

At a Glanz...

Glanzer 1, Vegas 0

My First Vegas Poker Tournament



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I came to Vegas to start a new life, but to also play poker. I loved poker. I was good at it,

and I was going to show my mettle in Vegas. Unfortunately having only \$400 and losing \$275 the first night, makes the dream a little harder to achieve. With only \$125 left in my bankroll, I had to give up poker and get a real job. But of course before Monday came, there was Sunday. And being in Vegas and all, I decided to let it ride.

The tournament at Binions cost \$130. My roommate Anthony Fiorino put up half that for me, and would split half the winnings. I don't remember what I was thinking on my way to Binions, but it should have been, "Richie, what the heck are you doing?!?!?"

It was Easter of 2006, and the turnout was only 17 people. Normally a lot more players play that tournament. This was good because I had a greater percentage to win, but of course the top prize of \$750 wasn't going to be life changing. But I guarantee no one needed that money more than me.

I remember starting off well. I didn't double up, but I was winning some decent pots and playing very well. Anthony was struggling and short stacked. I was glad we were at separate tables as I just wanted to put all my focus on me. But I got switched to Anthony's table after around the first hour. He was immediately to my right which was good because I could steal his blind or give him mine. There were a lot of enemies there that morning, no reason for me and Anthony to mix it up with each other.

However Anthony got eliminated and I felt the

pressure of the world on me. I know the stakes don't seem all that high, but for me this is all the money I had. I *needed* to win this thing. But not just for the money. For the trip. My trip was a four-day hell ride. I hyperventilated, almost died, and was a total mess. I was in the west coast for the first time in my life, and I felt I was on the other side of the world. I missed New York terribly and though I was enthused, I couldn't really have that initial rush because I had no money to do anything. Basically, I needed something good to happen to me.

The tournament was down to its final table. There were nine of us. The top three got paid, but third place paid so little, it was hardly worth it. No, I needed to win this thing.

I remember this old lady. She had never played Texas Hold Em before and she paid off everybody. She never folded. So I have K/Q hearts and three hearts hit the board. I remember thinking, "This old lady is going to double me up." I couldn't believe when she folded.

Some poker players say it doesn't matter if you win a small pot, as long as you win. Always remember this. Poker players lie. Winning a small pot when you have the nuts (best hand possible) sucks. And though there was one hand that beat me, (and Ace high flush) I felt I left some chips off the table.

The tournament grinded down and I was in decent position. I remember feeling nervous yet confident. Or maybe confident yet nervous. Finally it got down to three of us. The old lady, and this tight 27-year-old.

The old lady was dominating. Not because she was good, but because the blinds were so high and she was raising every pot. It was a good strategy, but it was more luck than anything.

The tournament has scheduled breaks and I remember going into the bathroom and seeing Anthony. I needed a pep talk and he gave me one. This was *my* moment, not theirs! I was

going to win this thing.

But I needed cards and I was right in the middle of the attack of the bad card brigade. I had nothing. I was on the button (meaning first to act when you're three-handed) and I remember saying to myself, I am going all-in. I am pushing all my chips to the middle no matter what. I was hoping just to steal the blinds. So I look at my cards and I see the dreaded 2/3 off-suit. The two lowest cards in the deck. But I pushed all-in hoping my opponents would fold. The extremely tight player called. Great, I was done. And then of course the old lady called. Doubly done!!

But I didn't realize something. I had \$100 more chips than the tight guy (\$100 was the lowest chip in play. It means we basically had the same amount). So if the old lady wins the hand, I come in 2nd, not 3rd. This was good news.

The tight guy had pocket 7's, and the old lady had A/K. I was around a 13% favorite to win the hand. The flop came and I hit a two. This may seem like good news but its really not. I wanted the 2, but I also wanted an Ace or a King. Because I was still behind the pocket 7's, and the 7's were ahead of the old lady. I needed the lady to beat the tight guy so I would come in 2nd. But that all changed on the turn when a magical 3 hit the felt!!! I was now in the lead!!! I remember Anthony going, "YES!!!!!!!" The crowd from the incoming tournament went nuts. But I was sitting there like someone killed my dog. There is a Poker God and he doesn't like players that celebrate too early. There were a lot of cards in the deck that could hurt me. The two remaining 7's, and if the board paired the other two non 2,3 I was done. I don't remember what hit on the river. I think it was a harmless 6. But I had won the hand!!! I took my two cards, turned to the crowd and said, "I only play the nuts!!! (which was a joke since I had a horrible hand when I put all my money in). Anthony suggested I make a deal with the old lady and give her an extra \$100 bucks to end the tournament now. I agreed and she did as well. She got the t-shirt

that said she won, I got the free entry into a tournament at a later date. We hugged and Anthony and I went to eat. He was paying. I was the hero.

I remember Anthony driving and I was high on life. I was cursing that Arizona mountain that nearly killed me, and calling all my family and friends telling of the story of my first win.

We went to the restaurant and Anthony told the waitress I was a hero. He was right. I thought I needed something good to happen to me. I was wrong. I needed something great. And it happened.

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