# POKER BUZZ

#### WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

# NEWSLETTER

# QUARTERLY POKER CHAMPIONSHIP QPC MAIN EVENT COVERAGE

FEBRUARY'S WPT QPC Main Event brought many a tale of woe from a record-breaking field of over 2400 entrants. But no story can top the rollercoaster ride of Wakerley-based family man, Phil Stamler.

With his hopes all but dashed in the dying minutes of his Main Event flight, Stamler miraculously scrambled his way into the final day's play and an exhausting 12 hours later found himself cuddling up to the coveted Main Event trophy and a wheelbarrow of cash.

Kept busy off the felt with his well-established stone restoration business, the affable 57-year-old added a juicy \$50,000 payday to an impressive string of recent results including 2<sup>nd</sup> in December's APT PokerShop Open, which featured an epic 90-minute heads up v eventual champ, Kane Moistman.

Add to that a healthy 3rd in APT's innovative 6-Max Shot Clock event to start the 2021 season and its fair to say Phil's five grandkids have been getting spoilt a bit lately. As has his newlywed wife and biggest supporter Shannon, with the pair wearing newly-acquired sparkling bracelets to match the cute King and Queen of hearts tattoos they also sport.

But the victory looked anything but likely deep into his Main Event flight after losing a massive flip when his A • Q • bricked out v pocket 10's with literally 2 hands left of play. Stamler was left crippled with \$14k in chips and resigned to a stab at the High Roller next day. But the Poker gods clearly had other ideas, as his compulsory shove last hand of play with a helpless 2-4 off suit caught a miracle river to see him toss \$53k into a bag.

The Final Day also started off well, with KK seeing him double up twice and with his confidence starting to return, the eventual champ found a dream spot in a massive 3-way pot when his  $A \spadesuit K \spadesuit$  scooped against good friend Phil Greene's A Ko and a third opponent's flopped set of Jacks. The turn and river diamond runout completed Stamler's flush and saw him sail into the money.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE #2...** 



As the field fell away once 'the cash' had been achieved, a table change landed Stamler almost immediately in possibly the most crucial hand of his tournament against Brisbane crusher Brenton Lee. Facing a min-raise before him, Lee called in the small blind and Stamler came along in the BB with K  $\spadesuit$  2  $\spadesuit$  . With a flop of 10  $\spadesuit$  6  $\spadesuit$  4  $\spadesuit$  opening a few possibilities, Stamler called Lee's \$250k bet on the flop to see a 2h land on the turn. Lee, who had flopped top pair with 10 7o, declared his stance by shoving \$2.3m all-in ... leaving Stamler the most difficult of decisions. Taking literally until the clock was called by his opponent, Stamler eventually called with five seconds left and a river J  $\spadesuit$  sealed a shocked Lee's fate.

"Looking back, that hand ... and the 3-way pot with the diamond flush a little earlier, that was the momentum push I needed" was Stamler's assessment.

"You can't win a really big tournament like this without getting lucky a few times. Sooner or later, all the chips go in, and I definitely ran well in a few key pots."



FROM RAGS TO RICHES: Brisbane grinder Phil Stamler beat the biggest field in Australian tournament poker history to win WPT's QPC Main Event in February.

A regular at WPT's Elite Series games and also a familiar face on Brisbane Poker United's QA Hotel schedule, Phil's philosophy is a pretty simple one.

"While the blinds are small, I think its best to play a few more hands and mix it up a bit. Especially in the larger fields" he said.

"With everyone so deep early on, there's more opportunity to play a few more hands and grow your stack nicely. But if you lose a sizeable hand, there is still plenty of movement to grind your way back and do the harder yards. "Of course, once you've built up a good stack there comes a stage where you might tighten things up and pick your spots a little more carefully. It's a game of constant adjustment – maybe that's why I love it."

Away from the competition of tournament play, Stamler also doesn't mind an occasional stab at the cash tables at the Casino and enjoys keeping an eye on the stocks/share markets. He is a stickler for hand analysis, often running over crucial spots with his poker mates during breaks or after play.

