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Relentless

Lee Sedol vs Gu Li

Go Game Guru

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To my family and my wife Jisun, for their love and support while I was working on Relentless, my teacher Hur Janghoi 9 dan, without whom I could not have become a professional, and Dae Hahn, for helping me to move to Australia.

David:

To Jingning and Ella, for filling life with happiness.

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Foreword

In ancient times there were four arts which educated people sought to master.

They were: music (the zither), baduk (Go), calligraphy and painting.

Among these four arts, baduk is unique in being the only one that requires a partner. No matter how skilled a master is, they cannot create a work of art unless they have a worthy adversary.

This gives baduk a special character, because even though the top players throughout history always competed fiercely to be the best, they also respected one another and often became friends.

Lee Sedol and Gu Li are a perfect example of this phenomenon. Both players are possessed of an indomitable fighting spirit and a strong desire to climb to the top of the baduk world. Yet, despite the intense rivalry that takes place over the board, they have become good friends through baduk.

Games between Lee Sedol and Gu Li are always dramatic, unpredictable and full of fireworks, and they both have many fans. Their 10 game match in 2014 was much anticipated and was exciting to watch, and the players created a collection of artworks for future generations to enjoy.

The analysis presented in *Relentless* goes into great detail to explain the strategies and techniques employed by the players throughout this match, and should be of assistance to ambitious Go players in the West.

When you study the games in this book, I recommend that you first play through the game record by yourself and think about the best moves for Black and White using your own mind and ideas. Once you've replayed the game, you can read the analysis in this book and compare the authors' ideas with your own.

I hope to see the level of baduk players in the West increase steadily over the coming decades, and that the baduk world will become more internationally competitive and richer as a result.

—Lee Changho 9 dan, Seoul, October 2015

Preface

This book contains analysis of 48 games between two of the top Go players of the early 21st century, but it is not just another book of game commentaries. It is the story of the rivalry and friendship between Lee Sedol and Gu Li, their relentless struggle to become the best, and an explication of the secrets of Go hidden within their games.

There are two parts to *Relentless*. Part One is the core of the book and examines, in unprecedented detail, the 10 game match (jubango) played by Lee Sedol and Gu Li throughout 2014. Part Two reviews every other official game between the two masters (up until the end of 2015), providing the reader with ample material to review and enjoy, while reflecting on what they learned in Part One.

Rather than just saying what happened, we use the match as the basis for an extensive study of the fundamental techniques, strategies and principles of Go—all applied within the context of real games, so that the reader can see how ideas and techniques are employed in practice.

Go is an art form, and like other arts, studying the work of masters contributes greatly to one's appreciation, enjoyment and gradual mastery of the craft. When you study a piece of music, the goal is rarely (if ever) just to be able to play it. Rather, a deep study of a piece is intended to convey a visceral understanding of the technique and theory embodied within it, in a way that a book about theory never could.

Relentless strives to offer that same experience to Go players. Over two years, we have distilled our knowledge and passion for the game into 625 pages of pure Go, until nothing more would fit.

Where other books might gloss over the details, we have sought to expose the wealth of tactical considerations beneath the surface, so that they may be studied, applied to the reader's games, and eventually mastered. We have extracted a practical lesson from every passage of play and boiled it all down to a series of memorable proverbs (both old and new) for the reader to internalize.

Relentless also draws on the knowledge of great thinkers of the past—such as Sun Zi (Sun Tzu), Lao Zi, Thucydides, Carl von Clausewitz, and many more—demonstrating how their ideas apply to Go.

Finally, the commentary is honest. In the past, some books portrayed professional Go players like gods and politely overlooked small mistakes. We make no apologies for doing away with this convention.

This is not intended to be the kind of book you will only read once. The content is dense in parts and may require reflection. It is our hope that it will serve readers for many years to come, however worn for wear, as a source of knowledge and inspiration, throughout their journey along the path of Go.

Lee Sedol and Gu Li

It's no secret that we, the authors, are big fans of both Lee Sedol and Gu Li. Anyone who has frequented the Go Game Guru website over the last few years would already be well aware of that.

When you review the list of titles that these two have to their names (given in the introduction shortly), it's hard to dispute that they've been amongst the best players in the world over the last decade. Beyond that, they're also two of the most popular players, even outside of their native countries.

Of course, winning tournaments helps one to acquire fans, but it's not the only factor. We believe that the attraction of both Lee and Gu's games lies in their originality, their adventurousness and their relentless fighting spirits. In an era where most professional Go players are trained in specialized Go schools from a young age, the level of play is higher than ever, but it comes at the cost of individuality.

The scores of technically masterful, fearsomely strong players whom we see today somehow pale in comparison to the colorful and wonderfully idiosyncratic personalities of last century. The likes of Sakata Eio (the razor), Kato Masao (the killer) or Takemiya Masaki and his cosmic style have gradually faded from the stage. Does the current intense competition even leave room for such characters?

Lee Sedol's style of play is practical, dynamic, territorial and razor-sharp. Like other top players before him, he excels in the middle game and is a master of attack and defense, sabaki, and fighting ko. He can also hold his own against the best in the endgame. Guided by deep and accurate reading, Lee often makes bold exchanges that lead to him capturing groups or trading on a large scale. This makes his play both flexible and decisive, and requires great confidence in the accuracy of one's analysis.

On the other hand, Gu Li's style is thick and powerful, and (like Lee's) razor-sharp. His play in the opening is flexible, creative and inspiring. It can appear slow at times, but he's rarely behind in the early stages of the game. His explosive fighting power helps him to convert his thick positions into profit in the middle game and is very difficult to imitate. One of the great pleasures of reviewing Gu's games is seeing him direct this power towards dismantling a moyo, as if it were made of tissue paper.

However, the real magic happens when these two play together. When the finely honed edges of their steely wills clash across the board, sparks fly in all directions and lead to unexpected and delightfully novel variations.

Like many Go players, we both have fond memories of most of the games in this book—watching the games live, or rushing home from work to download the latest game record—and reviewing them with friends. The cult following of this famous rivalry may seem strange to some readers, but it is best understood by replaying Lee and Gu's matches together. The game records speak for themselves.

Why Are We Fighting?

“Go uses the most elemental materials and concepts—line and circle, wood and stone, black and white—combining them with simple rules to generate subtle strategies and complex tactics that stagger the imagination.” —Iwamoto Kaoru 9 dan

Fundamentally, a game of Go is just a bunch of pebbles on a piece of wood with a grid; or a collection of lines and circles on a computer screen. Everything else that happens is a product of your imagination.

People often use the metaphor of warfare to describe Go, and we've followed that convention in this book because it's already well accepted and relates to the strategic insights of great military thinkers. However, it's just one of many possible models. Among other things, a game of Go could be viewed as:

a conversation, debate or negotiation, cooking or construction, the living of a single life, the running of a business or economy, an elaborate dance, or the interaction between primeval physical forces.

You can choose or invent any model which appeals to you, but we sometimes come across very gentle and kind players who take exception with the notion of ‘fighting’. These people see fighting as negative and immoral, and may consequently become upset when someone is “too aggressive.”

Of course, they are mostly right in the broader sense. We all benefit from a society that is peaceful and productive enough for us to enjoy Go and other activities. Most people understand that it’s necessary to abide by certain ethical and legal frameworks in order to maintain that stability for everyone.

The mistake in worrying about fighting is simply that it over-stretches the model and applies it to things that are way outside its scope. When people talk about fighting with respect to Go, what they really mean is something like “a finely balanced series of moves.”

The forces at play on the Go board are elemental in nature and bear more resemblance to the laws of physics than a human society. There is no such thing as morally right or wrong, good or bad. There is only possible and impossible.

Therefore, don’t avoid fighting and deprive yourself of knowledge just because of unrelated emotional connotations. Doing so only stunts your development as a Go player and reduces your enjoyment of the game. If you are one of these kind and gentle souls, a better response is to completely change your mental model for Go. For example, when people talk about ‘fighting’, what they’re actually discussing is a respectful business negotiation or, perhaps, mixing the cake. It’s all up to you.

In this book, we discuss your opponent and yourself, attack and defense, chaos and harmony, war and peace. We make no moral judgments about moves or states of play, because that’s quite unhelpful. We’re interested in what works: practical techniques and strategies which you can apply to your games.

“Use only that which works, and take it from any place you can find it.” —Bruce Lee

Creating Relentless

We feel grateful that fate and the Go community have given us the opportunity to write this book.

In terms of how *Relentless* was created, the majority of the analysis is Younggil’s, with advice and feedback from members of the Korean professional community, and suggestions from David.

The text in the book was written by David, in close collaboration with Younggil, starting from the draft commentaries on our website.

Josh helped behind the scenes, by automating parts of the typesetting process, and is listed as an author in recognition of this contribution.

Cover Art

The Chinese calligraphy on the cover depicts the word *hen*, which means *relentless* in Mandarin. As with the English word ‘relentless’, it can have both positive and negative connotations.

The Copyright Thing

As you may have noticed if you pay attention to copyright notices, we have some slightly unconventional views about copyright. In short, we like to get paid for our work by people who can afford to do so (so we can write more books) and don't like other people selling our work without including us.

That being said, if someone wants to 'loan' their digital copy of *Relentless* to a friend, we don't think it's reasonable to expect them to request a license to do so. People have been loaning books since before publishers existed, and libraries have long been esteemed institutions in most societies. We both have an embarrassingly large collection of printed Go books and lend them to friends all the time.

If a teacher somewhere wants to use content from our book to teach their students Go, we're happy for them to do so. In fact, we are overjoyed. We do what we do to promote Go, so why would we want to stop someone from teaching others? All we ask is that you give us credit for our work, so that people who have the interest and the means can buy our books. That way, we can write more for you.

The thing is, the knowledge in this book doesn't belong to us anyway. The games are the creations of the players and almost everything else has been handed down from one generation of Go players to the next over thousands of years. Our contribution is just presenting the knowledge in a new way.

Furthermore, we are almost at the point where universal access to human knowledge is attainable, for the first time in history. Of course, certain business models might have to be updated, but from a broader perspective it's hard to see this access to knowledge as anything but a good thing.

You can find more information on the details of all this on the [copyright page](#), at the front of this book. If you're interested in working on a commercial translation of *Relentless*, please contact us.

On the Important Matter of Pickle Jars...

When reviewing the games of past masters, we are struck by two things. Firstly, the level of play even hundreds of years ago was remarkable, especially given that the players didn't have access to the resources we take for granted today. Secondly, the pace of improvement in Go theory is startling, particularly in the opening.

Part Two of this book surveys games between Lee Sedol and Gu Li, spanning a whisker more than a decade. It is a mere flash of brilliance in the long arc of Go history. Yet, even over this short time, the rapid evolution of opening theory can clearly be seen if you pay attention from start to finish.

We have tried to capture the essence of cutting edge opening theory and make the thinking of contemporary professionals accessible to readers around the world, because we felt that a sizable gap existed in Western Go literature, in this area. Nevertheless, we expect Go theory to continue to develop day by day, and that gap will widen once again.

Almost exactly 250 years ago, the Go master Fan Xiping wrote the preface for his book, *Peach Blossom Fountain Go Manual*. His sentiments are just as relevant today, so we would like to echo them:

We are products of our time. We play modern Go. As for those who come after us, we cannot know what they will come up with. Perhaps our work will become like that of those who came before us, used only to cover pickle jars? We do not doubt it.

—Younggil An 8 dan and David Ormerod, Sydney, December 2015

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The book you hold in front of you was made possible through the assistance of many kind and generous people. We will do our best to recognize everyone here, and beg forgiveness for any oversights.

To begin with, we would like to thank Gu Li 9 dan and Lee Sedol 9 dan for their art, which has enriched our lives over many years and without which *Relentless* would not have been possible.

Next, we are grateful to Ni Zhanggen, the CEO of MLily, for sponsoring the MLily Gu vs Lee Jubango and transforming the dream of many Go players into a reality. The Chinese and Korean Go associations were also heavily involved in organizing the match, and deserve recognition for it.

We were humbled when Lee Changho 9 dan appraised our draft manuscript and agreed to write the foreword, and we greatly appreciate the time he took out of his busy schedule in order to do so.

The cover art and design is by Jingning Xue, who dusted off her calligraphy brushes for the occasion. Jingning also helped with translating and interpreting Chinese texts, and proofreading the final draft. On top of all that, she patiently indulged us alternating between the computer and the Go board, for days at a time, and working on this book on and off for two years, and reminded us to eat and sleep.

Our tireless editor, Carol Barnard, read *Relentless* from cover to cover and made many improvements to the text. This was a Herculean effort, especially given that she only knows the basics of Go.

Lee Hajin 3 dan caught many minor blemishes, as the technical reviewer, and worked diligently to ensure the accuracy of the commentary. She was also a welcome source of positivity and encouragement.

