

## Poker returns to Borgata

David Danzis

ATLANTIC CITY — A run-of-the-mill Wednesday morning in late October does not typically draw crowds.

But the return of live poker at Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa brought out more than 100 eager players ready for action.

Borgata's Poker Room is the first in Atlantic City to reopen since all nine of the resort's casino properties were shut down in March to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

"We are happy to welcome back our loyal players as we reopen Atlantic City's market-leading East Coast poker destination," said Melonie Johnson, president and chief operating officer of Borgata.

A handful of noticeable COVID-19 related changes awaited returning players, including polycarbonate barriers between seats and an abundance of hand sanitizing dispensers. Masks are required for everyone on the property.

The available number of tables in The Poker Room also was reduced from 77 to 30 to allow for social distancing.

All poker play has been limited to seven-handed live cash games only. No tournament play has been announced.

There are five poker rooms in Atlantic City casinos, at Bally's Atlantic City, Borgata, Golden Nugget Atlantic City, Harrah's Resort Atlantic City and Tropicana Atlantic City. Ocean Casino Resort had poker tables but removed them to make space for a new high-limit slot area.

In 2019, Atlantic City casinos with poker rooms reported slightly more than \$27.2 million in revenue. The prior year, revenue generated from poker rooms was nearly \$28.5 million.

According to data reported by the casinos to state gaming regulators, Borgata was far and away the biggest benefactor of poker. The market leader also boasts the city's largest poker room with its 77 tables. In 2019, Borgata generated nearly \$17.9 million in poker revenue.