Stopping short of any actual coaching to improve or evolve his game, he does admit to reading the occasional book or cramming in a few late-night YouTube sessions running over WPT Final Tables.

"There's a lot to be learnt from just observing the way professionals go about their business on the biggest stages. You pick up a lot if you keep your eyes and ears open at the poker table."

"I guess they are skills I learnt very young in life – Mum and Dad used to break out the cards a lot when we were kids. Pontoon, Canasta, Euchre and Five-Card poker had a good run on our family holidays away."

A young kid in short pants might not have won too many of those family pots way back then but looking back now it was time well spent!

### "YOU CAN'T WIN A REALLY BIG TOURNAMENT LIKE THIS WITHOUT GETTING LUCKY A FEW TIMES"

### POKER PLAYER PROFILE



#### OCCUPATION

OWNER/OPERATOR OF A STONE RESTORATION COMPANY

#### **FAVOURITE PLAYER**

DANIEL NEGREANU (HIS READING ABILITY) & PHIL HELLMUTH (NEVER A DULL MOMENT)

#### **FAVOURITE HAND**

KYQY

#### **TOURNAMENT PHILOSOPHY**

MIX IT UP IN THE EARLY LEVELS AND PLAY MORE HANDS, THERE'S PLENTY OF TIME TO GRIND ONCE THE BLINDS AREN'T SO CHEAP

#### STARTED PLAYING

2006 - ON THE APL PUB POKER SCENE

### PHIL STAMLER

# THE HONEY POT

We are great believers that there is never a bad time to sweeten the pot.

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# THE FOXES L'AIR

When POKER BUZZ said we were committed to taking readers into the lives and minds of the best in the poker business, we really weren't kidding.

So once a month we've enlisted none other than THE elder statesman of Australian tournament poker - the Silver Fox himself, Mel Judah as a regular columnist.

Fast approaching \$4m in live tournament earnings, the debonair Judah is a dual World Series of Poker bracelet winner and has mixed it with the absolute elite in the professional world.

His arrival on the absolute upper level was announced at the 1997 WSOP Main Event, where Judah finished desperately close to going heads-up with poker mastermind and eventual winner Stu Unger.

His third-place finish was the launching pad for a highly successful pro career which has seen him regularly battling some of the most familiar faces on the world stage.

Judah's 2003 WPT Legends of Poker victory saw him run over a star-studded Final Table featuring Phil Laak, Farzad Bonyardi, Chip Jett and TJ Cloutier.

In 2009, the approachable 73 year-old had the honour of becoming the inaugural inductee into the Australian Poker Hall of Fame. You'll still see him out there doing the hard yards on the Australian High Stakes circuit.

And now, more importantly, you'll hear from him once a month right here. But one piece of advice is necessary here: if Mel slips quietly into a seat on your left at a juicy tournament any time soon, smile and say gidday and FOLD!



\*Photo Courtesy of Dimi Photography



\*Photo Courtesy of Dimi Photography

COMING TO THE POKER BUZZ NEWSLETTER IN JUNE!

## POKER PLAYER PROFILE



\*Photo Courtesy of Australian Poker Tour

#### DUNCAN MCKINNON

#### OCCUPATION

RETIRED (FORMERLY AIR FORCE AND CORRECTIONS)

#### **POKER COACHING?**

SUBSCRIBES TO JONATHAN LITTLE'S COACHING WEBSITE

#### TOURNAMENT PHILOSOPHY

WHILE IT'S CHEAP, I'M HAPPY TO PLAY A FEW MORE HANDS WITHOUT PUTTING TOO MANY CHIPS AT RISK. BUT RAISING THE AGGRESSION ONCE THE BLINDS GO UP ... 3-BETTING A LOT MORE WITH STRONG STARTING HANDS

#### STARTED PLAYING

USED TO PLAY UNDER THE STREETLIGHTS FOR MY LUNCH MONEY AS A YOUNG LAD- HAVEN'T STOPPED SINCE

### **APT DRACAKIS CHAMPIONSHIP**

#### **WINNER: DUNCAN MCKINNON**

DISCIPLINE has never really been an issue for Peaks Crossing poker enthusiast, Duncan McKinnon. Celebrating his 64th birthday last week, McKinnon spent most of his adult life in the Air Force and is no stranger to the military-like requirements of success at the poker table.

