

Annie Duke will be the commissioner of a poker league for “pros only” starting this year.

The league was announced today, as Federated Sports and Gaming and the Palms Casino Resort announced the league via press release and named Duke as the commissioner of the league.

The league will be by invitation only, and will consist of four tournaments and a championship event. About 200 players will be invited to take part in the league, which does not have a name as of yet. Here's Duke talking to the Associated Press:

This is incredibly pro-centric. This is the one piece that's kind of missing from the poker landscape right now, which is something for the best players in the world to compete against the best players in the world.

Duke has won a World Series of Poker bracelet, took the National Heads-Up Poker Championship in 2010 and has live tournament winnings exceeding \$4 million. She recently announced her departure as a sponsored pro with UB.com and hasn't yet signed with a new online poker site.

The league will try to attract pros in several different manners. First, it will be televised, although it's not clear which network will be broadcasting the events. Likely landing spots include ESPN and Fox SportsNet, which already have a lot of poker programming. NBC, which airs the National Heads Up Poker Championship and Poker After Dark, and Fox, which has aired [PokerStars](#) Million Dollar Challenge and The Big Game, would also be possibilities. The league also features no rake and overlays for its tournaments, making the events more appealing to pros with lots of winnings and lots of choices of where to play poker.

How will the players be picked? Here's what the release says:

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The league will have a proprietary ranking system based on an eligibility formula that is driven by mathematics and proven historic achievement. This system will rank the top professional poker players with guidelines similar to those governing professional golf and tennis.

It sounds safe to assume that any poker pro a casual poker fan has ever heard of will be invited, although it's unclear if some of the top cash-game players in the world, like Tom “[durrrr](#)” Dwan and Viktor “

[Isildur1](#)

” Blom will qualify. It seems safe to assume there will be some “wild-card” spots available to players who might not meet the criteria otherwise, but are clearly among the top poker players in the world.

Federated Sports and Gaming was co-founded by Jeffrey Pollack, the former commissioner of the World Series of Poker. Having the man responsible for running the largest poker tournament series in the world likely bodes well for the fledgling venture. Here's what Pollack said, via the press release:

I've long believed that the top professional poker players create enormous value for the industry and are skilled in a way that is worthy of star treatment. Our new league will celebrate poker professionals like never before and provide a tournament experience at the Palms that is first-class at every turn.

The initial four tournaments are tentatively scheduled for August through December of this year, with the championship in January of 2012.

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