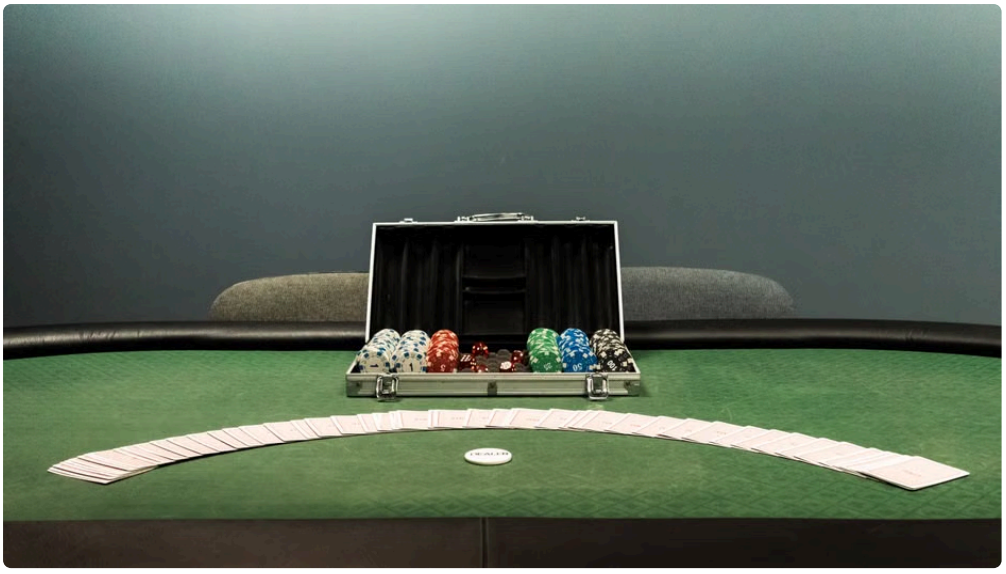
Greg Raymer's 2004 WSOP Main Event win came with a $5,000,000 prize—but the famous title-style matchup "three kings vs. a pair of 8s" should not be mistaken for the documented hand that won him the tournament. It's a useful hand-ranking example, though, and a good excuse to review how three of a kind works, how kickers break ties, and how to estimate poker odds without mixing up a made hand and a draw.





Raymer, nicknamed "Fossilman," won the 2004 World Series of Poker Main Event in a field of 2,576 players. His victory is a landmark piece of WSOP history. But unless a specific hand record is being cited, don't attach the "three kings vs. pair of 8s" scenario to his final hand as fact. Treat it as a hypothetical poker comparison—not a verified description of the showdown that earned the **WSOP Main Event prize**.

What beats what in Texas Hold'em?

In Texas Hold'em, each player makes the best five-card hand available from their two private cards and the five community cards. You can use both hole cards, one, or neither. Suits have no ranking: a spade is not stronger than a heart, and a flush does not win because of its suit.

Here is the standard hand ranking, from strongest to weakest:

1. **Royal flush:** A-K-Q-J-10, all one suit.
2. **Straight flush:** Five consecutive cards, all one suit.
3. **Four of a kind:** Four cards of the same rank.
4. **Full house:** Three of a kind plus a pair.
5. **Flush:** Five cards of one suit, not in sequence.
6. **Straight:** Five consecutive cards of mixed or matching suits.
7. **Three of a kind:** Three cards of the same rank.
8. **Two pair:** Two different pairs.
9. **One pair:** Two cards of the same rank.
10. **High card:** None of the above.

The distinction between a straight and a flush draw matters. A straight is a made five-card sequence; a straight draw is one card short of completing that sequence. A flush is five cards of the same suit; a flush draw is one card short. They are different hands with different outs and probabilities.

Three of a kind kings versus a pair of 8s

If a player's best five-card hand is three kings and an opponent's best hand is one pair of eights, the kings win. Three of a kind ranks above one pair. In a typical example, a player might have K♠ K♥ and see K♦ on the board, making three kings. An opponent holding 8♣ 8♦ has a pair of eights—unless the board gives that player a stronger five-card combination.