As the Australian Poker Tour (APT) shattered the \$2m mark in prizemoney, McKinnon grabbed a sizeable \$50k chunk of the change with a dramatic victory in the Dracakis Players Championship.

A \$1000 buy-in tournament, the Players Championship attracted a stacked field of 254 entries as the cream of the crop tussled to get their hands on both the trophy and the much-sought Dracakis Ring – itself valued at \$10,000.

A self-funded retiree with a soft-spoken nature, McKinnon's victory is one for the everyday player who dreams of taking down a major event.

"There's nothing too ground-breaking about my approach to the game" he offered.

"I don't like to take on any high-risk spots until I'm forced to. I just play the cards I'm dealt ...and mix in a bit of individual strategy once I've got a bit of a handle on my opponents."

Like any successful modern-day tournament player, he is always trying to picture the cards his competition is holding and adapting betting strategies accordingly.

"If you can narrow down the cards your opponent is holding during a hand, your ability to navigate the hand and make it profitable is boosted greatly," he said.

One great example was a crucial pot deep in the event, when McKinnon limped into a potentially treacherous hand holding 8-6 off suit against three other players. After flopping the nut straight, he faced a crucial decision when all three opponents came out betting – opening the possibility of a huge swing.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE #6...** 

"While I obviously knew I was in front and had the best hand on the flop, there were a lot of possibilities with two clubs on the board and everyone calling to see the turn card."

"Thankfully a club didn't come, and the board didn't pair, but my opponent still led out and I had to decide whether to risk everything and put them all-in. Or just call and hope my hand holds."

Eventually, he called, and a brick river allowed him to confidently lead out and, after being called by the original raiser, he had 'tripled up' and was very much in contention.



\*Photo Courtesy of Australian Poker Tour

After making Final Table and maintaining a healthy chip stack, it looked like his momentum had stalled three-handed when he misread an opponent's random shove and lost a huge pot when his 99 came up short versus KK.

"I made a bad read there. It just really looked like they were trying to steal the pot and I went with my gut – you can't be right every time. In hindsight, I probably should have folded."

Not that it made any difference in the long run. It didn't take much longer to get to Heads Up against Yita Choong and eventually McKinnon bested the talented Asian when his pocket Aces sealed the sweetest of victories.

While he is often seen jostling with the regulars at WPT's weekend Elite games and Brisbane Poker United's QA Hotel events, the Dracakis Ring and Players Championship Title are undoubtedly his biggest achievement to date.

Prior to last month's memorable victory, McKinnon's biggest cash was a \$23,000 collect for 4th place in a 2016 World Series of Poker Bounty Tournament at Melbourne's Crown Casino.

"That was a very exciting event for me personally. Miraculously, I managed to come very close to winning despite not even collecting one Bounty in a field of over 1000 starters!" he recalled.

Away from the felt, McKinnon loves tending to his cattle and goats out on his property, but also devotes an hour or so most days to some study or online coaching via top professional Jonathan Little's training site.

"Studying the game is a necessity if you genuinely want to keep improving. There's a very fine line between controlled aggression and reckless play when one mistake can literally unravel all the hard work."

And his plans for the loot?

"I'd love to trek through India with the wife one time soon. Probably shouldn't have given her the whole winnings now I look back," he said with a sly chuckle.

"I DON'T LIKE TO TAKE ON ANY HIGH-RISK SPOTS UNTIL I'M FORCED TO. I JUST PLAY THE CARDS I'M DEALT."

## APT WRAP-UP WITH CEO DAVID MILES

AUSTRALIAN Poker Tour CEO David Miles was still shaking off the cobwebs when POKER BUZZ caught up to him almost a week after last month's Gold Coast Series smashed the \$2m barrier in prizemoney.

"To exceed the staggering numbers, we got at our Brisbane Series is nothing short of mind-blowing," the man affectionately known as `Milo' told us.

"The bigger buy-in events just continue to grow in popularity," Miles said. "With numbers in Sydney usually a little higher – and a full sevenday schedule coming together as we speak – the anticipation for our June Series down there is huge."

