



HIGH STAKES HEROES

JAMIE GOLD

Love him or hate him, there was no ignoring 2006 WSOP Main Event champ Jamie Gold when he appeared on *High Stakes Poker*....

High Stakes Poker was enthralling television because you got to see the biggest pros in the world not only go up against each other, but also against rich businessmen, for enormous sums of money. Coming off a \$12 million win in the WSOP Main Event in 2006, many poker commentators were unsure which category to place the TV agent Jamie Gold in when he first appeared on *High Stakes Poker* in 2007's season three.

After a dazzling debut filled with plenty of table talk, \$750k suckouts and a bold attempt to become the 'world's best bluffer', one thing was for sure; Gold was compelling television.

After eventually breaking even over the course of his three *High Stakes Poker* appearances – helped in no small part by Sammy Farha's charity (see boxout) – Gold disappeared from view in the poker world. Besides an appearance on 2010's NBC National Heads-up Championship and a few small cashes in Vegas, Gold kept a low profile in the poker world. *PokerPlayer* managed to track down the former world champion to find out what he's been up to, why he's sailing the coast of Florida and his memories of those classic moments from *High Stakes Poker*...

***PokerPlayer:* Did you feel a responsibility to play on *High Stakes Poker* after winning the WSOP Main Event to 'prove' yourself? A lot of people said you only won the Main Event because you ran good.**

Jamie Gold: I was just excited to play on the show that I had watched and loved for years. The opportunity to play with some of the best players above my level, that I looked up to was wonderful. I lost \$60k the first season, won \$440k the next season and on my final day I lost \$400k. Breaking even overall after that experience was most fortunate. We were paid a minor fee to appear too.

You seemed to relish being on the big stage and getting TV time while you played the WSOP Main Event. Was that another reason why you were so keen to play on *High Stakes Poker*?

Having worked in the television and film business I realised what they needed to make the show most interesting, and my style of play was sometimes animated at the time.

Were you happy with how the TV shows portrayed you? Or do you regret any of your actions?



Jamie Gold's 2006 WSOP win thrust a unique personality into the poker spotlight



unseen hands, but the few you do see tell a story without the before and after. [That makes them] totally out of context so you must consider that when assuming ideas about a person. I'm not arrogant. [But] I've had moments yes, and they were on film, so I can understand why some may feel that way.

Despite winning \$12m at the WSOP, were the stakes in the cash game quite daunting for you?

Not really, I had been playing in high-stakes cash games at my local casinos in California just before I won the Main Event.

Were you familiar with any of the players beforehand?

Yes, many of the players were regulars in the casinos in California where I was living and playing for about eight years before I took my shot at the Main Event. From 1998-2006 I played a minimum of five nights a week. Johnny Chan was my inspiration and convinced me that I had a legitimate shot of winning it in 2006.

How did the players react to you when you walked on the set of *High Stakes Poker* for the first time?

It was a bit intimidating to walk onto the set, and I knew I was the outsider. They were all very nice to me and I had a great time playing.

Were you playing for 100% of your own action on *High Stakes Poker* or had you sold any to friends?

In every episode I played on *High Stakes Poker* it was 100% of my own money. →

// I do regret a few of the moments. I'm not arrogant. [But] I've had moments - and they were on film //

I do regret a few of the moments for sure. I have also learned a lot since that time. It's also much different than what was seen [on TV] – if you saw the ten hours between WSOP clips then the perception of it would be a lot different. We played thousands of

DEAL HIGH STAKES POKER

→ **Did you go in expecting to be able to compete with the other pros and how do you feel like you played?**

I knew that all of the players were more experienced than I was and it was absolutely about the experience for me. I was glad to have broken even over the seasons that I played because there were times when I played poorly, however I was also proud of the moments when I played my best. Overall, I was very fortunate to come out even. I knew that I was not a favourite in the game, but there were certainly moments against some of the players where I was confident I was.

You quickly became famous for talking a lot at the table. Why did you continue to do this against such top pros and do you think it was a help or hindrance to your play?

I think it worked both ways for me, at times it was a help and other times it was a hindrance. However, I knew that if it was a quiet table and set, the show would have been extremely boring. For me [I talked a lot

due to] a combination of making it an interesting show to watch, having fun, and learning from the best players in the world.

Which players did you particularly enjoy playing against or hanging out with?

Bob Safai, Nick Cassavetes, Phil Laak, Barry Greenstein, and Jennifer Harman were the players I enjoyed spending time with



// I devote my time to philanthropic causes, businesses, and poker. I combine the three //



most outside of the show.

Are you sad that you're no longer a part of that high-stakes scene when players like Phil Ivey, Daniel Negreanu and a few others have gone on to even bigger success?

No, not at all! I am doing exactly what I want to be doing with my life. My life is not about trying to win as many tournaments or play in the biggest cash games that I can. I devote my time to various philanthropic causes, businesses, and poker. I try to combine the three whenever I can, but until I retire, I can't imagine just playing poker and trying to win as many tournaments as possible every year. I don't fault anyone that does, there is just so much more that I can do to help the world while I still have the time, energy, and resources to do so.

