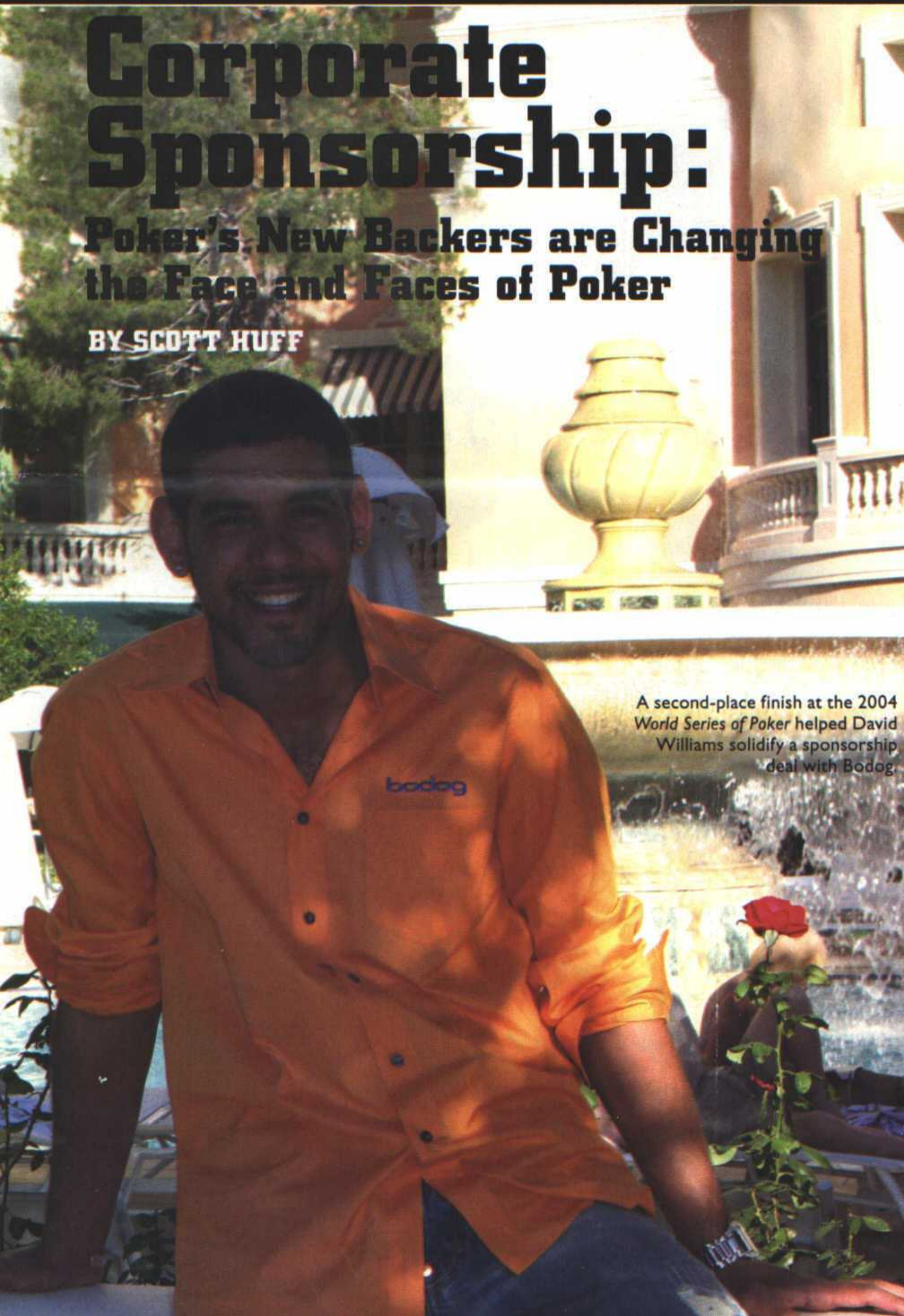


# THE INSIDE STRAIGHT

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FROM AROUND THE  
POKER WORLD

## Corporate Sponsorship: Poker's New Backers are Changing the Face and Faces of Poker

BY SCOTT HUFF



A second-place finish at the 2004 World Series of Poker helped David Williams solidify a sponsorship deal with Bodog.

The backer, a staple in the world of high-stakes poker since its inception, has been many a poker player's salvation. He is the money man; he's the one whose confidence in your game can get you off the rail and back in action; he's the one who, with a peel off his roll, can start you on the road from dead broke to the top of the world.

"Stu Ungar was backed by Billy Baxter in the 1990 World Series of Poker. Stuey was one of the chip leaders in the tournament, but didn't show up after the second day. Baxter was furious about it. Stuey still managed to finish in the money, but Baxter was so angry that he swore he would never back Stuey again. Baxter kept that promise until 1997. Then, just a few minutes before the start of the WSOP main event, Baxter inexplicably answered his cell phone on the way to the tournament and agreed to pay Stuey's \$10,000 buy-in. And the rest, as they say, is history. Answering that phone call made Baxter half a million dollars," said Nolan Dalla, who has been in the poker industry for more than 15 years and is director of communications for PokerStars.com; he considers this story to be the best he knows about this aspect of the poker lifestyle.

Backing arrangements such as the one described above are commonplace in the world of high-stakes tournament poker, and come in a variety of arrangements. Some players

