

**2016/2017 World Series of Poker Circuit at Choctaw Durant
Event #9
No-Limit Hold'em
Buy-In: \$365
Total Entries: 279
Total Prize Pool: \$83,700
January 17-18, 2017**

Pete Lawson Overcomes Adversity to Win Second Ring in Choctaw Event #9

Durant, Oklahoma (January 18, 2017) – Pete Lawson has defeated a field of 279 entries to take down the World Series of Poker Event #9 at Choctaw Casino, earning his second Circuit ring and \$20,089.

“I feel pretty lucky to beat those amazing players. I got incredibly fortunate to come out on top,” said Lawson about his victory.

Lawson stated that he was supposed to be out in fifth place, but instead got lucky and flopped a set against Tyler Young to double up when they were five handed.

When it reached the portion of three-handed play, Lawson made a correct call on the river against Josh Reichard, the eventual [3rd place finisher \(\\$9,008\)](#), to take the chip lead. Reichard was eliminated a few hands later, and it came down to heads-up play between Lawson and Tyler Young. The last hand took place when Young shoved all in holding KQ, and Lawson called with AQ. [The board run-out gave Lawson a five high straight](#), and Young was eliminated in 2nd place, taking home \$12,414.

Lawson has been playing poker professionally for 14 years, and recently made the decision to play only tournament poker for the entirety of 2017. He explained that prior to this year he had never felt mentally prepared enough to dedicate himself fully to tournament poker. Lawson’s decision came after a long-time battle with an illness that he only recently has been able to understand.

Early last year Lawson was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, a high functioning form of Autism. Since his diagnosis, he has started seeing a therapist that is not only one of the top five Asperger’s specialists in the country, but also has a spouse that plays poker, so she fully understands the lifestyle and mental aspects of the game that Lawson so dearly loves. Lawson said that her combination of skill and understanding has truly been life-saving for him.

“I’ve really learned about the difficulties that I have, and the things that have blocked me in the past. I also now know that my mind works on a different level too. There are good aspects of Asperger’s, and being able to harbor those (positive aspects) has made me so much stronger in the last year,” Lawson explained, “The biggest thing with me was gaining self-awareness and knowing how others viewed me at the table. And I really got a handle on that, and that really furthered my game. Knowing where I was at, and how most people view me at the table became one of my biggest strengths.”

It's common for people facing adversity to get sucked into a negative vortex, but Lawson has learned to focus more on the positive aspects over the last year.

"I now see my previous struggles more as advantages rather than problems," Lawson explained, "I have struggled with balance in the past. The reason is because I zero in on things, and I get obsessed with one thing, and I have to be focused on just that. And other things in my life fall apart when I do that."

Now that Lawson understands his struggle with balance, he is able to positively harness his energy into poker.

"I see things in a different light...it's tough to describe. My mind is constantly working and over analyzing. In life that hurts me, but in poker it's great because I am picking up on a lot of things that others miss," Lawson said, "Because of the way my brain works, I am constantly thinking about things, and I used to try to drown it out in very non-healthy ways. And now I can harness that energy and really focus all of my energy on poker, and that's a powerful tool."

Lawson has made it his mission to shed light on what he thinks is a crucial topic, a topic that too few are either afraid to address, or don't really understand.

"The reality is, I really want to succeed this year because so few people know really what it [Asperger's] is. Everyone thinks that it's just a mental illness where you have no social skills but there's such a wide spectrum of it. I feel like I can finally do something with my success other than just making money, and that's shedding some light on a very delicate subject that the world just doesn't really know about."

Lawson went on to explain that he wants to succeed this year not only to prove to himself and others that he can do it, but he wants to be a voice for those that are too afraid to face their demons.

"This year isn't about accolades for me. It's about being able to be a voice in a world that doesn't really have a voice. I think that there are a lot of people out there that suffer with high functioning Autism and think that they are drawing dead in life, and that's very much not true. It's just a matter of getting centralized and harnessing things correctly," Lawson said.

Prior to his diagnosis, Lawson struggled in ways that negatively impacted his life and his poker game.

"One of the biggest problems that I had was that when things don't go right, self-injury. And sometimes that takes the form of being depressed, suicidal, call it what you will. But my self-injury was always drowning things out with drugs, and I am so happy to say that that is not an issue with me anymore," Lawson said proudly.

Being able to identify his differences has given Lawson a new mission in life.

"I want to be able to succeed this year not only to prove it to myself and to others, but also I want to kind of be someone that can shed light on this. 25% of all adults have some form of mental illness. And the reality is, people don't realize how their incorrect judgements can hurt others. I always thought it was a disability, but the reality is, the positives really can outweigh the

negatives. And that's what the world really needs to know. Just because someone suffers from a mental illness doesn't mean that they need to live a crippled life," Lawson concluded.

Below are the results of the final table. Full results from this event are available on WSOP.com.

- 1 – Peter Lawson – \$20,089
- 2 – Tyler Young – \$12,414
- 3 – Joshua Reichard – \$9,008
- 4 – Austin Peck – \$6,646
- 5 – Greg Jennings – \$4,984
- 6 – John Patterson – \$3,798
- 7 – Barbara Sargent – \$2,940
- 8 – Jared Hemingway – \$2,310
- 9 – Daniel Mitchell – \$1,843

At the conclusion of this event, Nathanael Kogel still leads the Casino Champion race. Kogel won Event #5 (\$365 No-Limit Hold'em), and then took down Event #8 (\$365 No-Limit Hold'em) less than 48 hours later. He also cashed in Event #2 (\$365 Re-Entry) giving him a total of 102.5 points. Christopher Staats and Enrique Melguizo are tied for second place with 60 points each. The player who accumulates the most overall points in the twelve gold ring tournaments at Choctaw Casino earns the title of Casino Champion, and receives an automatic entry into the \$1 million 2017 WSOP Global Casino Championship (seat valued at \$10,000). The winner of the Choctaw Main Event earns an automatic entry to the Global Casino Championship as well. All players who cash in ring events will receive points that apply to both the Casino Champion race and the season-long race to claim one of the 50 at-large Global Casino Championship bids awarded to the top point earners throughout the season. More information on the points system is available on WSOP.com.

Here is the list of gold ring winners from Choctaw so far:

EVENT #1: Jorge Nieto defeated 1,096 entries (\$365 No-Limit Hold'em Monster Stack) for \$60,005.

EVENT #2: Charles Adkins defeated 5,280 entries (\$365 No-Limit Hold'em Re-Entry) for \$237,622

EVENT #3: Wesley Cooper defeated 377 entries (\$365 Congress 5-Card Omaha High Low) for \$24,882

EVENT #4: Andrew Telfer defeated 506 entries (\$365 No-Limit Hold'em One Day) for \$32,636

EVENT #5: Nathanael Kogel defeated 399 entries (\$365 No-Limit Hold'em) for \$26,334

EVENT #6: Christopher Staats defeated 498 entries (\$365 No-Limit Hold'em Six Max) for \$32,870

EVENT #7: Enrique Melguizo defeated 330 entries (\$365 No-Limit Hold'em) for \$23,269

EVENT #8: Nathanael Kogel defeated 360 entries (\$365 No-Limit Hold'em) for \$24,841

EVENT #9: Peter Lawson defeated 279 entries (\$365 No-Limit Hold'em) for \$20,089

With this tournament now wrapped up, there are still 3 more gold ring events before the WSOP Circuit at Choctaw concludes on January 23, 2017.

All rings at Choctaw Casino are furnished by [Jostens](#), the official ring supplier of the 2016-2017 WSOP Circuit season.

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