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**HAND 1:
'FEELS LIKE ACES'
JAMIE GOLD
VS PATRIK ANTONIUS,
HIGH STAKES POKER
SEASON FOUR
POT SIZE: \$743,800**

WATCH IT! www.tinyurl.com/GoldKK

→ Patrik Antonius raises it to \$4,000 with A♠-J♦, only to find Gold sitting behind him with K♠-K♦. Gold says his hand 'feels like Aces and wishes it was', before three-betting to \$14,000. Antonius calls and they see a 3♠-Q♦-T♥ flop.

Antonius checks, Gold bets \$15,000 and Antonius calls. The turn is a dramatic K♥, giving Gold top set but Broadway for Antonius, who decides to

lead out for \$45,000. Gold sighs and thinks it over before announcing 'raise'. After counting up his stack he eventually shoves for \$341,500. Antonius calls and the pot is a phenomenal \$743,800. The two agree to run it three times with Antonius a 77% favourite.



// I wish I hadn't reacted the way I did, but I've learned a lot since that experience //



Gold gets lucky and wins two of the three runouts to take home just under \$500k!

What do you think when you look back on this hand?

I played this hand very poorly. Sometimes I give away too much information and sometimes my decisions are incorrect. The thing that bothers me the most about this hand is the way I reacted during the hand [Gold celebrates after winning each runout while Antonius sits there in silence]. It was inappropriate and a learning experience for me. It's been seven years since that hand and I've made a concerted effort to not act that way again.

Patrik is a world class player and has always been a gentleman at the table. I wish I hadn't reacted the way I did, but I've learned a lot since that experience. I am constantly learning and working to be a better poker player.



HAND 2: 'THIS IS GOOD TV'

JAMIE GOLD VS SAMMY FARHA, HIGH STAKES POKER SEASON FOUR POT SIZE: \$391,300

WATCH IT! www.tinyurl.com/GoldvsSam

➔ Jamie Gold just calls in early position with $K\heartsuit-K\spadesuit$ and it's folded round to Sam Farha who raises to \$4,200 with $A\heartsuit-A\spadesuit$. The action comes back to Gold who asks Farha if they should 'get it all-in now or later', before just calling.

Gold checks in the dark and Farha bets \$10,000 without seeing the flop! Gold raises blind to \$30,000 now and stands up, imploring Farha to reraise him, saying, 'this is good TV'. After lots of

back and forth between the two, Farha elects to raise one more time to \$90,000. Gold screams, 'you have the Aces!' and says he's in big trouble, before calling the extra. The dealer puts out both the flop and the turn; $T\clubsuit-6\heartsuit-9\spadesuit-4\clubsuit$.

Gold checks and Farha bets \$100,000. Gold quickly calls. The river is $T\heartsuit$. Gold checks and begs for Farha to check

behind before saying that he will call any amount. Farha inexplicably checks behind and his Aces are good for a nearly \$400,000 pot as Doyle Brunson and Barry Greenstein look on in stunned silence at the antics of both players. Greenstein eventually says, 'you played well to save \$185,000' with a smile on his face.

This is one of the most famous hands in High Stakes Poker history, but also one of the strangest. What do you think looking back on it?

There is only one way to look at this hand if you really understand poker and, without getting into the details of it, based on the situation and if you had seen all of the hands leading up to it, I was supposed to go broke on that hand. Doyle [Brunson], Barry [Greenstein], and every other player I respect that I've spoken to feels the same way. I was very fortunate that whatever I did – or that Sammy did not do – it saved me \$181,000. In my mind that is the same as winning \$181,000!

/// I was supposed to go broke on that hand. Whatever I did - or Sammy did not do - saved me \$181,000 ///

Sail away with me

➔ Jamie Gold was one of the most polarising figures at the height of poker's popularity in the late 2000s. But he's been absent from our TV screens – and the circuit – for years. So what is the self-proclaimed 'best bluffer in poker' up to now?

Thanks to a deal with Island Breeze, Gold is sailing around the Florida coastline as host of the Jamie Gold Poker Room. Island Breeze is a full Las Vegas-style casino – the only difference being it's on the water. How did Gold end up swimming so close to the fishes?

JAMIE GOLD: My business manager brought the deal to me – he also represents a ton of celebrity investors including Rob Lowe and Eddie Griffin. It was the right situation for me as I fully trust and believe in the founders who are running the day-to-day operations – there are many planned casino ships worldwide, but this is the first.

We sail seven days a week and are the only poker room in Florida that can offer free drinks to players!

It seems that most people I meet at the poker tables [on Island Breeze] still remember watching the 2006 WSOP and recognise me from that. I'm honoured to have been in such a fortunate situation

with luck on my side – and that so many players are still interested in playing with me certainly helps build our poker room and casino.

[My Main Event win] is very important to me and I know how lucky I am to be one of the few to ever hold the title. It was my goal to win the Main Event and afterwards to give back as much as I possibly could to help my family, friends, and the world through philanthropy which if I hadn't won such an event I would not have had the same opportunities to give back.

You can find out more about Jamie Gold's latest venture at www.ibreezecasino.com.



Gold is a regular on the world's first casino ship in Florida