Recently adding the \$2500 buy-in event, The Goliath to an impressive regular schedule has also exceeded all expectations.

Gold Coast Goliath champion, Dwan Setton took home a whopping \$112,000 for his troubles as 189 entries saw a prize-pool of over \$400k.



APT CEO David Miles. \*Photo Courtesy of Australian
Poker Tour

In other high stakes results, The Grind attracted a record 376 entrants with the consistent Yang Lei scooping \$77k for his victory. Melbourne visitor, Anthony Cierco beat a field of nearly 500 players in the High Roller Tournament and scored a healthy \$32,875 for his interstate jaunt.

950 entrants were seated in the prestigious Main Event, with David Rodwell pocketing \$31,300 as the eventual winner. The appearance of Aussie cricket legend, Shane Warne – mingling with players and proving just as fierce a competitor on the felt as he was at the bowling crease – was also a big hit.

"Having someone like Warnie in the house was a huge driver for the series. He was a fantastic addition, really down-to-earth and approachable."



GIANT-KILLER: Gold Coast Goliath winner Dwan Setton scooped a sixfigure payday after navigating one of the toughest fields ever assembled for an APT event in March. \*Photo Courtesy of Australian Poker Tour

"It's been hugely successful in the past with poker identities such as Michael Mizrachi and Joe Hachem really providing a unique experience for our players," Miles said.

On the subject of household names and guest players, the APT head honcho was already busy building an impressive list of invitees for the Sydney Series' Celebrity Bounty Tournament.

"These marquee celebrity knockout events really are another key component as we continue to strive to make our Tour all about the players," Miles states.

"It's a bit early to release any certain celebrity starters just yet, but it's fair to say the players will get a huge buzz as they see the names announced. This event will be a cracker."

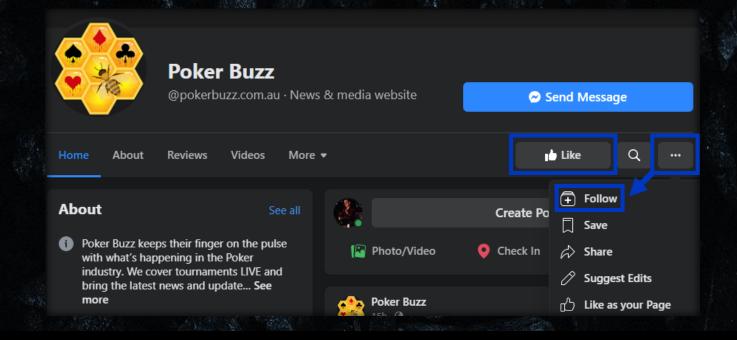
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## CHECK RAISE MAIN EVENT VO'S 'JOB SKILLS' COME IN HANDY

ANALYSING data and assessing risk management are two areas recent Check Raise Poker Super Series Main Event winner, Hai Vo has always excelled in.

Handy 'job skills' at the poker table for the 47-year-old, whose degree in IT and ensuing career as a systems engineer has undoubtedly helped build a very effective armory while on the felt.

Running well when it counted during his evening Main Event flight, Vo bagged a healthy \$310,000 for Day 2 and outlasted 330 entries to claim \$8,885 in cash and beat Larry Stockman heads up for the trophy.

With a couple of decades of both online and live poker under his belt, there isn't too much Hai hasn't seen (and noted) at a poker table.

"Your memory banks are your biggest weapon really. If you can get a good read on an opponent, and understand their style of play, you have a much better chance of knowing what to expect from them," Vo said.

"That can really help if you get in a big hand with someone. Your instinct takes over."

Two better examples couldn't be found than these:

- A bold hero call late in the tournament, already deep in the money, when Vo went with his gut after missing the board completely and called with A10 to beat his opponent's weaker A6 after facing a large river bet bluff; and
- A huge instinctive laydown on Final Table after raising from late position and being 3-bet by eventual 4th place finisher Kane Peters. Sensing he was beat, Vo folded his pocket 9's face up ... with Peters rewarding his correct play by showing his hand was a dominating pocket 10's. (Ironically a couple of hours later Vo's winning hand was pocket 9's!).