We received generous feedback and advice from our friends Han Jongjin 9 dan, Kim Jiseok 9 dan, Kim Juho 9 dan, Lee Jungwoo 9 dan, Mok Jinseok 9 dan, Park Jungsang 9 dan, Song Taegon 9 dan, Park Seungchul 7 dan, Choi Moonyong 6 dan and Na Hyun 4 dan, all of whom helped with game analysis and background information.

We were also very fortunate that friends who proofread the draft seemed to believe in what we were doing, and dedicated much more time than we expected to significantly improving this very long book. They were: Huw Barnard, David Mitchell, Tony Purcell, Neville Smythe and Gareth White.

Many members of the Go community offered feedback on early draft commentaries and asked helpful questions, on our website. They also encouraged and prodded us when we seemed to be losing steam.

John Fairbairn and T. Mark Hall created the GoGoD database of professional games, which was invaluable in ensuring that our comments about opening theory and trends were supported by data.

How to Use This Book

Reviewing high quality games is an important aspect of becoming a better Go player. The question of just how important it is depends largely on your current level and, to a lesser extent, your interests.

General Suggestions for Kyu Level Players

As we've written elsewhere, the most important thing you can do to get better at Go is simply to play games. After you've learned the basics, should spend most of your time playing games. Once you're around 15 kyu, books will be helpful if you enjoy reading them, but it depends on your personality. Try some books about basic haengma, tesuji and the middle game if you feel so inclined.

Once you reach single digit kyu level (9 kyu to 1 kyu), books become increasingly important. You can still improve by just playing games if you have the opportunity to play regularly with stronger players, but you may find that you improve more quickly if you can absorb the techniques and principles of play which have been worked out by Go players over generations. Who wants to reinvent the wheel?

How to Read *Relentless*

We wrote *Relentless* with an audience ranging from single digit kyu players to high amateur dan level players in mind. The book contains many detailed variations, especially in places where the games become complicated. For some players, the variations might be too intense and tiring to follow at times, and could detract from the overall story of the games. So, we recommend reading the book mainly for enjoyment at first, and dipping into the variations when you feel curious about something.

Our intention while writing the book was that players who were reading it primarily for entertainment could start at the introduction, to get to know the players and the background of the jubango, and then follow the story from chapter to chapter.

If you choose to read the book in this way, you can skip from section to section (sections start with headings and centered diagrams) and treat the variations as optional. Following the story with this approach will help you to stay engaged and you will still learn plenty. You don't need to have a Go board in front of you when reading, but it generally helps and can increase your enjoyment of the book.

We spent a great deal of time distilling all the knowledge we could into the commentary and variations in this book. It is not intended that readers will remember (or even look at) everything on the first

reading and the information is provided, rather, as a resource for enthusiastic players to mine over a period of years. We hope that you will become stronger and discover new things with each reading.

General Suggestions for Dan Level Players

By the time you reach low kyu or low dan level, you may have already established your own routine for improving at Go. If that's the case, keep doing whatever seems to be working for you. We will provide some suggestions below which you can try if you feel interested, or when you hit a wall.

If you're trying hard to get better at Go, it's important to have fun so that you maintain your passion for the game and motivation to improve. It's somewhat counter-intuitive, but often the fastest way to improve at something is to focus on your strengths and areas of interest. Very few people can excel at all aspects of Go, so you should strive to master the things that come most naturally to you first.

You may improve with this approach for some time, and then plateau. After several months without improvement, you might consider studying other aspects of the game and patching up weaknesses, but you don't have to if you're already satisfied.

Playing games is still very important, in order to experiment with what you're learning and consolidate the knowledge in a practical sense. You don't need to play too many games at this level. It's much more helpful to play fewer games with more time, so that you can concentrate and stretch your abilities to their limits. Doing so will help you to become stronger. You need time to read carefully and form a coherent strategy, which applies your current knowledge of the game.

If your goal is to become stronger, don't play fast games. If you don't have enough time to think, you'll make mistakes, reinforce bad habits through repetition, and condition yourself to think about the game in superficial ways. It will take more effort to unlearn these bad habits afterwards. Very few players are able to improve by playing fast games, so you should only play fast games for fun.

It's true that professionals sometimes play fast games, but they've already been through the learning process described above, and need less time to think because of faster reading and greater experience. Playing only fast games also makes professionals become weaker.

It's best to have a good teacher if possible. A teacher—even if only consulted on an irregular basis—can help you by pointing out mistakes and weaknesses in your game, and correcting any misconceptions you might have. Some misconceptions can be difficult to discover and address when studying by yourself.

Matters of Life and Death

If you feel that you lack confidence in fighting, or often collapse in the middle game, the fastest way to improve is to practice solving life and death problems. This will sharpen your reading and improve your sense of play far beyond life and death situations themselves.

Some players view life and death problems as a chore, but if you persevere for a little while they can become quite entertaining. Each problem is a self contained puzzle, like a crossword or sudoku, and solving problems can itself become an enjoyable game.

You will improve more quickly and have more fun with problems that you can solve without too much effort. If you can't solve a problem in two minutes, it's too hard and isn't helpful right now.

Learning to Love Fighting

After some time practicing life and death and learning about middle game strategy (there is plenty about strategy in *Relentless*), you may feel that your game becomes more aggressive and fighting oriented. This is generally a good sign. It's very difficult to become a strong player without first becoming good at fighting.

Eventually, when you've honed your fighting skills and become stronger, you might want to consult a teacher again. At this stage, a teacher can help you to focus on the more subtle aspects of the game and help you understand when to fight, and when not to. A teacher can also help you to expand your perception of the whole board, which is very important for mid to high dan level amateur players. We have tried to bake as much knowledge about whole board strategy as possible into *Relentless*.

How to Study Professional Games

With regards to replaying professional games and studying game commentaries, we will outline the method used by players who are studying to become professionals. You can try this approach if you're serious about improving and have plenty of time. It requires some effort, but achieves results.

The first step is to take some time to replay the game record once (or a few times), before looking at any commentary. *Relentless* has been designed with this use in mind and game records are provided at the beginning of every chapter. There is value in physically replaying a game on a board, from a printed game record. The process is more deliberate and engaging, because you need to think about where the next move should be in order to find it. The experience can be difficult at first, perhaps even frustrating, but overcoming that difficulty will make you stronger.

If you find the experience too frustrating, you might want to stop and try the games given in Part Two of *Relentless*, because the game records there have been split into three diagrams. If you're still feeling frustrated after replaying three to five game records, don't worry. Most likely it means that you aren't ready to use this approach to study games yet. You can try it again when you've become a bit stronger. In the meantime, you can download all the game records at: <https://gogameguru.com/relentless/> and replay them as you read through each chapter.

While replaying a game record, you are not a passive observer. With each move, try to understand why it was played and justify its purpose to yourself. Think about the position as if you were playing, and try to predict the next move. After doing so, you can check the game record to see if you were right. As you become stronger, your ability to predict the next move will become more and more accurate, so you will usually be able to find the next move quickly, even on a crowded page.

Try to feel the flow of play and sense when it comes to a natural pause. At these points, you can expect play to shift to another part of the board. Take a moment to widen your perspective and survey the whole board. Who is winning? What are the most important factors in the game and where should the next move be? Check the game record to see if the players agree with you. If not, why not?

Even if you don't understand everything that's going on, replaying games in this way is still worthwhile. Once you've played all the way through the game at least once, replay the game again with the commentary. Compare your ideas with our commentary and study the variations. You can now try to understand the meaning of each move more deeply. If some moves still don't make sense, don't worry. You can come back to this game and review it again sometime later.

Memorizing Professional Games

If you still feel motivated to study a game further, try to memorize it by replaying it several times. The easiest way to memorize a game is to seek to understand the meaning of each move and empathize with both players.

You can also try replaying it upside down for an added challenge. You're now looking at the game from White's perspective and you may find that you notice things which you didn't see earlier. The human brain is strange in that way.

We hope these suggestions will help you to learn as much as possible from game commentaries.

Some Technical Notes About Printed Game Records

When replaying a game from a printed game record, such as those in *Relentless*, the moves are numbered starting with 1 and proceeding in the order that they were played. Often games are broken up into several diagrams, in which case the stones which were already on the board in the previous diagram will appear without numbers, and only new moves will be numbered.

It's common to start counting from 1 again after every hundred moves, such that moves 101, 102 and 103 are simply represented as 1, 2 and 3 (likewise for 201, 202 and 203). This convention makes game records easier to follow and avoids straining readers' eyes with small fonts. If you need to know what the full move number is, you can find more information in the caption for each diagram.

Sometimes stones are played on the same intersection more than once in the space of a single diagram, such as when there is a ko fight. When this happens, the moves are listed below the diagram in the form: 7 at 1, 10 at 4 etc. This means that move 7 was played in the same place as 1, and 10 was played at 4. If you're ever having trouble finding a move, check below the diagram to see if it's listed there.

Don't Forget the Back Matter

If you come across a term or phrase that you haven't seen before, don't forget that a detailed glossary is provided in the back matter.

We have also compiled an 'Index of Principles' at the very end of the book, to help with looking things up and to assist those who learn best by reviewing a summary of key ideas.

Enjoy Yourself!

Finally, remember that the most important thing is to enjoy yourself. If something doesn't work for you, try something else. Everyone is different and this advice is general by necessity. Have fun!

Introduction

Let's get to know the players and learn a little about the match which is the centerpiece of this book.

Gu Li

Gu Li was born in Chongqing on February 3, 1983. His family name is Gu and his given name is Li.

Chongqing is a thriving metropolis and commercial hub, situated towards the center of China at the confluence of the Yangtze and Jialing rivers.

His father was an amateur Go enthusiast and Gu began to learn the game at the age of 6. Go was booming in China at the time, because of Nie Weiping 9 dan's amazing performances in the China Japan 'Supermatches' from 1984–88, and young Gu was swept up in the rising tide.

He showed an early talent for the game, so his parents enrolled him in local Go classes. However, he succumbed to the lure of the nearby video arcade for a time. Even though Gu didn't have much money to feed the arcade games, he enjoyed watching others play and skipped Go class in order to do so.

When his father discovered what Gu had been up to he was enraged, and the experience instilled enough fear in the young boy that he never missed Go class again.

Gu won the National Youth Championship when he was 11. In the following year, aged 12, he qualified as a professional and joined the National Youth Team. At this stage, unlike many of his contemporaries, Gu was still without a formal mentor. It had always been his father's belief that Gu should only have one mentor in his career and, therefore, this teacher should be a 'great master'.

At the time, Nie Weiping was the head coach of the Chinese National Team. Upon receiving a recommendation from Yu Bin 9 dan, Nie traveled to Chongqing specifically to play several games with Gu and assess his talent. After doing so, he decided to formally take on Gu as his apprentice.

Besides Go, Gu loves music and sport, particularly soccer. He is the self-proclaimed 'secret weapon' of the Chinese Go Association's soccer team. He was also a torch bearer during the Chongqing leg of the 2008 Summer Olympics torch relay.

Gu has been known to say, "If you only play Go and don't enjoy life, your Go will suffer for it."

A list of professional titles won by Gu throughout his career is provided on the following page (international titles are **bolded**):

2001 – 8th Xinren Wang, 2nd Liguang Cup

2003 – 17th Tianyuan, 5th Ahan Tongshan Cup, 7th China Korea Tengen

2004 – 18th Tianyuan, 17th Mingren, 9th NEC Cup, 8th China Korea Tengen, 5th Japan China Agon Cup

2005 – 19th Tianyuan, 18th Mingren, 7th Ahan Tongshan Cup, 9th China Korea Tengen, 12th Xinren Wang

2006 – **10th LG Cup**, 20th Tianyuan, 19th Mingren, 11th NEC Cup, 7th Japan China Agon Cup

2007 – **6th Chunlan Cup**, 21st Tianyuan, 20th Mingren, 11th China Korea Tengen

2008 – **21st Fujitsu Cup**, 22nd Tianyuan, 21st Mingren, 4th Chang-Ki Cup, 13th NEC Cup, 10th Ahan Tongshan Cup, 2nd Quzhou-Lanke Cup, 1st Longxing

2009 – **13th LG Cup**, **1st BC Card Cup**, **4th Toyota-Denso Cup**, 22nd Mingren, 14th NEC Cup, 10th Japan China Agon Cup

2010 – **15th Samsung Cup**, 1st China Japan Korea Meijin

2011 – 8th Chang-Ki Cup

2012 – 14th Ahan Tongshan Cup

2013 – 14th Japan China Agon Cup

2014 – 5th Longxing

2015 – **10th Chunlan Cup**.

Lee Sedol

Lee was born on Bigeum-do (Bigeum Island) on March 2, 1983—just one month after Gu. Lee is his family name and Sedol is his given name.

Bigeum is a small island in Shinan County, one of the poorest parts of South Korea. The main industries in the area are agriculture, salt farming and fishing.

