216

EVENT #6: John Feore defeated 427 players (\$365 NLH Six-Handed) for \$29,462

EVENT #7: Chris Shaw defeated 433 players (\$365 NLH) for \$28,578.

EVENT #8: Nilesh Choudhary defeated 446 players (\$365 NLH) for \$29,429

EVENT #9: Osarvefo Greene defeated 353 players (\$365 NLH Turbo) for \$24,355

While the Harrah's Cherokee stop reaches its conclusion, action is currently underway at Council Bluffs, Iowa. The series in Council Bluffs runs April 10-21st.

For more information about the World Series of Poker Circuit, be sure to follow us on Twitter @WSOP or check out WSOP.com.

For additional information please contact:

Josh Cahlik (WSOP Media Coordinator) at josh.cahlik@gmail.com.

