

8,772 entrants. A 12 million dollar first place prize. And a new champion crowned. Jamie Gold, a Hollywood talent agent is pokers new king for a year after prevailing at the final table of the main event of the World Series of Poker. Inside is the story of what went down, from the folks at CardPlayer.com, a phenomenal website for any poker enthusiasts out there.



*This story courtesy of the folks at [www.cardplayer.com](http://www.cardplayer.com)*

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### **As Good As Gold - Jamie Gold Takes Home \$12,000,000 Cash Prize and WSOP Bracelet**

Eight flat-screen TVs, over 150 seats, an elaborate lighting system and television set, 300 fans lined up two hours before start time, all at the Rio's Amazon Room, all brought together for the crowning of the 2006 World Series of Poker champ — aka The \$12 Million Man.

The nine remaining players, survivors of an 8,773 starting field, received a full opening ceremony at the start of the day. Former Aerosmith guitarist Jimmy Crespo performed the National Anthem and sponsor Corum presented each participant with a diamond-encrusted "Royal Flush" watch.

Joe Hachem, in his last duties as poker's reigning champion, wished the soon-to-be title holder well, then kicked off action with an emotional "shuffle up and deal."

The chip counts and seating for the final table were as follows:

1. Jamie Gold - \$26,650,000 (Seat 8)
2. Allen Cunningham - \$17,770,000 (Seat 5)
3. Richard Lee - \$11,820,000 (Seat 1)
4. Erik Friberg - \$9,605,000 (Seat 2)
5. Paul Wasicka - \$7,970,000 (Seat 3)
6. Doug Kim - \$6,770,000 (Seat 7)
7. Rhett Butler - \$4,815,000 (Seat 9)
8. Michael Binger - \$3,140,000 (Seat 6)
9. Dan Nassif - \$2,600,000 (Seat 4)

At 2:10 p.m. PDT, the last day of the 2006 World Series of Poker main event began at level 31 with \$80,000-\$160,000 blinds and \$20,000 antes.

In a tournament that moved so fast players received an unscheduled day off, fans and media expected eliminations to come quickly, and they were not disappointed.

On the fifth hand (roughly 10 minutes into play), Dan Nassif provided the packed Amazon Room with the final table's first casualty. The 33-year-old account executive from St. Louis, Missouri, started the action with a \$700,000 preflop raise from the button.

Jamie Gold, who entered play with a massive chip lead over Nassif and the rest of the table, made the call. After a blind check by Gold, Nassif pushed all in on the 5 3 2 flop. Gold called immediately, and continued his run of bustouts when he flipped over 2 2 and Nassif showed A K. The A turn offered Nassif some hope, but his tournament run ended with the 10 river.

Nassif congratulated his fellow final table participants and walked off the ESPN stage as the ninth-place finisher (\$1,566,858).

"I feel like an a—bag for calling, for not pushing all in preflop," Nassif joked with Card Player's Rich Belsky in a post-elimination interview. "But hindsight's 20-20, so what're you gonna do."

Like Nassif, Gold blindsided Allen Cunningham on a big hand. After a series of bets, Cunningham fired \$2 million into a A 9 9 8 5 board. Gold called and showed the 10-9. Cunningham flipped over another 9, mucked both cards, and shook his head as Gold dragged the pot.

The hand put Gold at \$34,500,000 and knocked Cunningham down to third on the leaderboard with \$12 million.

Not satisfied with taking a chunk out of the Full Tilt pro, Gold upped the stakes by sending his second consecutive player to the rail.

The new victim: 2005 Swedish Poker Challenge champion Erik Friberg.

Friberg moved all in over the top of Gold's \$1 million preflop raise. A quick call by Gold brought the crowd to its feet, and the room buzzed when Friberg turned over pocket jacks and Gold revealed pocket queens. A superfluous queen on the river gave Gold a set, and Friberg bowed out of the tournament in eighth place (\$1,979,189).

An hour later, Gold's streak of eliminations ended with Paul Wasicka's bustout of Doug Kim. In another case of pocket pair over pocket pair, Kim pushed all in on a 4 4 3 flop with 9 9, only to have Wasicka call and show Q Q. Wasicka's queens stayed true, and Kim took home seventh place (\$2,391,520).

Kim, who attended Duke University with 129th-place finisher Jason Strasser, credited Internet poker with his successful pre-WSOP training.

While the eliminations slowed, the action at the final table never stalled. Cunningham extracted

some revenge on Gold after calling a \$2 million bet on a Q 8 8 3 2 board. The audience cheered as Cunningham, showing nothing better than an ace high, raked the \$3 million-plus pot.

Despite the loss, Gold wasted little time reestablishing his presence as the table's chip boss. In a hand similar to the Friberg elimination, Gold, with pocket queens, called an all in preflop raise by an opponent holding pocket jacks. Richard Lee, a 55-year-old investor from San Antonio, had the unfortunate experience of being the massive underdog, and exited tournament play in sixth (\$2,803,851) after the board failed to improve his hand.

