

THE GAME GUY

Wagering to win: Toronto site links competitors

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 SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Note: All WorldGaming.com's transactions are processed offshore, which has raised questions about the legitimacy of the site and whether placing wagers between Canadian video gamers is legal.

Billy Levy, the WorldGaming.com co-founder interviewed for this report maintains "our service and operation is 100 percent legal in Canada; both our Canadian and U.S. investors went through exhaustive legal due-diligence to ensure we comply with all legislation in jurisdictions where we operate." Levy adds, "all tournaments offered on the WorldGaming.com website are legally defined as games of pure skill [opposed to chance]."

Video gamers who trash-talk about their "mad skills" can now put their money where their mouse is: a new Toronto-based website and service, [WorldGaming.com](#), lets you place a wager – from \$1 to \$1,000 – to compete online against single players or in multiplayer tournaments.

The site serves as a matchmaking service.

It connects console gamers, holds funds from both parties in escrow while the gamers duke it out online, and then credits the winning gamer's account based on results electronically sent to [WorldGaming.com](#) following the match.

Nearly 20 games are supported between the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, including Microsoft Game Studios' *Halo 3*, Sony's *Resistance: Fall of Man* and EA Sports' *NHL 09*. Coming soon: Activision's *Call of Duty 4*, Rockstar Games' *Grand Theft Auto IV* and Microsoft Game Studios' *Gear of War 2*.

"Trash-talking is part of gamer culture," site co-founder Billy Levy says in a telephone interview with the *Star*. "And so we're offering an extension of this competition by letting you vie for cash instead of dishing insults."

[WorldGaming.com](#) has hosted more than 10,000 challenges to date, managing more than \$100,000 in winnings. Levy says the activity is legal, because video games are based on games of skill rather than chance and therefore are not considered gambling. Registered players must be at least 18.


Here's how it works: Players register free at the site and create a profile, which includes an online Gamertag (Xbox Live name) or PSN ID (for PlayStation Network). Gamers then visit a lobby to initiate a challenge and specify for how much.

They deposit money into the account via a credit card or PayPal. If the challenge is accepted, players go to their consoles and play the game online, just as they normally would, and an automated verification system ensures the correct results are sent to [WorldGaming.com](#) to credit the winner's account. Players can assess would-be challengers through a reputation feedback system and skills rating based on actual wins and generated by the game automatically.

[WorldGaming.com](#) takes a 10 per cent fee off the top for managing the competition (e.g., \$10 from a \$100 wager, per player) with a maximum of \$25 per person, per game.

Multiplayer tournaments are also available, offering cash and prizes to winners. Levy says team-based head-to-head games will soon be supported as well.

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