

DANNY MCDONAGH – NOMINATION FOR 2023 INDUSTRY ICON

My move into the casino industry was very much by chance. After travelling/working overseas for 9 months, I returned to Melbourne on the same day Crown Casino first advertised for croupiers. Six months later in June 1994 I was a baccarat dealer for the grand opening of Crown Casino Melbourne.

In late 1996, Crown opened up expressions of interest for poker, and a fellow employee encouraged me to apply on the closing day (at that time I had no poker knowledge other than Caribbean Stud). June 29, 1997 saw the opening of the Crown Poker Room and later that year I became Tournament Director.

Here is a timeline of my work/achievements in the poker industry in:

June 1997 – Crown Poker Room opens – Floorperson. Appointed as Poker Tournament Director November 1997.

July 1998 – First Australasian Poker Championship held at Crown Casino



January 2003 – Aussie Millions established. The move to January coinciding with the Australian Open Tennis a major factor in this event quickly becoming one of the top poker festivals globally, with entry numbers for the 10k main event growing rapidly from 122 to 747 in the first 5 years.



July 2007 – Joined PokerStars as Tournament Director for the newly formed Asia Pacific Poker Tour (APPT) with inaugural festivals held that year in Manila, Seoul, Macau and Sydney.



Early 2008 – Responsible for managing poker operations at the newly opened PokerStars Macau permanent poker room at Grand Waldo Casino. February 2009 – PokerStars Macau moves to Grand Lisboa, the perfect venue for experiencing the rapid growth of poker in the region.



2011 – Inducted into the Australian Poker Hall of Fame, and appointed Director of Live Poker in Asia Pacific for PokerStars incorporating PokerStars Macau operations, President of the APPT, and Commissioner of a newly formed Australia New Zealand Poker Tour (ANZPT) which over 4 years held poker events in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth, Auckland and Queenstown.



2013 – PokerStars LIVE Macau moves to City of Dreams (COD), operating in a large space on the 2nd floor and enabling up to 50 poker tournament tables to be in operation for major events. The Macau Poker Cup (Red Dragon) builds in popularity over this period to reach 1,075 players for this popular freezeout event in Feb 2016. Other branded festivals including APPT Macau, Macau Millions and the Asia Championship of Poker leads to PokerStars Macau hosting six 10+ day festivals annually at COD and becoming the number 1 poker venue in Asia.



2015 – PokerStars LIVE Manila permanent poker room is established at City of Dreams Manila.



Jan 2017 – Joined World Poker

Tour as Live Events Specialist with primary emphasis on building events in Asia Pacific. This role lead to new WPT festivals being established in Australia, Cambodia, India, Korea, New Zealand, Taiwan & Vietnam with all time entry and/or prizepool country records being set in Cambodia, India, New Zealand and Vietnam.



2018 to 2019 – Had a joint role with PokerStars during this period as Executive Tournament Director with primary emphasis being a key party in the rollout of the inaugural PokerStars Players Championship (PSPC) in January 2019, which, with over 1,000 unique players, set the all time record for a 25k buyin event.



2022 – Enlisted as a key WPT staff member in the rollout of the inaugural WPT World Championship at Wynn Las Vegas held December 2022 which was highlighted by the 5,430 entry \$1,100 Prime Championship and the 2,960 entry \$10,400 WPT World Championship, the latter second only to the World Series of Poker for a 10k buyin in it's first year.

FINAL WORDS - Cannot believe 26 years have passed for me in the poker industry, however, I am pleased to write that I still get the same satisfaction running a successful poker festival as I did at Crown Casino at the end of last century. Just ten days ago the WPT event in Taiwan set the all time record of 1,359 entries for a regular WPT Prime Event so there is great motivation to continue my work. Thank you for considering my presentation.

DANNY MCDONAGH