After the elimination, Lee expressed great disappointment for not being able to take the title back to his beloved city.

"The biggest thing that I regret about getting knocked out," Lee said, "is I really, really, really wanted to bring a championship home to San Antonio."

Lee fell right before the dinner break, and right after the dinner break, Harrah's performed the \$12 million money presentation.

With a mountain of cash sitting right off to the corner, the final table participants played back-and-forth poker for over two hours.

At 11:45 p.m. PDT, Gold took another step toward the summit of Mount Cash by eliminating Rhett Butler in fifth place (\$3,216,182).

An insurance agent from Rockville, Maryland, Butler pushed his remaining \$2,075,000 in over the top of a \$900,000 raise by Cunningham. Gold knocked Cunningham off the hand after making a \$2 million bet into a J 6 5 2 board. With action heads-up, Butler found himself in a hole with pocket fours against Gold's K J. The 10 brought no help, making Butler the fifth-place finisher (\$3,216,182).

The Cunningham-Gold duel came to an end on the 208th hand of the final table. The knockout blow occurred after Cunningham pushed all in on a Michael Binger raise. The \$6,500,000 move prompted Binger to fold. Gold thought for a minute, then called.

With his tournament life on the line, Cunningham flipped over the 10 10 and fans cheered when Gold showed the K J. The most established, and well-known player at the final table, Cunningham stood up, walked away from his seat, but turned back around after the Amazon Room erupted when Gold hit the K on the flop.

Cunningham, visibly disappointed, exited the tournament area as the fourth-place finisher (\$3,628,513).

The short stack coming into three-handed action, Binger lasted for over an hour. The Atherton, California, native and Stanford graduate made a \$1,500,000 raise from the big blind. After both opponents called, Binger fired \$3,500,000 on a 10 6 5 flop. An all in reraise by Gold pushed Wasicka out of the hand and Binger called.

Going for his fifth elimination of the day, Gold turned over the 4 3 for the open-ended straight draw. Binger's A 10 gave him top pair, but he lost the lead for good when the 7 hit on the turn.

Gold celebrated with friends and family, while Binger saw his main event run end with a third-place finish (\$4,123,310).

Harrah's followed up Binger's elimination by pouring the \$12 million first-place prize onto the final table felt, and presenting the diamond-laced WSOP bracelet.

The chip counts going into heads-up action were as follows:

1. Jamie Gold - \$78,975,000
2. Paul Wasicka - \$11,225,000

After 11 days of intense tournament action, and 8,771 eliminations, the 2006 main event championship came down to two men.

Gold, a television producer from Malibu, California, dominated the latter half of tournament play, punctuated by an unheard of four-day run as chip boss.

A 25-year-old poker pro, Wasicka took a much more low-key road to heads-up action. The Westminister, Colorado, native floated around the middle of the leaderboard throughout the main event, and did not crack the end-of-day top 10 chip counts until Day 7 — when he advanced to the final table.

Overcoming Gold's chip lead, however, proved too much even for a player who had survived the largest field in WSOP history.

At 3:43 a.m. PDT, after 20 minutes of heads-up play, Gold made a \$1,700,000 raise. Wasicka bet \$1,500,000 on the Q 8 5 flop, and Gold repopped all in. After several minutes of thinking about the hand, Wasicka called and flipped over the 10 10.

Upon seeing Wasicka's cards, Gold threw his hands in the air and turned over the Q 9. His cheering section erupted, chanting "Gold! Gold! Gold!" The rest of the Amazon Room soon joined in the celebration, as the A turn and 4 river closed play on the 2006 World Series of Poker main event.

Despite the runner-up finish, Wasicka walked away with \$6,102,499 and the realization of the ultimate career goal.

"It's a dream come true to make it to that final table," Wasicka told Card Player's Ryan Luchessi. "You can't really put into words how amazing the experience was."

As for Gold, poker's newest champion saw his \$12 million cash prize and newfound title as gifts to be shared with friends and family.

The first two things Gold did upon winning the bracelet was hug his mother and make a call to his father.

“Today happened to be my day, but I hope from now on it can be their [friends and family] day,” Gold said after his bracelet presentation. “I can’t wait to do for them what they’ve done for me. We’re all going to have a really good time with this money.”

So how did Gold win \$12 million and poker’s most prestigious title? What was his strategy in besting 8,772 opponents.

“I’m playing against the other players, while they’re trying to play their cards.” Gold told Card Player. “I sit down at every table with the same strategy — I want to find out how they’re playing and I want to figure out how to beat them.”

For more information on bracelet winners and other WSOP news stories, please visit <http://www.cardplayer.com/tournaments/wsop/2006s>.