Bend Man Bound for World Series of Poker

by K_Guice

Qualifying for the World Series of Poker (WSOP) is a dream for every poker player. In fact it is considered to be the ultimate achievement in any playerâ€™s career and it is something one man in Bend has achieved, not once, but twice.

Matt Vogel qualified for the World Series of PokerMatt Vogel, 40, is a mortgage loan officer and father of three little girls; four, six and three months. In the little spare time that he has, Vogel has developed a passion for poker.

What he calls a hobby for the past two years has him in the most prestigious poker game on the planet which attracts thousands of players, spans nine days and has become so popular it is covered as a sporting event on ESPN.

â€œThe planetâ€™s richest and most prestigious gaming event is attracting thousands of customers from around the world,â€• said World Series of Poker Tournament Director Bob Daily.

There are several events, including Texas Hold'em Limit, Omaha Pot Limit, 7-Card-Stud Hi/Lo, Pot Limit, No Limit, and other types of poker such as Razz and Lowball, ending with the grand finale â€“ the World Championship Event.

The winner of each WSOP event gets the most prestigious award a poker player can win â€“ the World Series of Poker Gold Bracelet. The winner of the main event gains the coveted title of World Champion.

The stakes for the event are high; players can get a seat to the tune of $10,000. However, Vogel actually won his seat with a round of poker on a gambling web site.

"I put $160 up and I won a tournament that gave me a $10,000 seat,â€• Vogel said. This isnâ€™t the first time. Last year, the he put up $240 on a game on the web site and won a slot into the prime-time event.

The gambling site allows people to learn and play poker with others from around the world for real or play money. It is the place where Vogel actually began to learn about the game.

â€œI wasnâ€™t very good at all, but through practice I learned and improved,â€• he said. However, he admits, â€œHalf the games, I still donâ€™t know how to play.â€•

Call it skill or luck; he had what it took to win his way into the richest sporting event on the planet. It has an estimated prize pool of more than $70,000 and expects to bring more than 8,000 players to the events poker tables.

By winning his seat the the WSOP, he will be flown to Vegas, receive $1,000 in spending money, and have his $10,000 buy-in and his accommodations for the two-week event covered.

If last year is any indication, Vogel has a good chance of bringing back some big prize money this year. He finished 409 in the main event and brought $16,000 back home with him.

That is quite impressive considering that there was a field of 5,619 players and he outlasted most of the professionals. So, this year he is going for it again.

â€œPeople donâ€™t understand you have to be a mathematician,â€• Vogel said. â€œVery smart people play this game.â€•

He will play for a total of four to seven days, 12 hours a day. â€œIt is grueling. One of the hardest things Iâ€™ve done mentally,â€• he said. â€œIt takes a minute to learn and a lifetime to master.â€•

While in Las Vegas, Vogel will also meet up with the former WSOP champs. The last three champions, Chris Moneymaker (2003), Greg Raymer (2004) and Joe Hachem (2005) all walked away millionaires.

He will have the opportunity to learn form their mistakes and successes on their way to conquering the sport's most coveted title "World Series of Poker Champion."

Ultimately, Vogel tries to keep it all in perspective. â€œI am just going to have fun, play as best I can and get as far as I can.â€• He said. â€œPoker is luck and skill.â€•

Vogel tries not to get too serious about his hobby. â€œYou can have fun with it, but you have to keep your

priorities,â€• he said. â€œFor me it is something fun. It challenges me mentally and I like the competitiveness.â€•

WSOP begins July 28 and concludes on August 10 where one player will walk away with it all. You can tune into all the action on ESPN. Check local listings for show times.

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