As far as negotiating the early stages of the larger tournaments, Vo's strategy is pretty straight forward.

"There's little point just waiting round for monster hands if there's hundreds of players in the field," he offered. "I prefer to get in there early up and play a few starting hands that might flop straights or flushes."

"After all, the big hands play themselves. But getting involved while the pots are smaller, and the risks lower makes more sense to me."

"While you don't have to put too many chips in, the risk versus reward factor is huge because some players just cannot lay down their big pairs early."

Towards the middle stages, his focus turns to trying to stay above the average stack size.

"I think its important to try and stay aware of where you are in relation to the rest of the field. I've always got one eye on the leaderboard," Vo said.

Last fortnight's CRP Main Event victory ranks as the likeable Vo's biggest live result, but a \$45,000 win online in 2006 really piqued his interest and he can be found honing his skills as a regular at the Cypruss Poker Club, QA Hotel and local WPT Elite games.

Prior to arriving on the poker scene, a younger Vo was an accomplished volleyballer (playing at State level), and a handy rugby and tennis player.

He and wife Xuan (currently studying English) – whom he brought out from Vietnam on her birthday in February last year – love to fish and also have a tropical fish collection to die for.



HAI ROLLER: 330 entries lined up for last fortnight's Check Raise Poker Main Event, with the ever-smiling Hai Vo (47) the eventual victor.

"THERE'S LITTLE POINT JUST WAITING ROUND FOR MONSTER HANDS IF THERE'S HUNDREDS OF PLAYERS IN THE FIELD. I PREFER TO GET IN THERE EARLY UP AND PLAY A FEW STARTING HANDS THAT MIGHT FLOP STRAIGHTS OR FLUSHES."

### **CHECK RAISE MAIN EVENT**

**SERIES WRAP UP** 

The cream of Southeast Queensland's poker community converged on the southside's Acacia Ridge Hotel last month to lock horns at Check Raise Poker's 6-Max Super Series.

Offering 19 events over a six-day schedule, the CRP Super Series was another feather in the cap for independent league owner, Mark Mayer and his energetic crew.

Drawing a mix of local recreational players and semi-pros, the series featured a host of traditional events and a handful of hybrid/novelty tournaments which also produced many an exciting moment for players and spectators alike.

Heavy-hitting professional boxer Jeff Horn signed on as a celebrity player - scrapping it out across a host of events as he warmed up for The Hornet Super High Roller (\$1150 entry).

Running deep in his `sparring matches', Horn also more than held his own against the game's best high stakes players and was impressive as he booked a seat into Day Two and eventually also a Final Table berth.

Threatening to take out the feature event named in his honour, Horn finished a creditable seventh after running into a steamrolling Rauran Toye to end his impressive run.

Toye, a previous WPT QPC Main Event champion and consistent circuit performer, scored a few more high-profile scalps on his way to victory and a handy \$13,260 collect.

The Series' other nosebleed buy-in event – the Evolution 24/7 Gym Pot Limit Omaha Super High Roller (\$1150 entry) - also saw some towering chip stacks built and saw the top 3 players agree to come back next day to play down a winner.

Top level tournament specialist Najeem Ajez eventually got the better of Harry Evans (2nd) and popular professional Dan O'Shea (3rd) to lockup \$11,365 and another trophy for his growing collection.

Extreme Bounty winner Josh Norvock also added to his burgeoning resume, destroying nearly half the field singlehandedly in a tournament which definitely was NOT for the fainthearted.

The prestigious JDL Sports High Roller again attracted a solid field, with Kieren Kersvnoske prevailing.

Perennial Player of the Series contender, Brisbane's Sam Adams once again proved his table-hopping skills are secondto-none and took out the elite title for a \$8380 collect.

The series also featured a host of lower buy-in tournaments which saw victories to popular Sunshine Coast dealer Jacob Faull (Poker Buzz Freeroll), Sonny Ho (Run It Twice), Tin Loung (Win The Button), Paul Gibson (PLO5 Re-Entry) and silent assassin, Kiale Matthews (5-Card Single Draw).

