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bridge *Canada*



THE CANADIAN BRIDGE FEDERATION

The mission of the Canadian Bridge Federation is to promote bridge within Canada and protect and advance the national interests of Canadian bridge, including the selection and support of Canadian bridge teams and players for international bridge competition.



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MEMBERSHIP

Bridge Canada is available to members only.

If you know of anyone who wishes to become a member of the Canadian Bridge Federation please share with them these options:

1. Be sure to include CBF dues with your ACBL dues.
2. Visit cbf.ca and click **Join The CBF**.
3. Email info@cbf.ca for more information.

NOTE: Membership dues are waived for Canadian players under 25 years of age. Junior players can join the CBF by sending their information to info@cbf.ca.

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EXPLORING THE WORLD OF PROFESSIONAL BRIDGE

By Alex J. Coyne

Have you ever wished you could somehow quit your job and play bridge full time? Unfortunately bridge tournaments, unlike poker tournaments, rarely offer prize money. But for many expert players, prize money isn't the only way to earn a living at the world's favourite card game.

The world of bridge actually offers many possible careers including bridge director, teacher, club owner, writer, cartoonist and publisher. However, the most lucrative bridge profession could be said to be that of a bridge professional. But what's involved? How much do bridge players make? How would one hire a bridge pro?

We went digging into the world of professional bridge to find out more.

How much do prof bridge players make?

Canadian player Daniel Korbel revealed in an interview for *The Record* ("This bridge pro reveals his secrets as a hired gun", *The Record*, 2012) that some bridge players are happy to fork out "upward of \$30,000 or more to a top pro to be their teammate at a week-long national tournament." Smaller tournaments, also according to Korbel, could bring a professional player up to \$9,000.

An article from *The Globe and Mail* ("High rollers fit the bill for bridge pros", *The Globe and Mail*, 2011) noted that tournament rates for professional players can vary between \$8,000 to as much as \$50,000 according to professional bridge player and Canadian, Gavin Wolpert.

It would seem that just how much bridge players can make in the professional circuit would depend on how active they are, how often they win – and, largely, who is sponsoring their game. In many cases, these are larger companies and bridge-enthusiasts who like to see the game continue – the "high rollers" referred to by *The Globe and Mail*.

Someone asked this question of Quora in 2014, and Jim Griffin, a professional bridge player in the SF bay area replied:

As a professional player I can shed some light on the subject. How much a pro charges is like asking "How much does a lawyer charge?". The fee is based on several things:

- 1) How good a player is the pro? Does he (or she) have significant tournament wins and a reliable track record?
- 2) What is the event you are hiring the pro for? A club game is significantly less than a sectional, which in turn is less than a regional event. At the top of the fee ladder would be a National or World event.

3) What part of the country do you live? There is a regional pricing variance I've noticed depending somewhat on the locale you're in. NYC or LA or the SF bay area with their higher costs of living command a higher price tag. Many of the top pros have moved to Las Vegas and Florida and some of those rates are quite high as well.

In general I would say (based especially on bullet 1), a pro might get:

- a) \$75 to \$300 for a club game (3-4 hours). I know people getting paid both extremes.
- b) \$250 to \$800/day for a sectional (two 3-4 hour sessions)
- c) \$300 to \$1000 /day for a regional event (two 3-4 hour sessions)
- d) \$500 to \$3000/day for a nationally rated event (two 3-4 hour sessions).

Many top pros are hired to play all 3 nationals and some set number of regionals / year for an agreed upon price. Frequently, they have written contracts outlining their agreements.

Want to become a bridge professional?

You've earned a reputation at the bridge table, and you've amassed a goodly sum of points, now you want to see if you can earn some money to cover the costs of attending tournaments.

You can start small at your local bridge club. Talk to other 'pros' in your area and see what the going rate is for a club game. Then give your name to the club owner, to local teachers, and even to your local tournament organizers.

Your success as a bridge pro big or small will ultimately depend on how personable you are at the table as well as how well you play.

Documentaries & Books

These excellent publications will help you get a feel for the world of professional bridge.

In the Cards: The Secret World of Professional Bridge.

This bridge documentary, directed by Andy Pedersen and produced in 2004-2005, follows Gavin Wolpert and Vincent Demuy around the world capturing the excitement of professional bridge.

The Sheriff of Bridge: This is a perhaps lesser-known documentary about professional bridge player Boye Brogeland and his mission to spot and bring down cheaters in the professional bridge world. (And it was nominated the Best Norwegian TV Documentary!)

Aces & Knives: This is an exciting documentary about the mental side of playing bridge. Their webpage notes: *Aces & Knives is a documentary for and about us—the millions of people who discover the game of bridge and never let it go.*

Double Dummy: This is a documentary by John McAllister about the competitive world of youth bridge tournaments and the friendships that players form around the tournament table.

The Bridge Bum by Alan Sontag. This famous book follows professional Alan Sontag as he navigates the glamour and grind of a bridge professional's life

Would you like to get in touch with some professional bridge players yourself?

Pro Bridge: Find Me A Bridge Pro. On this cool website, Sally Brock, Simon Cope and Ben provide a service where players can be matched with a bridge pro - for tournaments or even for club games. Sadly Pro Bridge is located in the UK, and we haven't been able to find anything similar in North America. pro-bridge.co.uk

Truth is, though, any 'expert' bridge player would likely be available for a 'pro' bridge date. You could also ask at your local bridge club - very likely they'll have a list of players who are available.