

CHICAGO CELEBRITIES AND URBAN PREP SUPPORTERS GO “ALL-IN” AT THE ACES UP! CELEBRITY CHARITY POKER TOURNAMENT

On November 29, 2007, Illinois State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias, *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist and “At the Movies” host Richard Roeper and former Chicago Bear Chris Zorich hosted “Aces UP!” celebrity poker tournament to support Urban Prep Academy, Chicago’s only all-boys public charter high school. Participants played Texas Hold ‘Em while competing for a prize pool valued at more than \$10,000.

The event raised more than \$100,000 to support the school’s innovative programs aimed at ensuring its students, 90 percent of whom come from economically disadvantaged homes, have the opportunity for a comprehensive education that prepares them for college.

The event received advance coverage in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Time Out Chicago* as well as a number of blogs and social networking sites and was covered by WMAQ-TV (NBC). Additionally, event hosts Chris Zorich and Richard Roeper appeared on WFLD-TV (Fox), WBBM-TV (CBS), WMAQ-TV (NBC) and WGN-TV morning shows the week prior to the event. Alexi Giannoulias also spoke on B96 (WBBM-FM) twice.

Over the course of the five-hour tournament, 300 players were pared down to two. Ultimately only one person could be the “Aces UP!” 2007 Champion. On the final hand, both players were all-in: Pete with an Ace-Six against a Queen-Six held by Mark. Mark flopped two pair, but Pete managed to turn an Ace, giving him two better pair. Pete’s patient play, smart decisions and a little luck resulted in him winning a \$5,000 gift card and receiving riotous applause from the scores of onlookers who had stayed to watch the final table action.



(Above)
Media stars Anna Davlantes, Natalie Martinez, and Warner Saunders contemplate their next move.

(Top Right)
Tournament Champion Pete Shulit celebrates a victory.

(Middle Right)
Event co-hosts Alexi Giannoulias, Richard Roeper, Tim King, and Chris Zorich smile for the camera.



Participants matched wits with Chicago’s media, entertainment, sports, civic and corporate stars, including:

- Carole Brown** / Chairman, Chicago Transit Authority
- Erica Cobb** / Radio Personality, B96 (WBBM-FM)
- Jim D’Ambrosio** / Restaurant/Bar Owner, Citizen Bar
- Anna Davlantes** / Reporter, NBC (WMAQ-TV)
- Eric Ferguson** / Radio Personality, “Eric and Kathy Show”
- John Fritchey** / State Representative (D-11), State of Illinois
- Alexi Giannoulias** / Treasurer, State of Illinois
- Teddy Greenstein** / Sports Columnist, Chicago Tribune
- Natalie Martinez** / Reporter, NBC 5 (WMAQ-TV)
- Stephanie Neely** / Treasurer, City of Chicago
- Dom Niro** / Poker Room Manager, Majestic Casino
- Richard Roeper** / Writer/Columnist/Film Critic, Chicago Sun-Times
- Steve Rosenbloom** / Sports/Poker Columnist, Chicago Tribune
- Warner Saunders** / Anchorman, NBC 5 (WMAQ-TV)
- Voltaire Sterling** / Actor, “The Great Debaters”
- Rick Telander** / Columnist, Chicago Sun-Times
- John Vincent** / Singer, Ditka’s Restaurant
- Dave Weinstein** / President, Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center
- Chris Williams** / Actor, “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” “Dodgeball”
- Chris Zorich** / Former Player, Chicago Bears

Sponsors included AmericanEagle.com, Ariel Mutual Funds, Callahan Capital Partners, Fifth/Third Bank, Jasculca/Terman & Associates, Majestic Star Casinos, Otom Restaurant, Schwartz Cooper and Ty.