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## Making money, playing games



### Game on

It's every console junkie's dream: get paid cold, hard cash for sitting around playing the latest games. Now, for anyone halfway decent at contests such as Halo 3, Fifa 2009 and Fight Night, a new site could make that dream a reality.

The site, World Gaming, enables players to bet money on their own gaming performance, either in one-on-one match-ups or in multiplayer tournaments.

It has been developed by Billy Levy and Zack Zeldin, a pair of American gamers who believe they've found an ultra-competitive niche market.



The pair came up with the idea while playing games of EA's Madden NFL against each other for \$100 (£64) a time, while their friends sat in the same room playing online poker. They noticed that everyone felt the competitive atmosphere.

"We thought they were going through the same emotions playing poker online that we were going through playing this game," says Levy. "Then a lightbulb switched on in our heads."

#### Cash gaming

What they came up with was a site where players can stake real cash on the games they're playing on Xbox Live and PlayStation Network.

Using World Gaming, you choose your opponent and the stakes, then play out the clash on your console. If you win, the prize money goes straight to your account, while World Gaming takes a 10% cut of both players' stakes.

Games including Halo 3, Madden NFL 09, Fifa 09 and Resistance: Fall of Man are already supported, with Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, Gears of War 2 and GTA IV to be included soon.

The site launched six months ago, since when it has set up more than 14,000 head-to-head cash challenges. Stakes for these games are, on average, just more than \$10 a person, although some high rollers have played for \$250 a game.



#### Tournament option

Knockout tournaments are also available. These run with as few as eight players, but larger fields can also be found. World Gaming has just announced a partnership with UK Fifa 09 fan site Sweetpatch TV to set up 64-player Fifa tournaments.

Whatever the size of the competition, the focus of the tournaments is on rewarding a wide range of players, with anyone who progresses beyond the first round guaranteed a return.



Betting money against a complete stranger might seem unnerveing, but the site has a number of safeguards that should offer some reassurance.

Players each have a skill rating generated by their results in previous games, so you can choose to play only against people at a similar level to your own. There are also tournaments that are open only to players at specified skill levels.

#### Good reputation

On top of that, there's a reputation system modelled on eBay's. Using this, players can leave feedback for each other after each game: something that should weed out annoying or dishonest opponents.

Players who disconnect from games because they're losing will also come to the site's attention. Levy describes a "three strikes and you're out" system, where the site has the option to block players after three suspicious disconnects.

#### Play for free

People who still don't fancy making a wager can try out the site without spending a bean. More than 4,000 games have been played for free, as the site proves popular with gamers who want to be sure they'll get a decent online match-up. It's a better option than just logging on to the servers and jumping into a random game, says Levy.



"You could waste all your time playing some 12 or 13 year old kid in the middle of Oklahoma who's just screaming and yelling into the headset," he says.

"Even if you're not playing for money, World Gaming is a place where you know you'll find good players and get good competition."

Who knows, you might even make some money out of it too.

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