His father was a strong amateur player who ran a small Go class for children in the area. Lee was shy, so he only watched the other children play at first, but he soon became interested in Go and began to participate. He quickly surpassed the other students, so his father began to teach him more seriously, together with his older brother Lee Sanghun (now a professional 9 dan) and sister Lee Sena.

By the time he was 8, Lee had reached the level of amateur 5 dan, and began to participate in children's tournaments. That same year, he defeated Han Jongjin (now a professional 9 dan) to win an important youth tournament. It was sensational at the time because Han was in year 6 at school, while Lee (who defeated many older children) was only in year 2.

While Lee remained on Bigeum-do, his father was his only teacher. He would set life and death problems for young Lee to solve while he was working on the farm and would check his answers later in the day. He wanted Lee to find the correct solutions, even if it took the whole day. Lee's reading became quick and precise, partly because of this early training when he was still very young.

At the age of 9, Lee left home to study at Kwon Gapyong 8 dan's dojo in Seoul. Kwon recognized Lee's special talent, so rather than trying to change his unique style, he nurtured it and allowed Lee

to play as he wished. In 1995, aged 12, Lee became a professional.

Lee is gentle, positive and humorous, but is also independent and incredibly strong-willed. In 2009, at the height of his career, he took some time off from professional Go to the shock and disappointment of fans. He returned six months later, seemingly stronger than ever.

Because of his quirky sense of humor and straight-talking attitude, interviews with Lee are very popular, even amongst people who don't play Go. He is known for funny quotes which often contain a nugget of truth, but some members of the older generation don't appreciate this and are quite critical of Lee. Since most younger people find him inspirational, he is something of a polarizing character in Korea.

He was once asked how he felt about his many critics, and quipped, "I don't have enough time to take care of all my fans, so I don't even think about my critics."

The list of Lee's professional titles can be summarized as follows:

2000 – 5th Chunwon, 8th Baedal Wang

2001 – 1st Osram Cup

2002 – **15th Fujitsu Cup**, 7th Korean LG Cup, 1st KTF Cup, 12th BC Card (Korean New Stars), 6th SK Gas Cup

2003 – **7th LG Cup**, **16th Fujitsu Cup**

2004 – **9th Samsung Cup**

2005 – **2nd Toyota-Denso Cup**, **18th Fujitsu Cup**, 6th Maxim Cup

2006 – 11th GS Caltex Cup, 7th Maxim Cup, 2nd Price Information Cup, 25th KBS Cup

2007 – **3rd Toyota-Denso Cup**, **19th Asian TV Cup**, 35th Myeongin, 51st Kuksu, 8th Maxim Cup, 3rd Price Information Cup,

2008 – **12th Samsung Cup**, **12th LG Cup**, **20th Asian TV Cup**, 36th Myeongin

2009 – **13th Samsung Cup**, 52nd Kuksu

2010 – **2nd BC Card Cup**, 6th Price Information Cup, 1st Olleh KT Cup

2011 – **3rd BC Card Cup**, **8th Chunlan Cup**, 6th Siptan, 2nd Olleh KT Cup

2012 – **2012 Samsung Cup**, 40th Myeongin, 17th GS Caltex Cup, 3rd Olleh KT Cup

2014 – MLily Gu vs Lee Jubango, **26th Asian TV Cup**, 15th Maxim Cup, 1st Let's Run Park Cup, 32nd KBS Cup

2015 – **27th Asian TV Cup**.

The MLily Gu vs Lee Jubango

Since at least the 18th century, the question of who is superior between two top players has often been resolved by playing a 10 game match. The Japanese term for such a match is 'jubango', and has been imported into English by Go players.

Given the innate magic that is apparent on the Go board when observing games between Lee Sedol and Gu Li, many dreamed of a jubango between the two masters. The Chinese and Korean Go associations were involved in plans to organize a 10 game match starting from at least 2009, but there was some

difficulty involved in finding a sponsor.

At long last, in 2013, Ni Zhanggen offered to sponsor a jubango after hearing about the aborted plan. Ni is the CEO of MLily, a mattress and bedding company based in China, and is also a serious Go fan. He believed that history demanded that such a match occur and was in a position to make it happen.

Chinese reporters claimed that Ni was disappointed after seeing Gu lose to Lee in the final of 2012 Samsung Cup. Gu lost two games by half a point in that match, and some observers regarded Lee's victory as a matter of luck. Ni is a big fan of Gu Li, and he thought that Gu was the stronger player. Consequently, he believed that if a longer match were played, Gu would prove to be superior.

The organizers considered venues in Canada, Europe and South America, but they eventually decided to have nine games in China and one in Korea (for financial and logistical reasons). Some journalists predicted that such an arrangement would favor Gu, because China is his home country, but Lee has played regularly in the Chinese A League for many years and doesn't seem to mind traveling for games.

The official name of the event was *MLily Meng Baihe Shiji Zhi Zhan Gu Lee Shifanqi*. This translates literally to MLily Battle of the Century Gu—Lee Jubango, but we at Go Game Guru elected to omit the battle of the century flourish for brevity, in all of our translations.

MLily tends to use its double barrel English and Chinese names in the titles of events that it sponsors. Its Chinese name, Meng Baihe, can be translated literally as meng = dream and baihe = lilies. A loser, but more natural translation would be something like 'sweet dreams'. The *M* in MLily stands for Meng. This explains the somewhat cryptic MLily moniker and its unusual capitalization.

The time limit for each game was 3 hours and 55 minutes per player, with five overtime periods (byo-yomi) lasting one minute each. It's traditional to subtract 5 minutes from the 4 hour total to account for the five overtime periods. Originally, Gu wanted the time limit to be shorter, but Lee insisted that they needed plenty of thinking time for an important match like this and Gu accommodated him.

The prize money for the winner of the match was 5 million renminbi (about \$800,000 US dollars at the time). The loser would receive a match fee of 200,000 renminbi.

The match was officially launched on November 24, 2013, at the Conrad Hotel in Beijing, China. Liu Siming, the president of the Chinese Go Association, gave a speech where he said:

“The jubango between Gu Li and Lee Sedol is finally going to start in 2014, and many Go fans have been looking forward to it. Each of the 10 games will be played in a different city.”

“I think these two players are the best choice for a jubango, and the games will be very exciting. There hasn't been a jubango like this in the last 70 years [Translator's note: Liu was referring to the famous jubango between Go Seigen and Kitani Minoru], but we've pushed ahead to make this one happen.”

“Gu Li and Lee Sedol were both born in 1983, and Lee is just one game ahead in their head to head record. There are many rising stars today, but Lee and Gu are still the best, since they've won 14 and 7 international titles respectively.”

“It's a very special event with a lot of prize money, and I hope that both players will create great games, of which they can be proud.”

Relentless

Part I

The MLily Gu vs Lee Jubango

About This Free Sample of *Relentless*

This is a free sample of *Relentless: Lee Sedol vs Gu Li*, from <https://gogameguru.com/relentless/>. Pages 5 to 194 have been omitted from this sample, as have pages 242 to 579 and all pages after 580. The sample includes Chapters 4 and 44, as well as the frontmatter of the book, and we hope that you will enjoy reading it.

Chapter 4 is from Part One, which is the core of the book. Each of the eight chapters in Part One reviews a game from the jubango between Lee Sedol and Gu Li. These chapters are very long, and use the games as the basis for a broad ranging study of Go.

The topics covered in the first eight chapter depend on the character of each game, so every chapter is quite different. Chapter 4 focuses primarily on middle game tactics and strategy. There is also some material on counting and endgame, though counting is introduced earlier. Other chapters focus much more on contemporary opening strategies, because the opening in Chapter 4 is analyzed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 44 offers a sample from Part Two of *Relentless*. Part Two provides more traditional commentary on 40 other games played by Lee Sedol and Gu Li, between 2004 and 2015. These commentaries are written with a much lighter touch and only address the key points of each game. They are geared slightly more towards stronger players, and will be easier to digest after reading Part One.

We hope that you will enjoy this free sample of *Relentless*. The complete work is available in both paperback and hardcover, as well as various e-book formats.

Order *Relentless* at: <https://shop.gogameguru.com/relentless/>

April 27, 2014, Jeung-do, Korea: *Gu Li 9d (Black) vs Lee Sedol 9d*

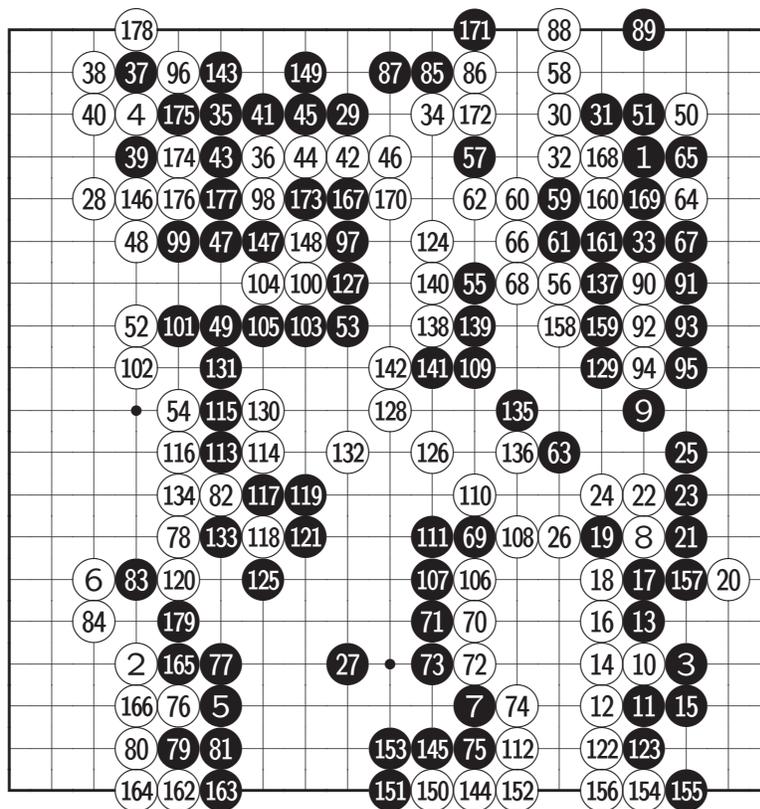


Diagram 1
(Moves: 1-179)

Jeung-do

Game four of the Jubango was held on April 27, 2014 on Jeung-do (Jeung Island), in Shinan County, Korea. It was the first and only game scheduled in Korea, and Gu Li held black for the second time.

Jeung-do is not far from Lee Sedol's hometown, Bigeum-do. They are both part of a group of more than 800 islands that form Shinan County.

Apart from the traditional local industries of agriculture, salt farming and fishing, Jeung-do also boasts a burgeoning tourism scene. Visitors are drawn by the coastline, fresh seafood and slower pace of life.

The mood of the series changed when Gu Li defeated Lee Sedol in three consecutive games, including game three of this match and two games from unrelated tournaments, but the overall score was still 2–1 in Lee's favor. Nevertheless, since Gu was on a roll, Lee was keen to win this game and apply the brakes Gu's growing momentum.

Playing on one's home turf can be advantageous in many ways, but also brings enormous pressure. The media and fans in Korea were much more interested in Lee Sedol than the Chinese had been.

Lee Sedol arrived early, with his brother Lee Sanghun (also a 9 dan professional). The camera crew was still setting up and the venue was in a state of disarray. There wasn't anywhere to sit and wait, and tension was clearly visible on Sedol's face.

Sanghun suggested that they return to their hotel rooms, to relax, but his younger brother refused. Instead, Sedol uncharacteristically fussed over minor details, like the lighting around the Go board.

Gu Li finally arrived, but the two friends avoided eye contact...

Chinese Style Refrain

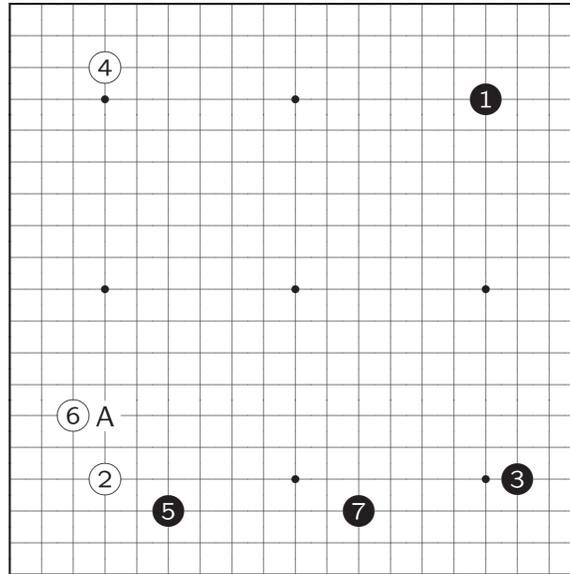
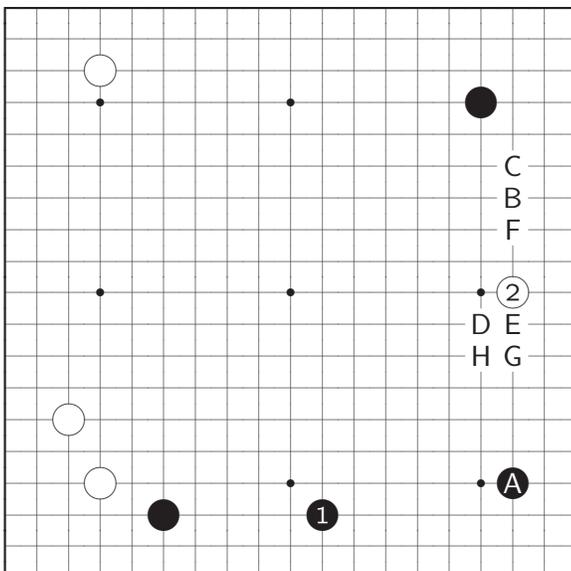


Diagram 2
(Moves: 1-7)

Black started with the Micro-Chinese Opening of ③, ⑤ and ⑦, which is one of Gu Li’s favorite formations. The opening was almost the same as in game one, except that Lee Sedol, playing White this time, swapped Gu Li’s trademark jump at A for the knight’s enclosure at ⑥.

