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TI'I PAULO WINS OVER SIX THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR DIABETES NEW ZEALAND

The 12th annual New Zealand Poker Championships kicked off in style last night with Crusader Ti'i Paulo winning \$6,600 for Diabetes New Zealand Christchurch.

Over 50 media and celebrities battled it out at Christchurch Casino's Media Charity Event with the challenge to win a share of over \$13,000 for ten Canterbury charities.

Brave moves at the final table saw seven other media competitors knocked out in style leaving TV personality Brooke Howard-Smith, Radio New Zealand's Monique Devereux and Crusader Ti'i Paulo as the final three - representing Ronald McDonald House South Island, Cholmondeley and Diabetes New Zealand Christchurch respectively. Paulo's skills shifted code as he ousted Devereux to secure first place on behalf of Diabetes NZ Christchurch.

The winning didn't stop there – the top three winners and their charity representative racked up more cash for charity in the Bonus Round – tossing a \$100,000 cash bundle the length of the specially made Cash Pitch as many times as they could in 20 seconds.

Brooke Howard-Smith and Sharon Amataiti together took home a total of \$3,300 for Ronald McDonald House, Monique Devereux and Sarah Barrer took home \$3,900 for Cholmondeley while Ti'i Paulo and Tim Exton took a massive \$6,600 for Diabetes New Zealand Christchurch.

Christchurch Casino's Chief Executive Officer Brett Anderson says the Media Charity Event, now in its third year, is one of his favourites:

"This is a great opportunity for media and charities to come together and have fun. For us, it's another to support our local community and we really enjoy it – this event stands out as one of the highlights in our calendar for the brilliant atmosphere it brings."

Tim Exton of Diabetes New Zealand Christchurch said of the event:

"This has been such a great night, not only do we have an amazing prize for Diabetes New Zealand, but we've had so much fun doing it. The camaraderie between the media is fantastic and we're really appreciative of the effort Christchurch Casino has gone to."

Crusader Ti'i Paulo said of his feat:

"I'm pretty stoked with my poker skills actually; I made a few bold moves but my poker face came through for me. I'm honoured to be part of raising money for a great cause and I don't think Tim or I have ever made that much money in such a short space of time."

Stacked with \$600,000, the Cash Pitch combined with the \$100,000 Cash Bundle represented the \$700,000 prize pool for the New Zealand Poker Championships which officially begins Saturday 10 April with the first tournament, Canterbury Championships.

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Ti'i Paulo in the Bonus Round holding the Cash Bundle over the Cash Pitch