Team event winners Jaisan Patel and Francis Nguyen scored a tense win over young guns Kassiah Kong and Sam Burns.

Local grinder, Alex Lees nabbed his first tournament trophy along with a \$2230 catch for his win in The Accumulator.



SERIES CHAMPION: Check Raise Poker Player of the Series Sam Adams. Photo Courtesy of Dimi Photography



# TABLE TALK

w/ Geoff Bond

### **DON'T BE THAT GUY**

### RESPECT THOSE AROUND YOU — WHETHER RUNNING HOT, OR KNOCKED OUT FROM A BAD BEAT

As a recreational poker player, there is nothing that upsets me more than seeing and hearing the disrespect many players show to their fellow competitors - worse still, to tournament directors.



In the past month alone, I've had to bite my tongue so many times my kids genuinely think I've developed a lisp. I mean generally, I'm drawn to the eerie balance of banter and deathly silence of a poker tournament.

It's just that lately (and probably more so because fields are larger across all poker platforms) there seems to be a few more `bad apples` than ever before.

There could be literally 60 people in a poker room, most of them trying to enjoy their weekly escape from the demands of life, yet it takes only one or two inconsiderate a\*\*holes to kill the vibe.

Whether it be berating a fellow player for playing a hand differently than they would (and taking their chips) - or making rude and loud vocal demands of the TD - this kind of behaviour is the absolute opposite of what anyone should bring to poker.

If you've had a super bad day and feel the need to take it out on someone, just go to bed early or whoop your grandkids on PlayStation. STAY HOME and retain your dignity rather than go to poker and wreck someone's night out with your bad attitude.

Personally, I've only ever abused another player at the tables once. And, while I could easily justify it at the time, I later felt pretty bad about it and offered a genuine apology.

But I know I'll never do it again. I can promise I won't back down if ever I get abused or belittled by another player – but I don't ever want to be THAT GUY that causes a scene he later regrets.

In a world where most of us are obligated to leave a good impression at work and at home, those common courtesies can easily be replicated at a poker table. No matter how hideous the beat or terrible the play, when you're out of chips and busted … tap the table as you leave and wish your opponents good luck.

And, on the topic of tournament directors/staff/dealers, remember this:

- They would probably secretly rather be playing than working, but they've chosen to feed their kids by earning today instead;
- · You're probably lucky they aren't playing. Because the truth is more often than not, they'd bust you if they were sitting at your table;
- · Without them getting to the venue waaaaay before you did and working their butt off to setup, there wouldn't be a tournament to play.

So, next time you have the luxury of spending your day or night playing poker, try and put a smile on their face and show some appreciation for those who make our game possible.



### WHAT'S ON IN MAY?

#### **QUEENSLAND**

#### WPT DEEP STACKS @ THE STAR CASINO (GOLD COAST)

21st - 31st of May

Tournament buy-in's start at just \$330, with the Main Event having a buy-in of \$1,500. <a href="https://www.starpoker.com.au/rego">www.starpoker.com.au/rego</a>

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

#### **POKER PALACE AUSTRALIA - AUTUMN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2021**

27th April - 17th of May

LOADS of poker to be played. www.pokerpalace.com.au/

#### **AUSTRALIAN POKER LEAGUE PRO TOUR (SYDNEY)**

11<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> of May

29 Events over 6 days <a href="https://www.playAPL.com/">www.playAPL.com/</a>

#### **BIG BOYS UNLEASHED**

21st - 23rd of May

Guest appearance by Mel Judah - Poker Buzz Poker Ambassador. \$40k est. Main Event prize pool with a GTD \$10k for 1st place.

www.bigboyzpoker.com/

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA SOUTHERN POKER TOUR

27th April - 17th of May

Face Off in The Fleurieu - \$100k est. Series prize pool www.southernpokertour.com.au/

#### STACKED POKER CHAMPIONSHIP

16<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> of May

\$100k GTD for 1st for the Main Event.

www.stackedsocial.com.au/

### WEST AUSTRALIA SHARK AUTUMN POKER CHAMPIONSHIP

1st - 14th of May

15 events.

www.sharkpoker.com.au/