We investigated the Micro-Chinese Opening together in Chapter 1, and by now you’ve probably made it your own, so we’ll refrain from repeating a detailed analysis here.



Variation 1 for ⑦

The Mini-Chinese Opening at ① is also quite common and splitting the right side with ② is the usual strategy for limiting Black’s development.

White ② prevents Black from playing near the same point and forming a wide framework centered around his stone at A.

There are so many possible continuations for Black next. For example, on the right side, all of the moves from B to H have been tried extensively in professional games.

Approach from the Wider Side

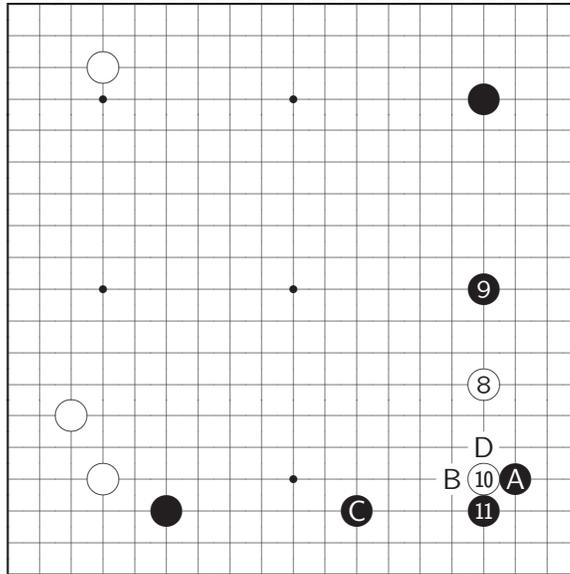
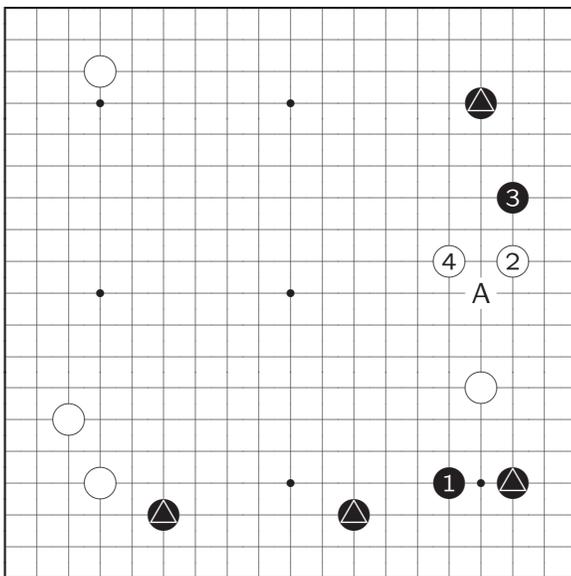


Diagram 3
(Moves: 8-11)

White approached from the outside with ⑧, and you may recall that in Variation 1 of Chapter 2 we said that it's generally better to approach a 3-4 point stone like ① around B. However, when ③ is already on the board, approaching from the outside with ⑧ is better, because White is playing on the wider side—meaning the side that has more free space and future potential.

White wanted Black to reinforce the corner at B or D, so that he could extend along the right side. Resisting with the pincer at ⑨ was a good idea. White attached at ⑩ to settle a group in the bottom right as quickly as possible. It's generally good to play contact moves like ⑩ when you're outnumbered.



Variation 2 for ⑨

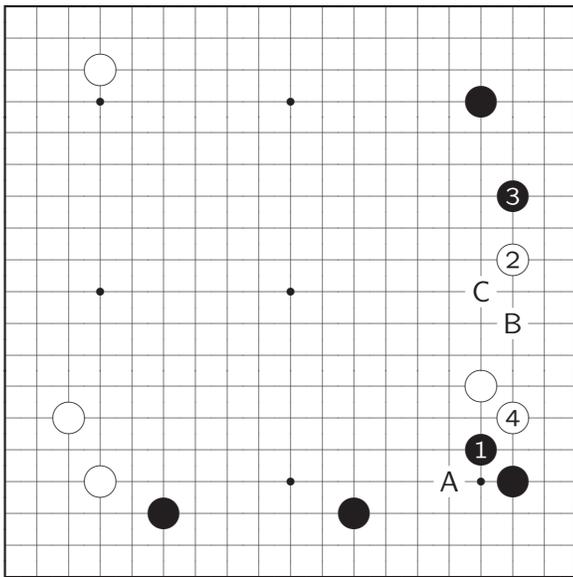
If Black just defends the corner at ①, White will extend to ② and establish a stable group up to ④.

Even though White doesn't gain much on the right side, he settles a group there with relative ease.

Black had hoped to be able to play around A and unify his marked stones in a magnificent large framework, but White's stable group drove a wedge into those dreams.

As long as White is going to interfere with Black's plans, Black would like to exact some form of compensation. That's why he pincer at A in the game.

When your opponent enters your sphere of influence, you should try to pressure them firmly. This allows you to turn a sketchy moyo into real territory.

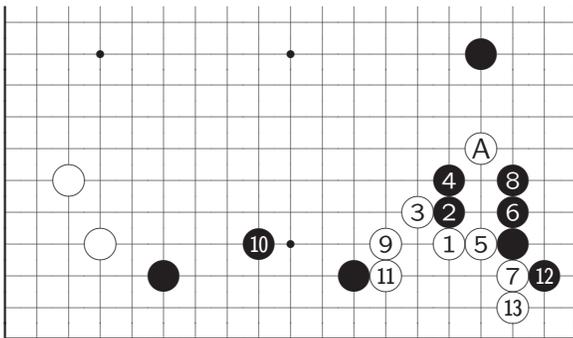


Variation 3 for 9

Responding with the kosumi at ① is similar to defending at A.

White will still extend to ②, and the result up to ④ is playable for White.

If Black invades at B later, White will fight back with a diagonal move at C.

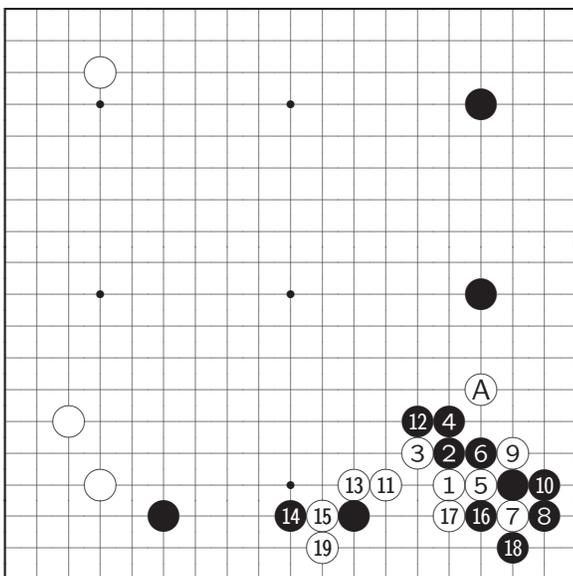


Variation 4 for 10

Pressuring Black's corner with the large knight's move from ① to ④ is a slightly gentler haengma.

The large knight's press is thin, yet flexible, and when you play this way you should expect to be separated by ② and ④. White uses Black's momentum against him to gain a foothold in the corner, sacrificing ①.

Park Junghwan 9 dan and Lee Younggu 9 dan played the variation up to ⑬ in game two of the 9th Price Information Cup final, in August 2013.

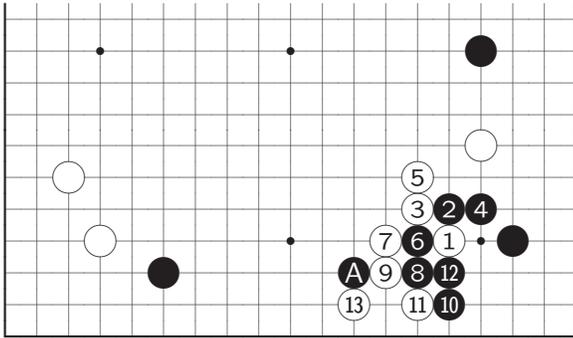


Variation 5 for 10

Black ④ is an important move in these variations. It separates ① from the rest of White's group and prevents Black from being sealed into the corner.

Eight days before this game, the moves up to ⑱ were played by Gu Li 9 dan (Black) and An Kukhyun 4 dan, in the preliminary final of the 19th LG Cup.

White won that game, but Lee may have thought that the result up to ⑱ was playable for Black, so he didn't choose the large knight's move at ①.



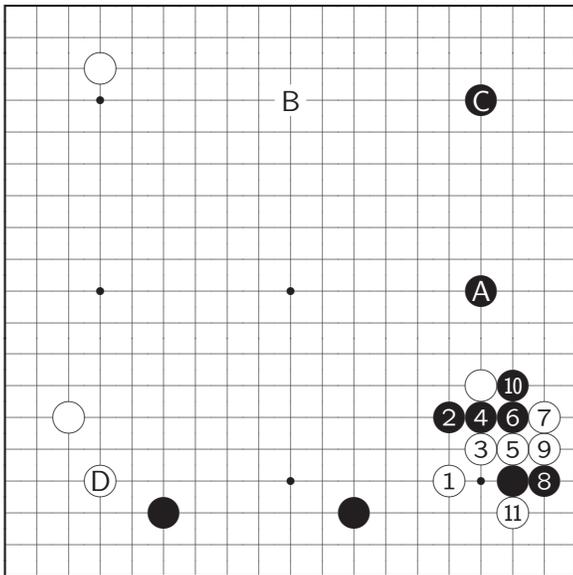
Variation 6 for ⑩

Pulling back at ④ is wrong in this situation.

White ⑤ is a good response and it's very difficult for Black to find an effective move afterwards.

Cutting at ⑥ captures ① and strengthens Black's corner group, but White sacrifices in style with the sequence to ⑬ and achieves a better result overall.

Observe how ① is badly damaged by ⑦ to ⑬.



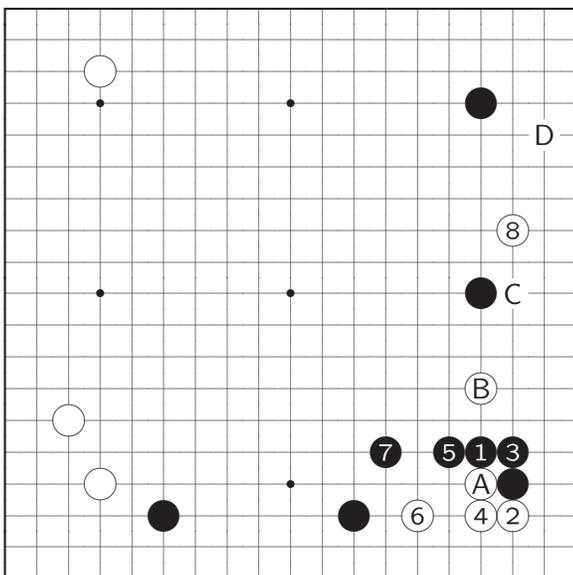
Variation 7 for ⑩

The elephant's step at ② is another haengma for cutting the large knight's move, and can sometimes be played to develop a large moyo.

White will break through with ③ to ⑦ and will be happy with the corner territory up to ⑪. In this game, Black's moyo isn't particularly impressive.

Black ① is too close to Black's influence in the bottom right. It would be better if it were around B. Moreover, it would be better if ③ and ④ swapped places. As you can see, Black's opening is confused and inconsistent.

When the overall situation doesn't support developing a large moyo, trying to force one into existence usually leads to a difficult game. Your stones should flow along the path of least resistance, like water.



Variation 8 for ⑪

If Black hanes on the outside with ①, White can easily live in the corner with the counter-hane at ②, and the moves through to ⑥.

When White attached at ① to settle his group, it was implicit that he was prepared to give up ③ in exchange for some other profit (such as the corner territory).

