

# Principles of American Professional Go

## ***Introduction***

For a number of years in America, strong amateur players have proven their ability against certified professionals who have received credentials in foreign countries. The time has come, therefore, to establish the principles and approach that the American Go Association deems appropriate for creating a professional system in the USA. The principles herein do not give the details for such a system, but only serve to establish the framework of ideals that should govern the development of a system, so that the AGA can help ensure that it is created in the proper spirit, and with the best interests of the future of Go in America.

There are potentially many ways to define a Go “professional”. One may be a tournament player, winning prizes. One may be a teacher, earning fees. One may be a writer or distributor, making royalties or sales. For the purposes of this document, the term “professional” is used only to indicate a level of title conferred on the basis of playing skill, so as to distinguish American players of the most exceptional ability. Such distinguished players would still be free to pursue their happiness to earn their living through Go (or not) as they see fit.

## ***Fundamentals***

The following principles are considered fundamental to the creation of a fair and open professional system, well suited to the American ideals of openness and inclusion, so that professional Go may be a welcome place for all.

### **Article I: Objectivity**

Go is an objective game. No subjectivity is required to determine the winner of a Go match. Therefore, it is paramount that whatever system determines the relative strength of players to qualify for professional ranks be completely objective. Fair and open competition shall be the sole arbiter of ability, both for joining the ranks of professionals or for advancing within those ranks.

### **Article II: Inclusiveness**

America is the land of opportunity. While it may be desirable to have some level of citizenship requirement to be included at the highest levels of title or professional status, there should be no other barrier to participation within the tournament system. People may not be barred from the system based on consideration such as, but not limited to race, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age or affiliation to any particular club or school. People with disabilities will also be accommodated as much as possible without compromising the spirit of the competition.

Qualifying tournament for major events may limit participation based on skill level, but the criteria must be based on objective information only, or derived from yet other tournaments whose results are similarly objective and inclusive.

### **Article III: Teaching and schools**

The American Go Association welcomes the creation of schools and—with the obvious exception of schools it may itself choose to found—has no overall governing interest in how they are formed or managed. However, just as the inclusiveness principle asks that none be excluded because of affiliation with any particular club or school, it shall not be required that players must participate in any given club or school in order to participate in the professional system. Participation in any professional preparatory program or similar school shall be voluntary and independent.

Furthermore, the choice to teach or not is a personal one, and independent from play. No player shall be forced to teach or otherwise participate in an educational program as part of inclusion in a professional program.

## ***Approach***

The above fundamentals may be applied in one of two broad directions: certification vs. no certification. Although either direction may be realized by a wide variety of systems, the following details further principles that will help ensure that the fundamentals are upheld.

### **Option 1: No Certification**

In America, anyone who wishes to compete in a game (be it board, card, electronic or otherwise) is generally welcome with only one criterion: that they have the ability to win against their peers. The declaration that one is a “professional” is primarily a personal decision, based on how much time is spent at the activity and whether or not a living wage can be earned at it.

It is possible to create a tournament system that merges all players, without the need for the certification as a professional. It may be desirable to create other titles (such as “Master” and “Grandmaster” used in other games) to confer distinction for exceptional ability. Since representation in International tournaments is often defined as requiring professional status, it would then be incumbent on the American Go Association to formally establish that this merged system of ranking has been formally established, and assure foreign Go associations that we will send our strongest players by the fairly administered practices of our national tournament system.

### **Option 2: Certification**

If certification is deemed necessary, it is important that the American professional Go system use the distinction primarily as a way of interfacing with international Go organizations. The above principles make it explicitly clear that inclusion in such a community must be based on playing ability, and open to all who possess the strength.