

The Bicycle Casinos Renowned Legends of Poker and World Poker

BELL GARDENS – One of the hottest spots to see stars on Monday night wasn't in Beverly Hills or Hollywood! It was in Bell Gardens at The Bicycle Casino!

This night was the launch of a three-day poker championship held at the Casino every August and more than Poker Stars came to try their hands at the Cadillac of Card Games, No Limit Hold'em! Lou Diamond Phillips, the unofficial spokesman for the upcoming season of the World Poker Tour attended the Mariani/Buss Charity Event on Sunday evening to speak to the audience (including Frank Mariani and Jerry Buss, co-owners of the L.A. Lakers), but then returned for the BIG game on Monday night to try his hand at this, the game of champions, as did Ben Affleck and Gabe Kaplan!

Reflecting the phenomenal growth of tournament poker, a growth very largely fueled by World Poker Tour exposure, an incredible total of 309 players turned out for the 2003 Legends of Poker Championship/WPT event. This represents a 229 percent increase over the 135 players at the first WPT tournament at the Bike last year. The \$ 1,545,000 prize pool also set an all-time record for any Bicycle Casino event.

A small army of journalists and cameramen descended on the tournament. In addition to WPT television cameramen, there were representatives from local and network TV stations, including CBS, ABC, FOX, KCAL-9 & ESPN. At the Bike's front entrance, floodlights and cameras were in place to film the arrival of a stretch limo out of which stepped ... Arnold Schwarzenegger? No, Shana Hiatt, rising star commentator of the World Poker Tour.

In a spectacular, made-for-TV finish, Mel Judah (a former ladies hairdresser who started playing poker with friends when he was 14, and has been traveling the international tournament poker circuit for years) captured the Legends Championship/WPT event by breaking Paul Phillips (a 31-year-old former computer programmer and currently a self-styled „dilettante,“ who came to the third-day final table of with an enormous chip lead of \$ 657,000, twice that of anyone else.) It was an intriguing final table, featuring high caliber players including the renowned T.J. Cloutier, Mel Judah, Chip Jett, Farzad „Fred“ Bonyadi ... and a student from Ireland, Phil Laak, nicknamed „The Unibomber“ because of the hooded sweatshirt and sunglasses he favors while playing.

The phenomenal World Poker Tour will bring the Legends of Poker“s championship event, a \$ 5000+ \$ 80 No Limit „Texas“ Hold“em tournament, to the general public on The Travel Channel this spring. Filming „live“ for the WPT began on at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 3rd. Thirteen cameras captured the action, including tiny cameras that will reveal the hole cards at the final edit, allowing viewers to see who is bluffing and who is not.