Black's influence is not to be sneezed at, but White can treat his stone at ③ lightly and invade with ⑧.

It's hard for Black to attack ⑧ because White has several possible continuations. For example, C and D are miai.

Use Contact Moves to Defend

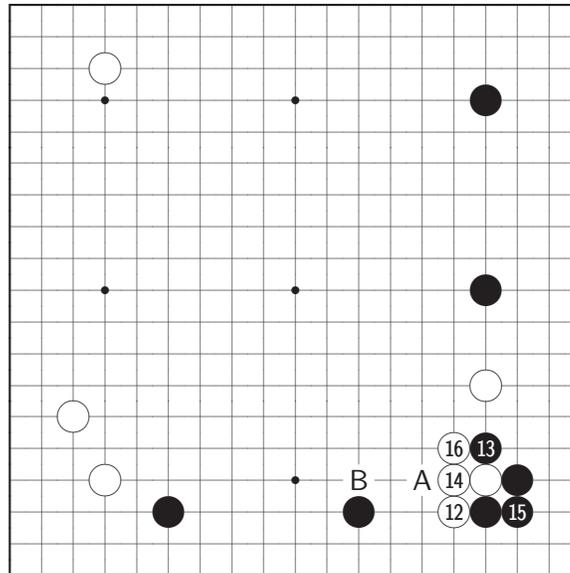


Diagram 4
(Moves: 12-16)

White's forces had landed deep inside black terrain, without any reinforcements, and wanted to avoid getting caught in a drawn out battle. White played another contact move with the counter-hane at ⑫, in order to settle a group in this area without delay. Black played ⑬ and ⑮ to make White heavy.

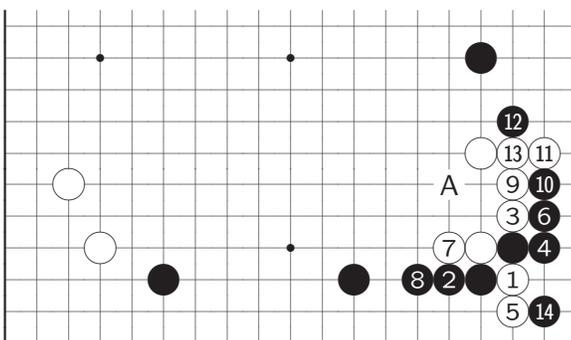
As we discussed in Chapter 1, contact moves help to defend because the resulting contact fight makes the groups on both sides become solid and settled more quickly. This tends to favor the defender.

White isn't worried about Black cutting with ⑬ at ⑭, because after White extends to ⑬ the ladder at A and the atari at ⑮ will be miai for White.

White isn't trying to save all his stones, he's just trying to establish a viable presence in this part of the board. Splitting the position into many small groups helps that cause. Therefore, if Black ataris at ⑭, he has to realize that as he cuts White, he also cuts himself.

Lee couldn't find another feasible path at the time, so he blocked at ⑯. However, he realized later that continuing to play contact moves, with the attachment at B, would have made things simpler.

Perhaps Lee was haunted by the memory of his inopportune attachment in game three?



Variation 9 for ⑫

White can also think about the crosscut at ①. The crosscut is another contact technique which often helps to settle a weak group.

However, Black's tesuji at ⑭ captures White's cutting stones at ① and ⑤, and the result is better for Black because White's center stones are still floating.

Black will be able to attack White's group at A later.

Concentrate Your Forces

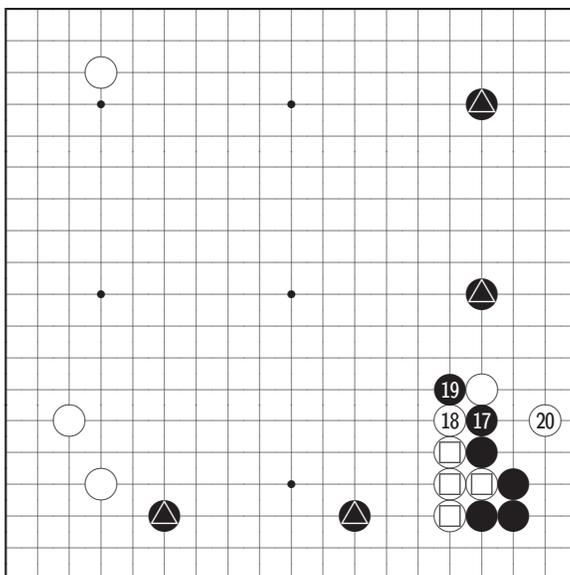


Diagram 5
(Moves: 17-20)

There was no reason for Black to avoid fighting. A battle in the lower right looked promising for Black, because his marked stones could all be expected to play a part in attacking as the fighting spread across the board. Consequently, Black played a grinding yet potent cut with 17 and 19.

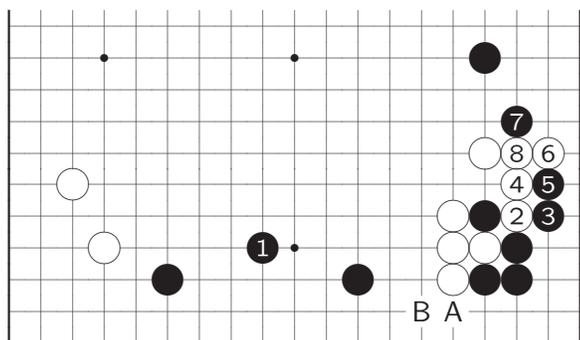
In *The Art of War*, Sun Zi says that a general should concentrate his forces, which means that all of your forces should be focused on a common goal, instead of being scattered towards disparate ends. Black's stones in this diagram are arrayed in a way that epitomizes this principle as it applies to Go.

In the discussion of the previous diagram, we advised against cutting White to pieces, yet here we are praising the cut at 19. Isn't that a contradiction?

The difference is that White's lightly peppered stones in the previous diagram were formless. Should Black attack any of them directly, White would be able to dodge away with an inconsequential sacrifice.

In this diagram, White's form is clear because his marked stones are all solidly connected. They are heavy, because no one stone can easily be sacrificed anymore. Once connected, their fates are tied.

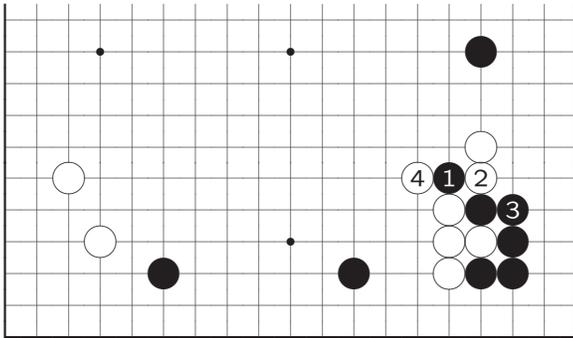
The crux of it is in the value of what you cut. Black 19 was powerful, and 20 was an exquisite haengma.



Variation 14 for 17

If Black reinforces his stones at the bottom, White can cut at 2 and develop a strong outside position up to 8.

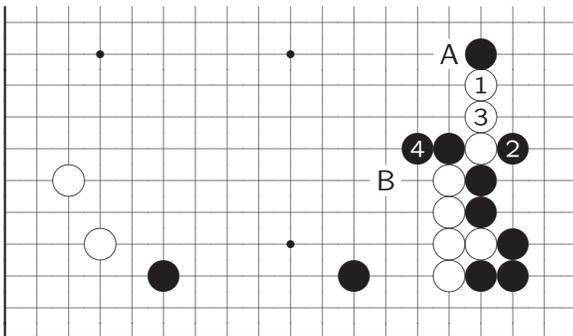
In addition, White will be able to play at A or B in sente later, because both moves threaten Black's corner.



Variation 15 for 17

The double hane at ① is an alternative technique for cutting, which results in better shape for Black.

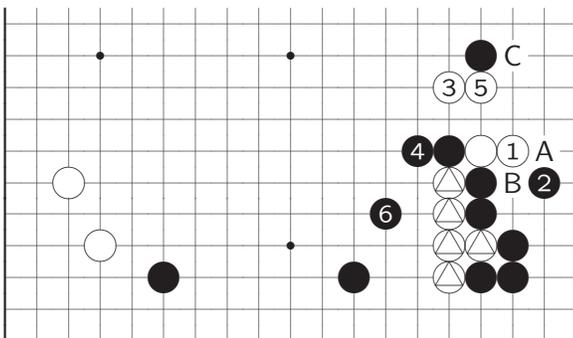
However, it doesn't work in this case because the ladder at ④ favors White.



Variation 16 for 20

Attaching at ① looks like a tesuji, but it doesn't really help White in this case.

After ② and ④, A and B are miai for Black, and one of White's two groups will be in serious trouble.

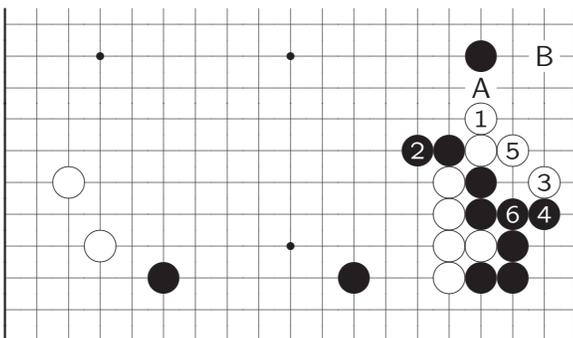


Variation 17 for 20

Extending at ① is a common sense move. However, it's hard to fight after Black defends at ②.

White's marked stones are in danger up to ⑥.

Instead of ③, White can also consider White A, Black B, ⑤, ④ and White C, but the result is similar and White's marked stones are still in trouble.



Variation 18 for 20

White ②⑩ in the game (③ in this diagram) is the right technique in terms of move order.

If White exchanges ① for ② first, Black will respond to ③ with ④. Even though White can threaten a snapback with ⑤, the empty triangle implies that one move was wasted.

White ① is now over-concentrated and White would prefer to move it to A or, in this game, B. The exchange of ① for ② overwhelmingly favors Black.

Cooperate, When It Suits You

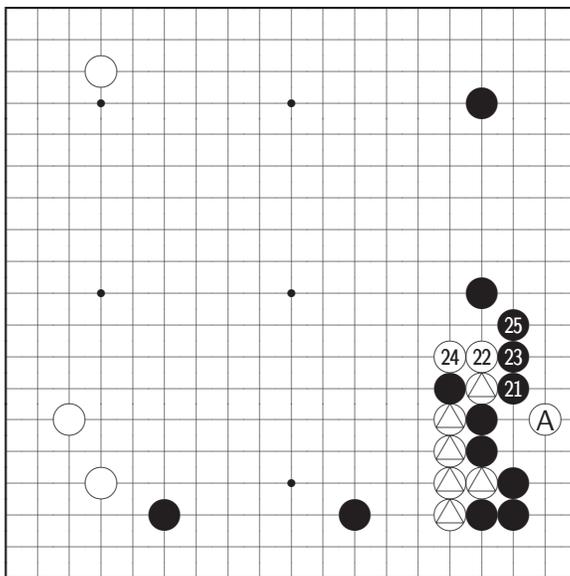
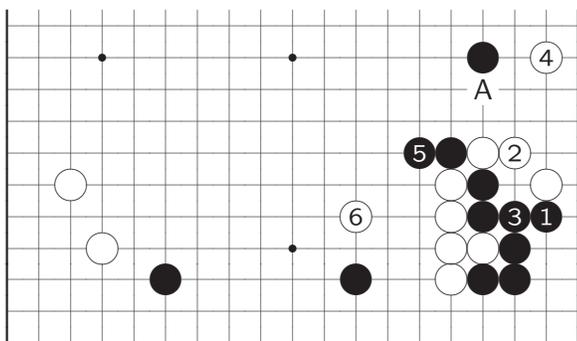


Diagram 6
(Moves: 21-25)

White played (A) to provoke Black's counter from 21 to 25, because this gave him the impetus to strengthen his marked center stones. Even if you know your opponent's plan, it doesn't mean you must resist. When it suits you, you can let him have his way. Black willingly took territory up to 25.



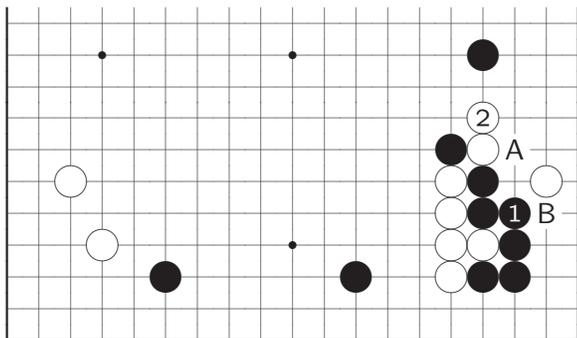
Variation 19 for 21

If Black defends with 1, the result won't be the same as in Variation 18.

