

# PokerNews Cup Form Guide

THE WSOP IS ALL DONE AND DUSTED AND MANY PLAYERS ARE RETURNING HOME BRUISED AND BATTERED AFTER A LONG AND EXHAUSTING SERIES, BUT FOR THOSE STILL HIGH-SPIRITED, ANOTHER MAJOR TOURNAMENT SERIES AWAITS AROUND THE CORNER.

**W**ith the PokerNews Cup once again rolling into Crown Casino from September 27th to October 5th, many amateurs and professionals will be looking to take home their piece of the poker pie!

Before you get too far ahead of yourself, make sure to keep both eyes out for the following group of players who will be creating trouble for anyone and everyone they line up against.



## Daniel Neilson

Even with a mention in our last issue, it was hard to turn down a man that is taking the tournament world by storm. With great results both at home and interstate, Daniel Neilson hit the WSOP this year full steam ahead, picking up a result in Event 32. It wouldn't stop there as Neilson would enjoy a deep run in the Main Event, including some valuable TV time on the feature table, before bowing out in 73rd place for a US\$68,979 payday.

## David Zhao

David (Xin) Zhao was a relative unknown to those that didn't play the lower limit cash games at Crown Casino before the start of the year, but when we ticked into 2009 things began to change for this Melbournian. After a second placing in a Joe Hachem Deep Stack Series preliminary event, Zhao went on to make two final tables at the ANZPT Sydney, including a 9th in the Main Event. Zhao then returned home to capture an 18th and a 5th in the ANZPT Melbourne and Melbourne Poker Championships Main Events respectively. With such a great start to the year both at home and interstate, Zhao will be looking to replicate the form that saw him awarded the PokerNetwork Young Gun of the Month for May.



## Tim Duckworth

## Dave Lee

At last year's PokerNews Cup Dave Lee picked up his second breakthrough result of his poker career when he finished a gallant 3rd in the Main Event. Since then Lee notched up a 47th placing in the APPT Sydney Grand Final as well as a 74th placing in the Joe Hachem Deep Stack Series Main Event. However, with a recent marriage and honeymoon that has seen him venture to all parts of the world to keep him away from the felt, a refreshed Lee will be looking to tackle the PokerNews Cup with the attitude and excitement that we have come to expect from the Melbournian.



## Van Marcus

Playing a fairly light tournament schedule at the WSOP this year, Van Marcus was still able to knock down two WSOP final tables. Marcus claimed 7th in Event 32 before backing it up just several days later when he finished 3rd in the \$10,000 World Championship Pot Limit Omaha event. With an Aussie Millions final table earlier in the year and his landmark victory last November in the APPT Manila Main Event, Marcus will be looking to continue his steady streak at the upcoming PokerNews Cup.



## Kristian Lunardi

Making a successful transition from cash games to tournaments, Kristian 'Bada Bing' Lunardi has made inroads on the online rankings while also tackling the live tournament circuit. Lunardi picked up one cash during the Aussie Millions, but it was his near back-to-back final tables during the Melbourne Poker Championship that brought him to everyone's attention. After taking 7th in the ANZPT Melbourne Main Event, Lunardi unfortunately fell just one place short of back-to-back final tables when he finished 10th in the Melbourne Poker Championships Main Event. Following his close calls in Melbourne, plus an unsuccessful WSOP, Lunardi will be hoping to bounce back even stronger to cement his place as one of the best Australian young guns on the circuit.

## George Cotaidis

'Carwash' George Cotaidis may not be a household name, but his results speak otherwise. Three Joe Hachem Deep Stack Series cashes following an Aussie Millions cash started the year rolling for Cotaidis who is looking to continue on his consistent results. Loved by many for his sociable demeanour and great personality, don't be fooled by his friendly banter as Cotaidis will be more than willing to take your chips on his way to another tournament cash!



## Chris Levick



2009 has been the year of Chris Levick as he began by making the final two tables in two ANZPT Sydney events, including a 12th placing in the Main Event. However, when Levick rolled into Melbourne for the recent Melbourne Poker Championships he managed to outlast the 218-player field to capture the near \$160,000 first prize for the ANZPT Melbourne feature event. Levick was unable to find any luck during the WSOP, but a final table at the Venetian Deep Stack Series keeps him in form for when he returns back to Crown Casino to tackle another busy series.

## Sam Khouiss



After finishing a respectable 5th at the recent ANZPT Melbourne Main Event, Sam Khouiss made his annual journey to the WSOP to battle it out against the best. Although he may not see it as his most successful series to date, Khouiss managed to cash in both Event 5 and the \$10,000 World Championship Omaha Hi/Lo for a total of more than US\$45,000 in winnings. With Khouiss being a regular on every tournament series around Australia, he will be hoping for another successful one to add to his long and always-increasing poker CV.

## Antonio Casale

Following a deep run in the Aussie Millions Main Event this year, Antonio Casale cashed in both the Joe Hachem Deep Stack Series and ANZPT Melbourne Main Events. However on the local scene, Casale has been carving up tournament after tournament to sit in great shape on the Crown Poker Player of the Year Leaderboard. With many years of experience under his belt, Casale will be hoping to continue his hot run of two Crown Player of the Month awards.



## Steve Topakas

After capturing gold in a preliminary event at the Joe Hachem Deep Stack Series, Steve Topakas continued on his merry way by finishing 13th during the six-handed event at the Melbourne Poker Championships. Topakas wouldn't stay sheltered too long as he backed that up with a runner-up finish in the Main Event for his second \$100,000 collect of his poker career. With no results to speak of at the WSOP,



Topakas will still be able to draw on the valuable experiences that he picked up while in Las Vegas to tackle the PokerNews Cup with more gusto and ambition than ever before.

## Bruno Portaro

With his charismatic and loud personality, Bruno Portaro is always a fan favourite as he lights up any poker room – he can also play a little too! Portaro's last five results have all been final tables with three of them logged at the Aussie Millions before an 8th placing at the inaugural ANZPT Adelaide and a 4th in the Melbourne Poker Championships Main Event. While his crash-and-bash style to tournament poker may be frowned on by many, it is hard to question Portaro's consistency over the past few years, and the upcoming PokerNews Cup will just be another stop on his poker journey.



## Nali Kaselias

Nali "Iraqi Nick" Kaselias had always been a well-known player around Crown Casino, but when he bested a field of 410 to capture the \$250,000 first prize and title of champion of last year's PokerNews Cup, Kaselias was immediately thrown into the poker limelight. Kaselias didn't take a step backwards as he picked up his tournament volume to see results follow in both the Aussie Millions and Melbourne Poker Championships Main Events. With Kaselias having the number one target on his back, he will have to work harder than ever to defend a title that he made his own in 2008.



There is no doubt that one, if not all, of these players will feature prominently in the upcoming PokerNews Cup, and to follow their progress make sure to head to the Crown Poker Room or join the PokerNews.com Live Reporting Team as they provide exclusive coverage of every rivered flush, turned straight and flopped set.