

AT THE TABLE

January 7

[A look at how](#)

Pennsylvania casinos stack up AT THE TABLE TOM ROBINSON

Slots payouts

For the week of Dec. 20-26:

Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs

Wagers

Week: \$43,530,802.55

Year to date: \$1,367,654,985.09

Payouts

Week: \$39,126,565.23

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 06 January 2011 23:33 -

Year to date: \$1,231,837,605.55

Mount Airy Casino & Resort

Wagers

Week: \$24,986,655.02

Year to date: \$1,010,100,416.00

Payouts

Week: \$22,575,033.51

Year to date: \$915,370,685.92

SOURCE: PENNSYLVANIA

GAMING CONTROL BOARD

table tip

Hollywood Casino at Penn National recently announced the addition of tournament play to its poker room. The Grantville casino is set to begin Monday-through-Friday noon tournaments on Monday. The Monday-through-Thursday tournaments are no limit hold 'em tournaments. The Friday tournament will be Pot Limit Omaha.

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Costs of the tournament are \$80-\$85: \$65 for the prize fund, \$15 in fees and \$5 for an optional dealer add-on that gives players an additional \$2,000 in tournament chips.

According to the casino's website, evening tournaments will begin Jan. 19.

GRANTVILLE – Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs has been the primary focus of this column, along with some issues related to table-game developments. I'll sometimes, however, check in on how poker rooms look at other state casinos.

Although they started around the same times, the poker rooms in each casino have developed their own characteristics, both because of the player make-up and different approaches by management and staff.

At the Hollywood Casino at Penn National, the 14-table poker room can be a little hard to spot from some entrances. It is positioned near the race track, and casino staff can quickly point out its general direction.

Based on an extended Friday afternoon/evening visit in December, the room scores points for aesthetics but has other highs and lows. The lighting, space between tables, comfort of chairs and positioning of the big-screen televisions all make for a pleasant setting.

As I had been told to expect by other players who had spent time at both Hollywood Casino and Mohegan Sun, there was less limit hold 'em action. There was not even an active game on a Friday until after 7 p.m. When limit play started up, it was 3-6, not 2-4, which is almost always the only limit action locally.

Not long after the limit game started up, a 1-2 pot limit Omaha high/low game also started, but dealers and regulars called that very uncommon.

Some observations from an admittedly limited sample:

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- The floor and the chip runners were well-organized in getting people to tables and started in their games.
- The first buy-in of chips is done right at the sign-in desk before you are escorted to your game. That works fine, perhaps even more smoothly than a separate desk and cage, which opens the possibility of occasionally missing a seat while getting chips.
- Leaving a game was not as smooth. The cage to cash in chips is well outside the poker room, across the casino floor and past some slot machines. This would be particularly bothersome to players trying to handle transactions when switching games as well as a bit of trouble for those fortunate enough to leave the table with a full rack(s) of chips to carry through the casino.
- A 10 percent rake of each pot up to \$6 per hand makes it more difficult for even the best players to post significant profits at the lower limits.
- The 1-2 no-limit game, in particular, seemed especially soft compared with the challenge locally. The game was far less aggressive, and the number of players who had built up significant stacks did not appear as high. The room recently switched from a buy-in range of 40-200 to one of 60-300 for its 1-2 no-limit games, so the larger starting stacks might lead to a little increase in the pressure applied within the game.
- The dealer rotation differs from that at Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs and is more similar to what you normally might see in a blackjack pit. A dealer returns to the same table frequently with relief providing breaks from that table rather than sending the dealer off to another game.
- One dealer in particular missed a series of obvious mistakes by a couple of players that did affect play. The frequency and severity of the mistakes was much more significant than generally seen in even the worst cases anymore locally.
- There was not much difference from other Pennsylvania casinos with the other dealers who seemed to handle their jobs efficiently.

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- Finally, the dealers were impressive in keeping players off cell phones, including texting, while in hands and seated directly at the table. Players were told to back away from the table and were not dealt in hands when on their phones, proving that such rules can be enforced with consistent commitment. When phone calls or texts felt necessary, players still had plenty of opportunity by just backing away a few feet.

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