White will crouch down with 4, because it doesn't directly provoke 5 like attaching at A does.

Black will extend to 5 anyway, but White is now relatively stable on the right side and gains a tempo to move out with 6.

This lets White manage his groups on both sides.

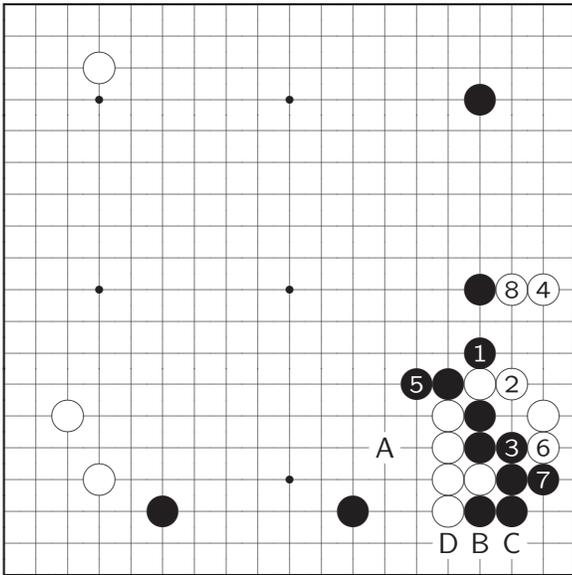


Variation 20 for 21

If Black connects at 1 instead, developing at 2 becomes a natural choice for White, because extending at A isn't sente anymore.

The overall situation is still very complicated, but the fact that White can push at B later means that Black's corner isn't completely safe yet.

This gives White more leverage against the corner, which will help him to manage his groups on both sides (as we can see in the following variation).

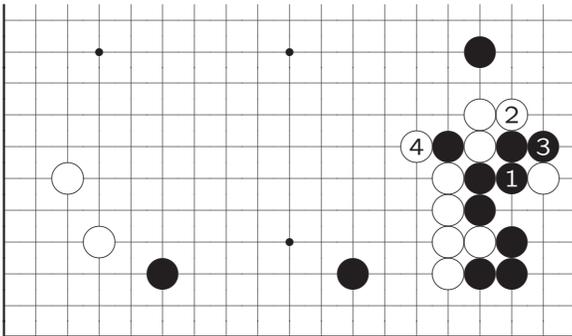


Variation 21 for 21

The atari at 1 is an overlay.

Black's corner is weakened up to 7, and White has time to defend at 8 because moves around A and B are miai for White at the bottom.

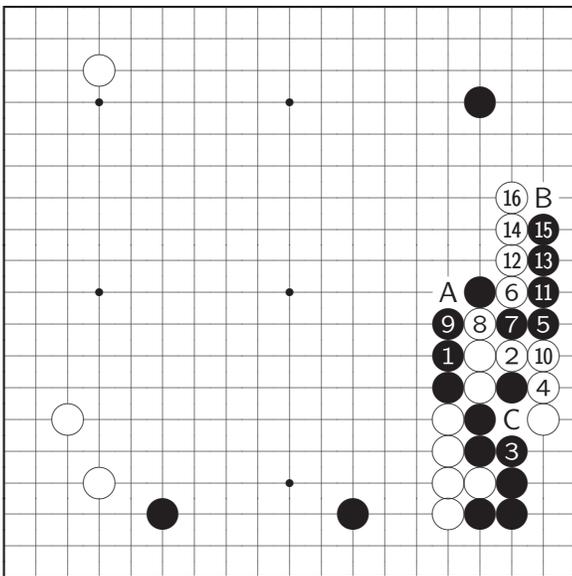
If Black plays at A next, provoking White to play B to D, Black will lose the capturing race in the corner.



Variation 22 for 23

Connecting at 1 is too cautious.

White will be ecstatic when he captures Black's cutting stone in a ladder with 4.



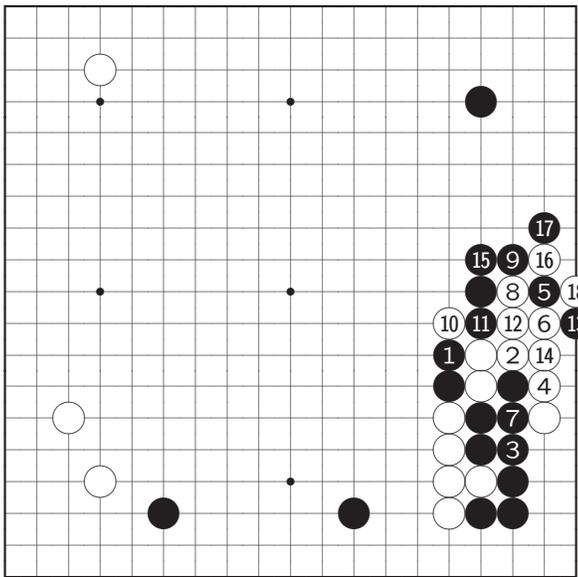
Variation 23 for 23

Sealing White in from above with 1 can sometimes be a powerful continuation, but it doesn't work well in this case.

For Black's attack to succeed, 5 needs to land a debilitating blow.

Unfortunately for Black, 6 is a strong counter and White makes miai of A and B in the sequence to 16.

After White cuts at 8, he makes miai of 9 and 10. If Black ataris at 10, White at 9 makes miai of C and White at 11, and Black collapses.

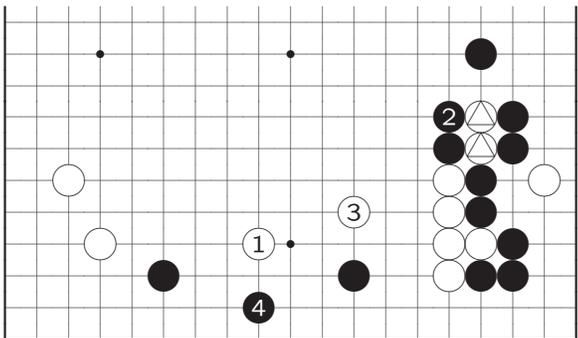


Variation 24 for 23

If Black tries the looser encroachment at 5, White can still live easily because 6 makes miai of 7 and 8.

The moves that follow are practically forced and White is alive up to 18.

Now Black has to take care of his unstable group in the lower right corner, and the cutting stone at 10 is also annoying.

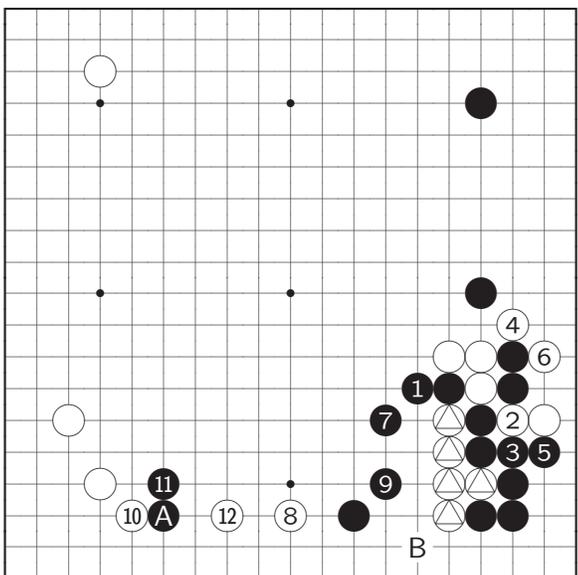


Variation 25 for 24

Pincering at 1 is impetuous.

Black becomes too powerful on the right side after he captures two critically important stones with 2.

Even though White can continue with 3, Black can manage the situation flexibly with 4.



Variation 26 for 25

Extending to 1 is an overplay. White will make a thick and excellent shape on the right side up to 6, erasing most of Black's potential there.

Black is aiming to attack with 7, but it's not enough because now White can afford to sacrifice his five marked stones and engineer a counter-attack on A.

There's still some bad aji inside Black's position, for example if White plays at B later. Remember to beware of indigestion.

Never Underestimate Thickness

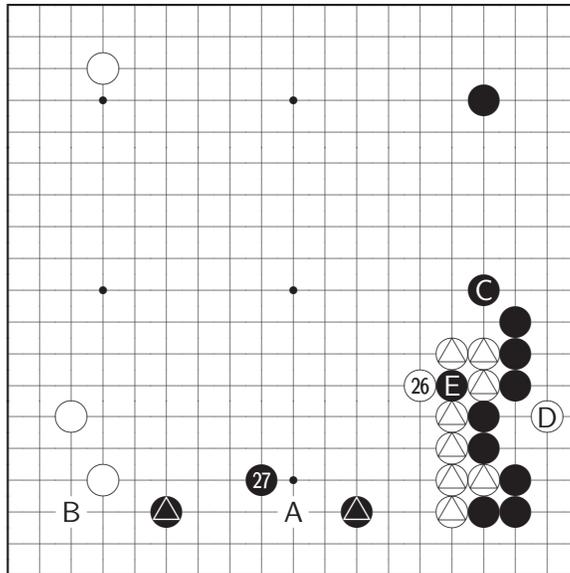


Diagram 7
(Moves: 26-27)

White created an extremely thick shape with ②⑥, and reinforcing Black's position at the bottom with ②⑦ became necessary. It was a classic exchange of territory for power. Many Go players questioned this result and thought that it was better for Black, but most professionals watching the game (including the professional author) evaluated it as even because:

1. Black has to defend at ②⑦, so White takes sente.
2. Black started out with four stones in this area, whereas White had only one, so we should expect Black to end up with more profit than White in this part of the board.
3. Even after ②⑦, Black's position at the bottom is still weak, because of the power of White's thick group. For example, it will be easy for White to invade at A later.
4. Because Black is still weak at the bottom, White's lower left corner is actually much bigger than it looks. Black can't expect to be able to invade at B without provoking a severe counter-attack, and White can enlarge the corner in sente by harassing Black later (see Variation 27).
5. Since White's lower right group has good eye potential, it's much more powerful than a simple wall would be. It's more than a wall; it's thickness. Extending along the bottom is less important for this kind of group, because there's no urgency to create a base (think eyespace).
6. Even though ②⑦ reduces the potential of White's thickness, Black doesn't have much potential to speak of either. White's thickness turns the bottom into a no man's land, where neither player can expect to make many points. Meanwhile, the lower right corner is settled, mostly along the third line. Black's stone at ② is slightly over-concentrated.
7. White has potential on the left side and at the top, which he can develop with sente.
8. Both players exchanged one stone (② and ②), but ② still has some endgame aji, as we'll see later, so Black's lower right corner is slightly smaller than it looks.

Still Waters Run Deep

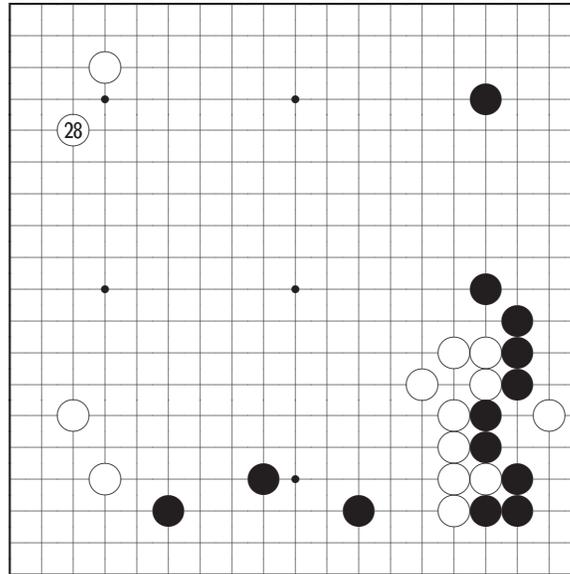
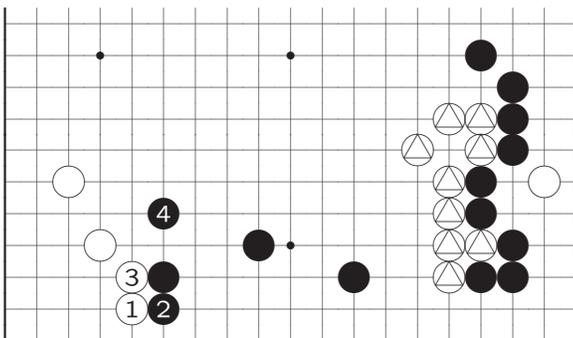


Diagram 8
(Move: 28)

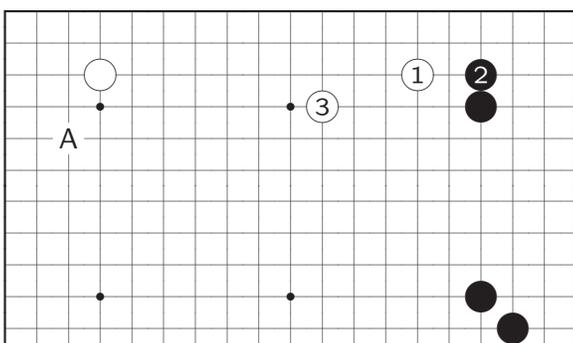
Lee patiently enclosed the top left corner with ②⑧. This move was somewhat slow, but it was also solid. Since all of White's groups were strong, he'd be able to fight without reservation later in the game. Nevertheless, it takes a high degree of skill and explosive fighting power to play this kind of game well.



