

2015-16 World Series of Poker Circuit

Season 12

Bally's Las Vegas

Las Vegas, NV

Event #14

High Roller

Buy-In: \$3,000 (+\$250)

Total Entries: 101

Prize Pool: \$303,000

March 6-7, 2016



Igor Kurganov Picks Up a Ring in Las Vegas

Philanthropic Russian standout collects \$90,899 in the High Roller event

Las Vegas, NV (March 7, 2016) — Igor Kurganov is the champion of Event #14 at Bally's Las Vegas. Kurganov defeated a pro-heavy field of 101 players in the \$3,250 High Roller event, winning \$90,899 and his first gold ring. The victory also netted him 50 points in the season-long race to claim one of the at-large seats in the WSOP Global Casino Championship.

The champ is a 27-year-old pro from St. Petersburg, Russia, though he now makes his home in London. In the middle of an extended poker trip in the United States, Kurganov dropped into Bally's to play the week's biggest buy-in. Despite a long list of poker accomplishments, this WSOP Circuit territory is still a bit unfamiliar to him. "It's hard to chase these people," he said complimentarily. "They usually have seven rings or something." He glanced down at his own ring to finish the thought. "This is a start, though."

Kurganov entered Day 2 with a below-average stack, but he found an early double when his ace-king beat an opponent's pocket kings. "I was right on the cusp where I would catch my flight if I busted," he said. "So it was kind of like a win either way. But then I won the hand, so that was a real win. From then on, I had a very playable stack."

A short while later, Kurganov took the chip lead in a big cooler of a confrontation against Tom Kearney. Kurganov was dealt ace-queen and Kearney pocket sixes, and the ace-queen-six flop brought plenty of action. Another queen on the turn gave Kurganov the lead with queens full, and Kearney paid off two more streets of value before seeing the bad news at showdown.

From then on, it was pretty much "smooth sailing throughout," as the winner said in his postgame interview. Kurganov entered the final table with more than one third of the chips in play, and just about 90 minutes later, it was all over. Arkadiy Tsinis was the last man standing between Kurganov and the victory, but he was unable to overcome the 10:1 chip disadvantage he faced entering the final duel.

While his poker accomplishments are certainly an integral part of his life, Kurganov emphasized the need for balance too. "I've been traveling a bit much lately," he said. "I'll be spending more time at home over the next couple months. It's something I'm craving after so much travel."

When asked to elaborate on that craving, Kurganov was quick to explain. “It’s hard to do other things when you’re on tour. When you’re home, you can educate yourself on all the other amazing things that there are in life. I just try to learn as many things as I can about business, finance, philanthropy...”

Kurganov’s desire for the deeper things in life has led him down a charitable path over the last few years. As the co-founder of a movement called Raising for Effective Giving (REG), Kurganov is part of a team spearheading the notion of effective altruism in poker. He was more than happy to explain the thought process that started him down this path of charity:

“Most of us like to see our relatives or friends receive a gift and see the smile on their face,” he said. “Everyone has it to some degree. I’ve always felt quite a bit of empathy for people in bad situations. The thought of effective altruism really motivated me when I stumbled on it. It was the first thing in charity that I saw to be along my lines of thinking. It’s a lot of mathematics and scientific process.”

There’s a balance and a sense of well-roundedness evident in his words, both of which can be rare traits among poker players. It didn’t always come easy, though. “I found balance by not having it,” he remembered. “In 2010 and 2011, I was playing as much as possible. At some point, you catch yourself enjoying it less or being burnt out or not finding the motivation anymore. You desensitize yourself from winning and losing. It doesn’t mean that much emotionally anymore. When that’s the case, you need to find other motivation.”

He must be doing something right. Kurganov has been playing poker professionally for less than a decade, but he’s already amassed more than \$10 million in career earnings, with huge results scattered all across the globe. This latest win is his first career cash on the WSOP Circuit, and it comes with a piece of gold jewelry and more than \$90,000 in cash.

Event #14 was the penultimate event on the WSOP Circuit schedule at Bally’s Las Vegas. The \$3,250 event drew a field of 101 players, generating a prizepool worth \$303,000. The final 12 players finished in the money.

The tournament began at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 6, and Day 1 concluded with 29 players remaining at the end of Level 12. Day 2 began at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, January 7, and the last hand was dealt around 11:00 p.m.

The player who accumulates the most overall points during the 12 ring events at Bally’s earns the title of Casino Champion and receives automatic entry into the WSOP Global Casino Championship. Additionally, all players who cash in ring events earn points that apply toward the season-long race to claim one of the limited at-large bids. More information on the points system is available on WSOP.com.

All rings at Bally’s are furnished by Jostens, the official ring supplier of the 2015-16 WSOP Circuit season.

For more information about the WSOP Circuit, follow us on Twitter at [@WSOP](#) or visit [WSOP.com](#).

For additional information please contact:

Rob Kirschen (WSOP Media Coordinator) at rkirschen@caesars.com