Always compare the best five-card hands, not just the hole cards. The board can change everything. If the community cards make a straight or flush for one player, that hand may beat three kings. If both players make three of a kind, compare the rank of the trips first, then the kickers. The two unused cards in a five-card hand can decide a tie in the main combination.

The kicker check

Here's the quick sanity check: if you have three kings and your opponent has three queens, your kings win. If both players have three kings, compare the highest kicker, then the next kicker. If the board itself supplies the same best five-card hand to both players, the pot is split. A pair of 8s does not beat three kings—but a made straight, flush, full house, or better hand can.

That kicker detail is easy to miss in home games and low-stakes online play. Players often look at their hole cards and assume they decide the result. They don't: the best five-card combination decides it.

Hand odds and probabilities: read the denominator carefully

Odds depend on the game and the point at which you measure them. A five-card poker hand has different probabilities from a seven-card Hold'em hand, where a player can choose the best five cards from seven. Always check which calculation a chart is describing.

Hand or event Example probability What it describes Four of a kind 0.0240% (1 in 4,164); also stated about 1 in 4,165 A five-card poker hand drawn from a standard 52-card deck Four of a kind in seven cards About 0.168% (roughly 1 in 595) The best five-card hand available from seven cards Flush draw after the flop, with nine outs

About 19.1% by the turn; about 35.0% by the river Assumes all nine outs are clean and both remaining community cards will be seen

The requested five-card figure— **0.0240% (1 in 4,164), also stated about 1 in 4,165**—is an example of why the game format matters. It is not the chance of making four of a kind by the river in Hold'em. A seven-card calculation gives you more cards to work with, so the probability is higher.

Draw odds by flop, turn, and river

For a quick estimate, count your *outs*: unseen cards that improve your hand. The common "rule of 2 and 4" gives a rough percentage. After the flop, multiply your outs by four to estimate the chance of hitting by the river if you expect to see both remaining cards. After the turn, multiply by two to estimate the chance of hitting on the river.

Draw example Typical outs Flop to turn Flop to river Turn to river Open-ended straight draw 8 About 17.0% About 31.5% About 17.4% Flush draw 9 About 19.1% About 35.0% About 19.6% Gutshot straight draw 4 About 8.5% About 16.5% About 8.7%

These figures assume the listed outs really help. They may not. For example, if you hold a flush draw but an opponent can make a full house on a paired board, a card of your suit may not be a winning out. Discount "dirty" outs when an opponent could already have a stronger hand or when your improvement could still lose.

Draws are not made hands

A flush draw is not a flush, and a straight draw is not a straight. If you have four cards to a flush after the flop, you still need a fifth card of that suit. If you have four consecutive ranks, you need a card that completes the sequence. Don't count a card as an out merely because it looks helpful; ask whether it makes the best hand at showdown.

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Use cheat sheets and equity charts as study tools

Printable cheat sheets can help beginners memorize hand rankings, common draw counts, and basic pot-odds comparisons. Keep one nearby during practice, but use it to learn—not to replace thinking through the board. A short reference that clearly separates made hands from draws is more useful than a crowded chart that lumps them together.

Equity charts show how often a hand is expected to win or tie against another hand or a range, given the remaining cards. Equity is not the same as hand strength in isolation. Pocket eights may be ahead of two overcards before the flop, for instance, but the result depends on the opponent's exact cards, the board, and future cards.

- Use a hand-ranking chart to confirm which five-card combination wins.
- Use a draw chart to estimate how often your outs arrive.
- Use an equity chart to compare a hand against a specific holding or a realistic range.
- Check whether a probability is for five cards, seven cards, one street, or two streets.

What Greg Raymer's 2004 win teaches beginners

The memorable part of **greg raymer 2004** is not a made-up hand label; it is the achievement. Raymer navigated a huge field and won the Main Event, taking home $5,000,000. That result is a reminder that poker decisions are

made under uncertainty: players must evaluate hand strength, opponents' possible holdings, and the cards still to come.

For a beginner, the practical lesson is simple. Identify the best five-card hand first. Then compare ranks and kickers. If you are drawing, count clean outs and use the right street-by-street probability. And when reading a headline that pairs "three of a kind kings" with a pair of eights, separate the useful hand-ranking example from the historical claim: the matchup is clear, but it should not be presented as Raymer's verified final hand without a reliable hand record.