



For those in need of new poker television content, the NBC franchise “Poker After Dark” returns for its first new episodes of 2011 tonight, featuring the biggest tournament in the history of the program.

Dubbed “Big Heat Week,” “Poker After Dark’s” first tournament of 2011 features a six-man sit and go that brings together competitors who have more than proven their worth in the poker world. Combined, the six players – John Juanda, Erick Lindgren, Phil Galfond, Huck Seed, Tom “durrrr” Dwan, and Phil Ivey – have over \$42 million in career tournament earnings, 18 World Series of Poker (WSOP) bracelets, a WSOP Main Event title, and a slew of other major championships.

The \$100,000 buy-in event guarantees that the victor of this week’s “Poker After Dark” will walk away with a \$600,000 payday.

Galfond is the newcomer to the “Poker After Dark” stage, as all of the other competitors have faced the NBC show’s cameras previously. Galfond, who terrorizes the online poker world under the name “OMGClayAiken,” has built a reputation as one of the top No Limit Hold’em and Pot Limit Omaha players in the game today. His addition to this week’s lineup is indicative of how the show is embracing the “new blood” of the game.

Safe money on who will win this week’s battle should be on Ivey and Juanda, who are veterans of “Poker After Dark” and have racked up two wins each during the run of the show. While Lindgren and Seed have previously appeared on the program, neither has been able to crack the winner’s circle. For his part, Dwan has been a part of previous “Poker After Dark” cash game episodes, but this is only his second foray into the freezeout arena.

“Big Heat Week” will kick off this evening on NBC late night at 2:05am ET, with host Ali Nejad providing voiceover commentary of the action. The sit and go will continue over the next four nights in the same timeslot and a special “Director’s Cut” will air late night on Saturday at 1:00am ET after NBC’s “Saturday Night Live.” This show will feature Leeann Tweeden with a behind-the-scenes look at the week with highlights and insightful player interviews.

Throughout the first half of 2011, "Poker After Dark" will continue to provide new shows mixed in with encore presentations of some of the series' best episodes. After this week's new episodes, Dwan will return to the two-week encore presentation of one of the show's most memorable cash games. The cash game, which featured a \$100,000 buy-in, also featured Phil Laak, Gus Hansen, Eli Elezra, and former World Champions Doyle Brunson and Phil Hellmuth.

The week of February 7th, a new cash game will take to the "Poker After Dark" stage with the highest stakes yet. The \$150,000 buy-in No Limit Hold'em cash game will feature Howard Lederer, Greg Mueller, Elezra, David Peat, Olivier Busquet, and Laak battling it out for supremacy.

April will bring one of the most eagerly anticipated additions to the "Poker After Dark" lineup. During the week of April 4th, a \$50,000 buy-in sit and go will take place featuring some of the "young guns" of the game. Andrew "luckychewy" Lichtenberger and UB.com pro Eric "basebaldy" Baldwin will join Melanie Weisner, Annette Obrestad, Brunson, and Dwan, with the winner walking away with \$250,000.

During the week of April 11th, Pot Limit Omaha will make its debut on "Poker After Dark" and be featured for two weeks. Joining Ivey, Dwan, and Galfond on the felt for the \$100,000 buy-in cash game will be Brandon Adams, Patrik Antonius, Brian Hastings, and Jared Bleznick. The addition of Pot Limit Omaha to "Poker After Dark" should draw a huge audience with the ever-increasing popularity of the game.