Variation 27 for ②⑧

White can play ① to ③ in sente later, because of the presence of White's thickness (marked).

This means that White's corner is bigger than it seems and White's power is already paying dividends.



Variation 28 for ②⑧

After the game, Lee pondered whether ① and ③ would have been better. This would certainly have been a more active way of playing, but we can't say that A (②⑧ in the game) was a mistake.

Black can play for territory with ②, because Black's position on the right is already quite strong. This kind of move dares White to invade and create a target for attack.

The moves up to ③ would lead to another game.

Stake a Claim to the Land Between Two Corners

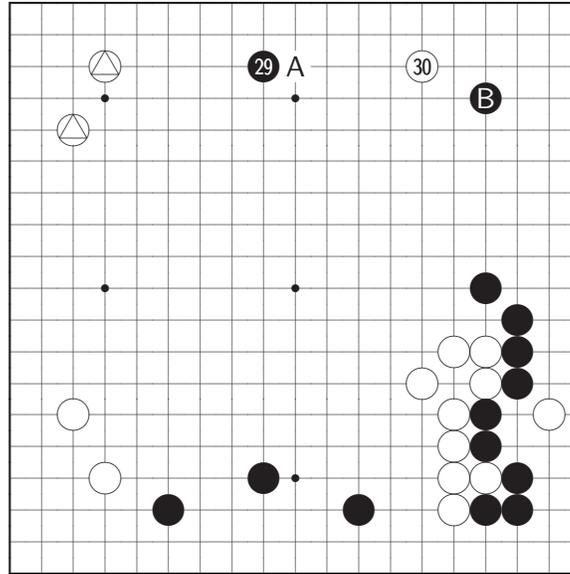
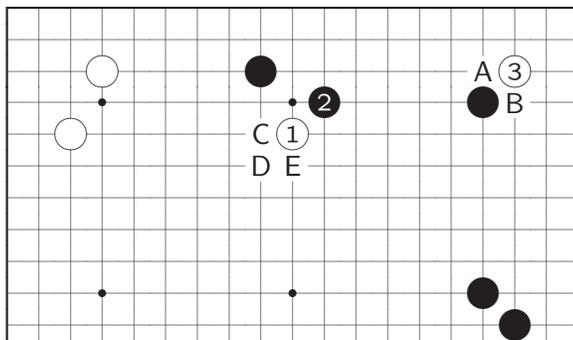


Diagram 9
(Moves: 29-30)

The area around A is a key point for developing White's marked corner enclosure. Likewise, the top is a high priority area for B, because the star point wants to form a moyo on both sides. Obviously there was an advantage in staking an early claim to such a desirable piece of real estate with 29.

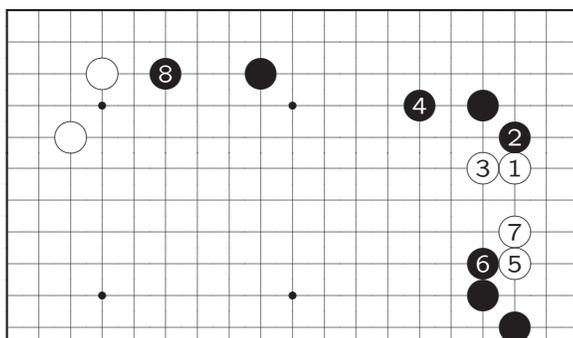


Variation 29 for 30

Probing with ①, before invading at ③ is an old-fashioned style of play.

The logic behind this combination is that, after White invades the corner at ③, Black will develop a powerful wall with either A or B and either way ② will end up looking a bit over-concentrated.

If White invades the corner first and then tries to exchange ① for ②, Black will probably resist by attaching at C. After C, Black plans to meet D with a crosscut at E. A complicated fight will follow.

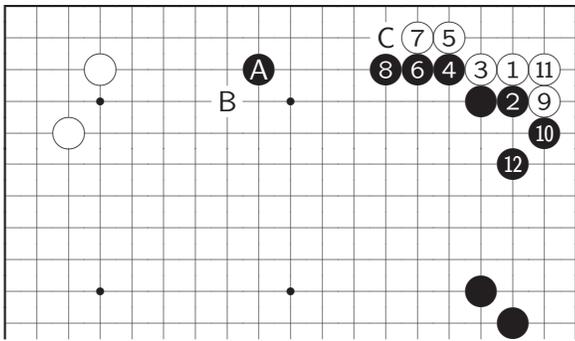


Variation 30 for 30

Approaching from the right side, with ①, betrays a jealous attitude and is a bad idea.

Black will be happy to develop his position at the top and can still aim to further attack White's top right group later on.

It's better to avoid playing near strong positions when you don't have to.

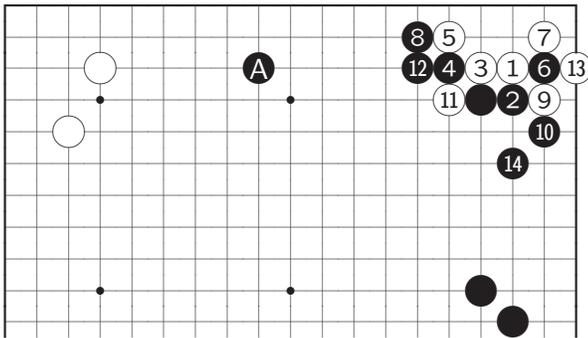


Variation 31 for (30)

Invading the corner immediately at (1) is also conceivable.

The result up to (12) isn't a proper joseki for Black, because (A) isn't working efficiently.

Black (A) would be better at B, because the door is open at the top around C; and the center and the top left are more important than the top now.

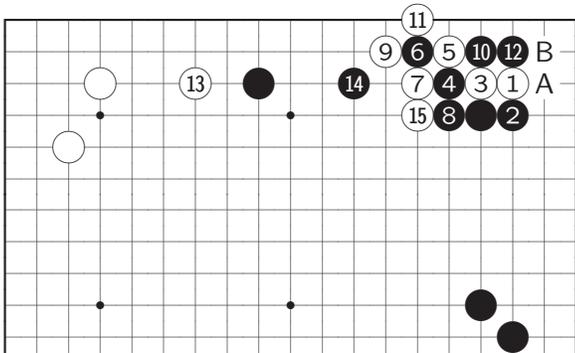


Variation 32 for (30)

Black (4), (6) and (8) are savvy moves.

Black seals White in and makes efficient use of (A), which is good enough for Black.

This is why White didn't invade at (1) in the game.

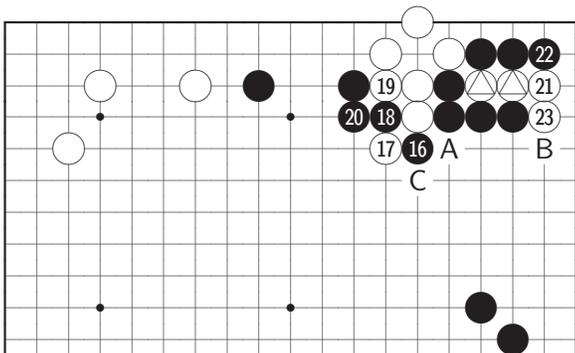


Variation 33 for (30)

In the midst of the previous variation, if Black hanes at (6) without exchanging A for B, White will capture (6) with (11).

The result up to (15) is playable for White.

Continuing...



Variation 34 for (30)

Cutting at (18) is an overplay, because White can reactivate his marked stones with (21).

White (23) makes miai of A and B, so Black runs out of steam.

Instead of (18), Black should extend to C, giving White time to connect at (20).

Defense Is No Mere Shield

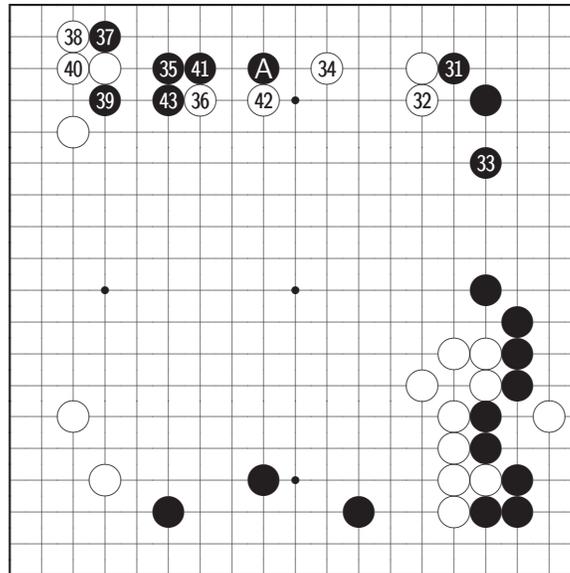
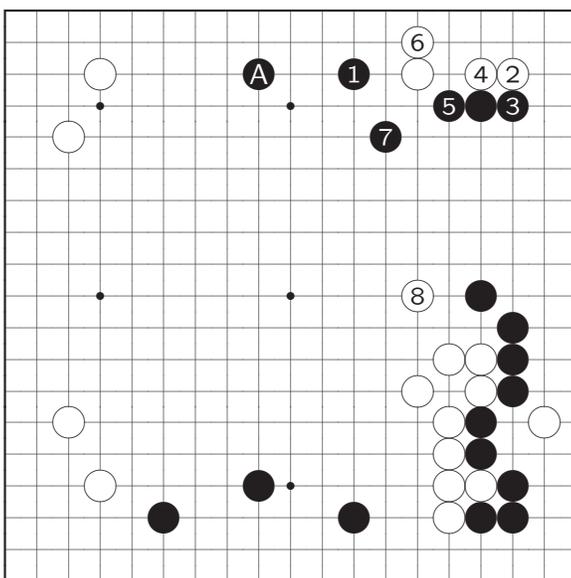


Diagram 10
(Moves: 31-43)

Black chose 31 and 33 because A already stifled White's development and pressured him at the top. White 34 approached A and established a small base for White, which prompted Black to create his own base with 35. This is the ebb and flow of attack and defense, and such progressions are natural. White's shoulder hit at 36 aimed to develop influence while helping White's top right group. Black probed skillfully from 37 to 40, and played to minimize White's center influence with 41 to 43. As Carl von Clausewitz notes in *On War*, defense is ". . . not a mere shield, but a shield formed of skilfully delivered blows." In practice, attack and defense are finely balanced and are often combined.



Variation 35 for 31

Let's explore how the players should (and shouldn't) combine attack and defense in this position.

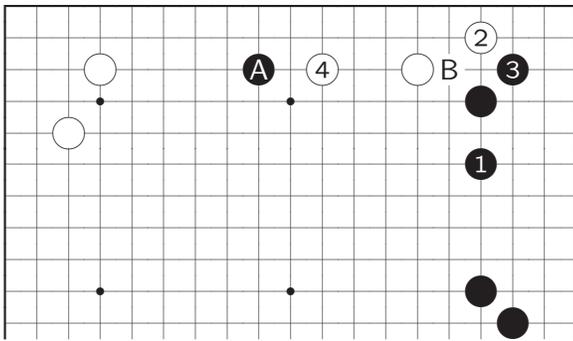
'Attacking' with 1 is a questionable strategy.

White 2 dodges into the corner as swiftly as a swallow and Black is faced with a choice between 3 and 4. He chooses 3 because the right side is large.

White lives in the corner in sente up to 7, and flying to 8 reduces Black's right side territory nicely.

Black A has become a slack move, and this variation is comfortable for White.

Black is thinking about attacking, but going about it in a manner that isn't well suited to the circumstances on the board.



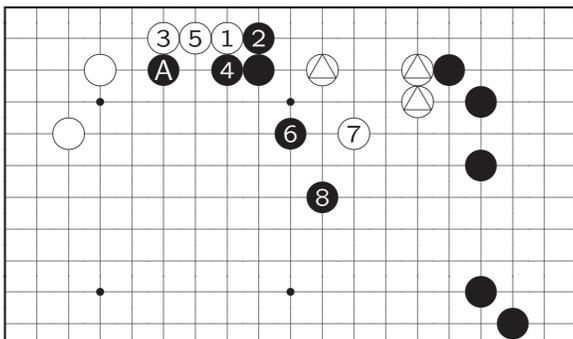
Variation 36 for 31

The high enclosure at 1 puts too much emphasis on defense.

White can expand his eyespace with 2, which makes miai of 3 and 4.

Up to 4, White settles easily at the top.

Black A isn't being used to its full potential in this variation, and is becoming weaker. Since neither of these tactics were promising, Black wisely chose B (31) in the game, instead of 1.



