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# Beginner Wins Grandpa Beck's 2026 Skull King U.S. National Championship in Unforgettable Gen Con Finale

**INDIANAPOLIS, Ind.** — One of the most dramatic finishes in competitive card gaming unfolded last week at **Gen Con**, North America's largest tabletop gaming convention. Held annually in Indianapolis, the four-day event draws more than 70,000 tabletop gaming enthusiasts, including fans of board games, card games, role-playing games, miniatures, and hobby gaming from around the world.

The Grandpa Beck's Skull King U.S. National Championship brought together 57 qualified competitors from across the country. After the opening rounds, seven regional champions joined the field with automatic berths into the semifinal round.

The tournament opened with two qualifying rounds, cutting the field by more than half. The remaining competitors then faced the seven regional champions in semifinal tables of five, with only the winner of each table advancing to the five-player championship final. In a surprising twist, every regional champion was eliminated before reaching the championship table.

After more than three hours of intense competition, it was just past midnight when the championship game began. Because of time constraints, the final was shortened from the standard ten hands to eight.

The championship came down to one unforgettable final hand.

Entering the last hand, each finalist held eight cards. Four of the five players were separated by just 20 points, with scores ranging from roughly 200 to 220. Only two players made positive bids—Rick Porter of Provo, Utah, bid two tricks, while another player bid one. The remaining three attempted the notoriously difficult zero bid.

As the hand unfolded, players carefully preserved their highest cards for the endgame. Porter unexpectedly captured the first five tricks, far exceeding his bid and seemingly eliminating himself from contention. Meanwhile, the player who had bid one successfully claimed a single trick. Everything came down to the tournament's final play.

Brigit Adams, who had bid zero, appeared destined to fail after playing a Pirate—normally a winning card. Then came a sequence that even veteran Skull King players may never witness.

Griff Briggs of Clarksville, Tennessee—who had learned Skull King earlier that very day—played the Skull King, the game's highest-ranking trick-taking card. Whether from inexperience or an inspired gamble, his play created an opportunity that almost never occurs.

The final card of the entire tournament was a Mermaid.

In Skull King, the Mermaid is the only card capable of defeating the Skull King. As it captured the final trick, the championship—and the national title—changed hands on the final card of the tournament.

The Mermaid defeating the Skull King is one of the rarest endings possible in Skull King, making the championship's final play one that players are likely to remember for years.

Against all expectations, first-time player Griff Briggs captured the 2026 Grandpa Beck's Skull King U.S. National Championship in one of the most dramatic finishes the tournament has ever seen.

*"It was the perfect ending to a game that's famous for surprising twists,"* tournament organizers said. *"You simply couldn't script a more exciting championship finish."*

## **Final Standings**

**1st** – Griff Briggs (Clarksville, Tennessee)

**2nd** – Brigit Adams (Spanish Fork, Utah)

**3rd** – Rick Porter (Provo, Utah)

## **About Grandpa Beck's Games**

Grandpa Beck's Games is a family-owned publisher known for creating engaging, easy-to-learn card games enjoyed by families and gamers worldwide. Skull King has become one of the company's flagship titles, celebrated for its blend of strategic bidding, daring risks, and unforgettable moments.