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POSTED ON 06 JUL 2009
BY GENE BROMBERG

World Series of Poker Commissioner Jeffrey Pollack and other Harrah's executives just concluded a meeting with around 150 players who hoped to play in the Main Event today but were turned away because the field was capped. The players were told that because of operational issues no additional players would be admitted to the Main Event.

"We are sorry, and I am sorry," Pollack said in his opening statement. "The last thing that we ever want to do is deny people entry into our event." But, he went on to say, "as was the case with ten other events at this year's WSOP, we simply reached capacity today."

As you might expect the players weren't satisfied with Pollack's statement and peppered him with questions. The biggest points of contention were why Harrah's website says their Main Event capacity is 3,000 when they capped the field at around 2,700, and what specific "operational issues" prevented Harrah's from putting more players in the field. Pollack said introducing alternates into play today wouldn't be fair to those players, and that playing ten-handed today wouldn't be fair after the first three days were played nine-handed. He also said that if they re-opened registration for a "Day 1E" then perhaps a thousand people might show up to play, which could have repercussions as the Main Event plays down from there.

"You have my word and my promise that this is going to be topic one as we plan for 2010. I have pledged every year that we will do better than the year before, and I think we've lived up to that promise," Pollack said. "This is probably the single biggest challenge that we have faced in the past four years, and I promise that we will look at this and find the solution so this isn't repeated next year."



But the players weren't especially interested in plans for next year--some of them have traveled thousands of miles to play in the Main Event, one said that playing in this tournament was a life-long dream and now he was being turned away. Another player brought up the fact that in just about every other tournament /late registration was allowed. "In all the other events that started at noon you could sign up at two o'clock, and then today at ten o'clock they were shutting people out?"



A number of people also asked Pollack about reports that a number of well-known players who tried to register after the field was capped got in anyway--Pollack said that so far as he knew every player in the field had registered on time and that a number of famous players (Ted Forrest, Minh Ly and Tom Franklin among them) were not able to get in the field.

Pollack conceded that this is the first time that players have been turned away from the Main Event under his watch (and perhaps the first time that's happened in Main Event history). "Just to be clear, we are not doing this happily," Pollack said. "We're not in the business of turning people away." To which one player replied, "What part of \$3 million don't you like, bro?"

It was an unhappy outcome for all concerned. This is one of those situations where everyone had good intentions and everyone got screwed. It's one thing to say that the players should've registered early, that they should've played on one of the earlier days...but the fields were smaller than last year (when no players were turned away) and there was no notification on Harrah's part (until last night) that Day 1D might sell out. And if you're flying from New York, or Oslo, or Buenos Aires on Sunday to play on Monday it's impossible to change your plans at the last second. For many of the players in the room, this was their first time to the World Series and they might not have had an idea of the sheer size and scope of the event. They thought (quite reasonably) that they could show up at noon, plunk down \$10,000, and take a seat. Because that's the way it's always been.

But today, the World Series of Poker was a victim of it's own success. There were 150 people in that room desperate to give Harrah's \$10,000...and Harrah's had to say, "I'm sorry, we can't take it". The WSOP is so popular that today the players strained it beyond it's ability to cope. There are only so many tables, so many dealers, so many floorpersons available to work the tournament. If another 500 players sat down at 5pm to play in a makeshift Day 1E it might've caused gridlock as the Main Event tried to get through the Day 2s and Day 3 and into the money.

After the meeting was over a number of disgruntled players crowded around Tom Franklin, who acted as a spokesperson for the players. He told them to calm down, that the decision was made and it was final. One player said he couldn't believe he was going to miss the Main Event and Franklin said, "I've played 30 in a row and I can't believe I'm going to miss this one."

About an hour after the meeting Jeffrey Pollack came up to Media Row to say that he'd be willing to discuss what happened today further during the press conference that's scheduled for Thursday. And while he was here he said, again, "We're going to fix this, THAT I know". It's unfortunate that no one, not the players nor Harrah's, saw soon enough that something was going to break today.

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5 Responses to "Everybody Loses"

vu-doo says:
July 6, 2009 at 8:47 pm
this is a problem that I was afraid could happen. The WSOP can only handle so many players at one time. I think everyone can understand that. I don't know why Harrah's decided on 3000 players, and then stopped short of that number. I am sure they have a reason. Why no alternates list either. I can see why they didn't want to add another day.

On the other side of the coin. Why did so many people wait until the last day to play. Well there are a ton of reasons why. I am sure. Just by looking at the previous days registration numbers might have led some to believe that the numbers for Monday would be down as well. Others might have been planning to play day 4 from the start. Because of the Holiday. July 4th was Saturday you know. And I am sure nobody thought they would get turned away from the Main Event.

The crux of the problem comes down to a few things I think. The fact that the Main Event falls over the 4th of July weekend is one. It is a double edged sword...it is great on one hand because some people get an extra few days off work on the other hand some people stayed home for the holiday then came to Vegas to Play the WSOP.

Another thing I think needs to be tweaked is the way registration happens for the Main Event. There needs to be a way for everyone to register before the Main Event even starts. Let everyone sign up the week before. Then get assigned a day to play.

It is sad that this happened. But this you can bet on. Jeffrey pollack And the WSOP will fix this for next year. Trust me...they wanted all the players who were turned away to enter. It just wasn't possible.

DickOShea says:
July 6, 2009 at 9:57 pm
Thanks for update so quick. Interesting point for the future okay and interesting to see if some players did slip through as the closed out implied in their understandable upset of missing the great event.

Have to say its great that its growing which means good for Live Poker. Growing mainly because of on line poker which means both are winners.

I wonder what I would do with 10K in my back pocket in Las Vegas....buy a laptop and logon to UB!!

Those In the Field - Ultimate Bet Blog says:
July 7, 2009 at 12:10 am
[...] a picture of today was Matt Graham, who was eliminated from the Main Event while I was attending Jeffrey Pollack's meeting earlier today. But I did get quite a few shots of Matt earlier in the Series, like when he won his second WSOP [...]

Everybody Loses | Gene Bromberg says:
July 7, 2009 at 1:09 am
[...] the whole meeting I'm just gonna cut-and-paste the last part of what I wrote today on the UB blog (if you're interested check out the whole article): It was an unhappy outcome for all [...]

The 2010 World Series of Poker, Get Ready - Ultimate Bet Blog says:
December 20, 2009 at 3:02 pm
[...] been held in the past. The decision to use Pavilion no doubt comes from the disaster last year when hundreds of players were shut out on Day 1D of the Main Event because there was no room at the inn (well, the Rio). The Pavilion is 58,000 square feet (compared [...])

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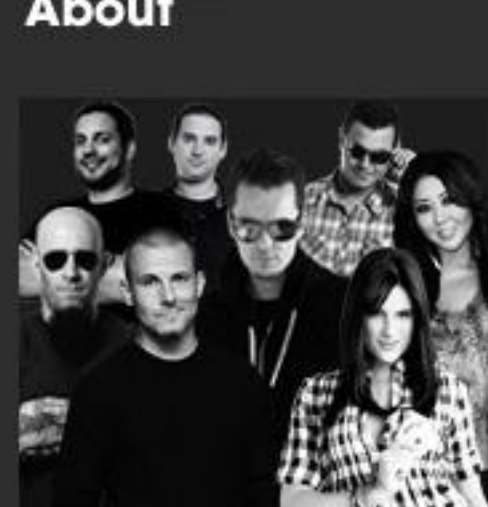
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