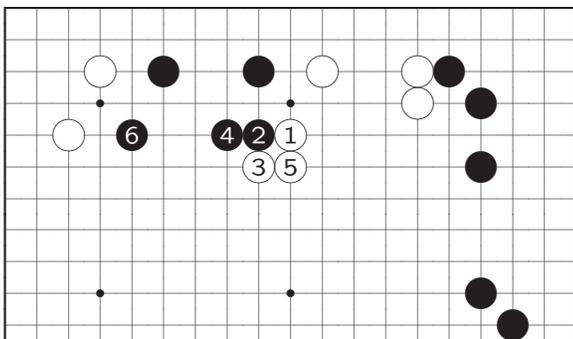
Variation 37 for 36

After Black extends to A, stealing his base with 1 and 3 puts too much emphasis on attacking.

Even though 1 to 5 set Black adrift, and force him to find life in the center, White's tactics don't balance offense and defense appropriately.

Black has sente to counter-attack the marked stones and is able to occupy the high ground up to 8.

White 1 would be possible if the marked stones were stronger, but in this case it gives up the initiative.

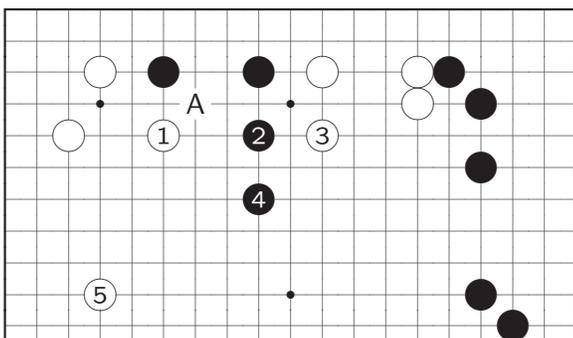


Variation 38 for 36

The knight's move at 1 occupies what is often a key point between two space extensions, but it's a bit slack in this game.

Black expands his base into the center, starting with 2, and his group is effectively settled up to 6.

Black has a comfortable shape and White's potential on the left side has been reduced.



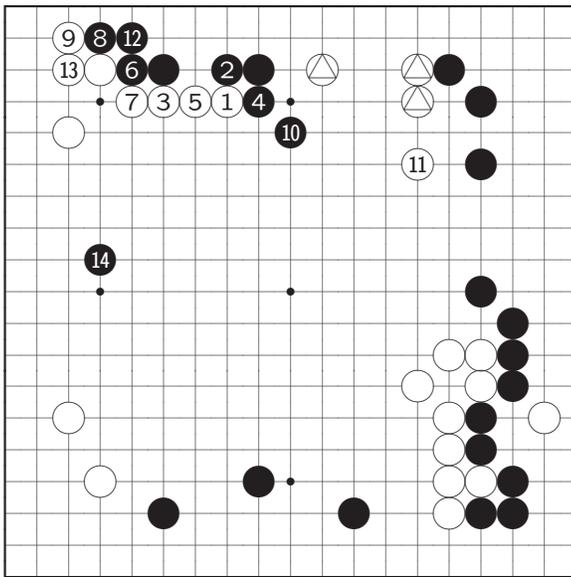
Variation 39 for 36

White chose the shoulder hit at A in the game, but capping at 1 is a strong alternative strategy.

As Black moves into the center with 2, White is able to strengthen his own group while attacking with 3.

Black 4 avoids a capping play at the same point, and the stones follow a pleasing rhythm up to 5.

It's another game.



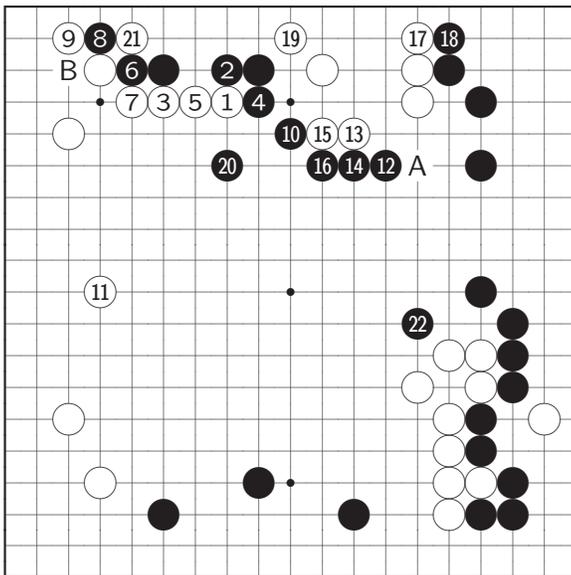
Variation 40 for ③⑥

The other shoulder hit, at ①, heads in the wrong direction. Once again, White fails to combine the needs of attack and defense properly.

When Black turns at ④, White's marked group becomes weaker.

After ⑤ to ⑬, Black plays at ⑭ and the value of White's stones from ① to ⑦ is diminished.

White ⑪ in this diagram may not look big, but it's the key point for attack and defense. Let's explore what happens if White omits this move...



Variation 41 for ③⑥

The fundamental principles of attack and defense are:

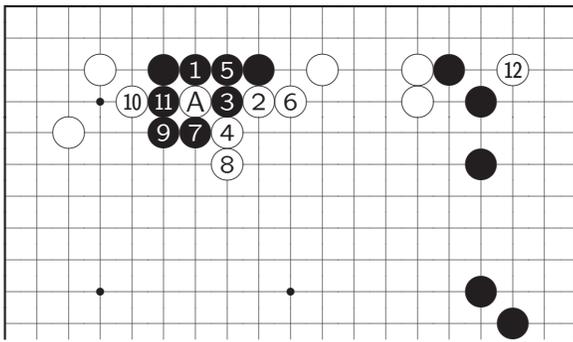
1. Divide your opponent's forces,
2. Surround your opponent, and conversely
3. Stay connected,
4. Avoid being surrounded, and finally
5. Know your next moves.

White ⑪ is big, but jumping to A was urgent.

Black's light enclosure at ⑫ looks thin, but if White scrambles for life like an octopus in a kettle, Black's surrounding positions harden to stone up to ⑲.

Black consolidates a large corner territory, and his center stones become powerful, while White struggles. Next, connecting with ⑳ makes B and ㉒ miai.

Even if you can live, you should avoid being surrounded unless you really know what you're doing.



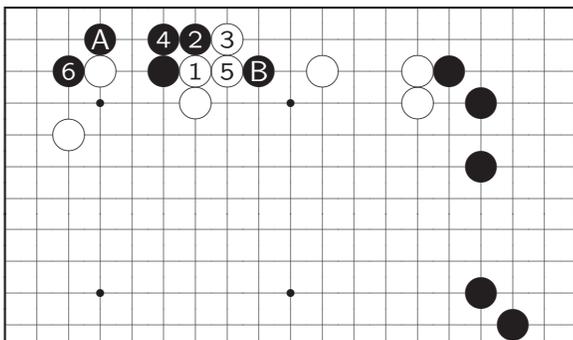
Variation 42 for 37

Simply defending at ① is naive. Black is following White's plan without thinking about what White wants or looking for a counter-punch.

White will be able to strengthen his group and accumulate power in sente, with ② to ⑧.

He can use that power to invade Black's moyo in the top right, with ⑫.

Meanwhile, despite being chuffed about its perfect eye at (A), Black's group is over-concentrated.



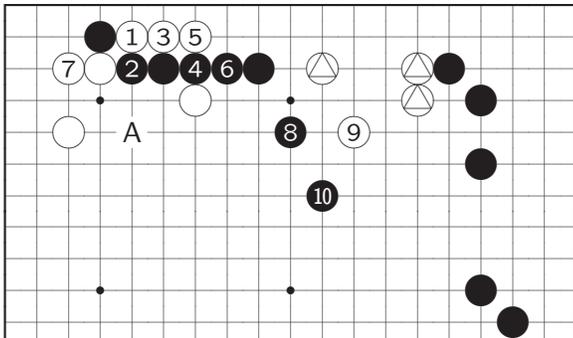
Variation 43 for 38

Black probed at (A) in the game, before defending with Black at ①.

If White resists with ①, Black will happily trade (B) for the corner territory with the moves up to ⑥.

Black's net profit is twice as big as it looks, because White's corner territory has disappeared and become Black's corner territory.

This variation is better for Black.



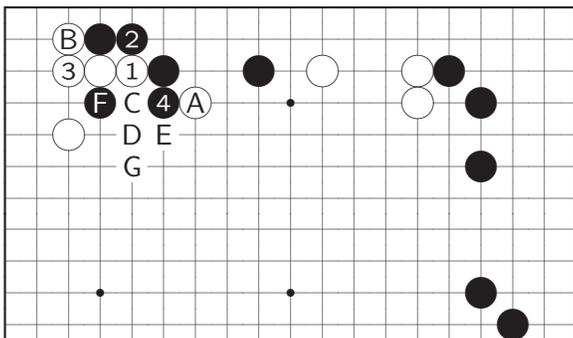
Variation 44 for 38

If White tries to resist with ①, it will only make Black's position stronger.

White will eventually have to defend at ⑦ and Black will take the opportunity to counter-attack the marked stones with ⑧ and ⑩.

Though the moves are different, the result is similar to Variation 37.

Black has the initiative and can make shape in the center with A later.



Variation 45 for 40

Resisting with ① is a bad move, because exchanging ① for ② makes Black stronger and ④ damages (A).

Blocking with ③ at ④ doesn't work well either. Black will be happy to cut at ③ and capture (B).

Instead of ③, White C provokes ④, White D, Black E and (A) is wasted. White (A) is more valuable than (F) and Black G will be sente later (because it aims to atari at ③ once again), so Black will be satisfied.

Make Territory While Attacking

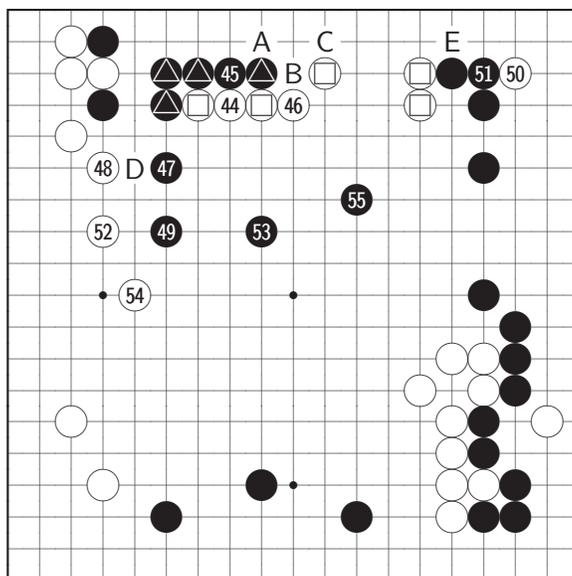


Diagram 11
(Moves: 44-55)

Gu regretted ④⑤ and later said it should have been at A instead. In that case, White would have played ④⑥ at B to prevent Black from expanding his eyespace with C. White ④⑥ was the proper move after ④⑤.

Black's marked group at the top wasn't settled yet and he jumped out with ④⑦ to stave off White's attack at D. At this point in the game, White had developed considerable power at the top and in the bottom right, but didn't have as much territory as Black.

When you have a lot of power and not much territory, you should look for a way to make territory while attacking. White's biggest area of potential was on the left side, so his plan now was to develop territory by attacking Black at the top, and in doing so to maintain the overall balance of territory.

White ④⑧ struck firmly at a key point in Black's shape while simultaneously developing the left side. If White didn't play at ④⑧, Black would have played a shoulder hit at ④⑧—reducing the left side and practically settling his top group at the same time.

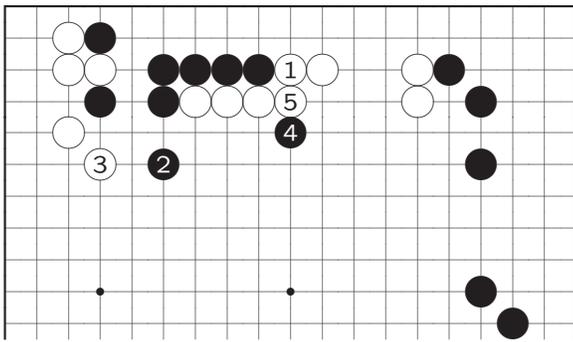
Sometimes you have to play slow-looking moves like ④⑧, to prolong your attack and prepare powerful followups. White ④⑧ set up a powerful attack at ④⑨, so Black jumped to ④⑨ himself—once again forestalling a more severe attack on his dragon in the top left.

The invasion at ⑤⑩ was a probe and ⑤① was the right response. In cases where the squared stones are already relatively strong, there isn't as much potential for a counter-attack after descending to E, so ⑤① is better.

After seeing Black's response at ⑤①, which focused on the corner, White continued taking territory while attacking with ⑤②. Black's dragon fled into an open sky up to ⑤③, gradually growing stronger.

White ⑤④ continued to expand White's area on the left side and Gu Li demonstrated his delicate sense of play in the center with ⑤⑤, which lightly pressured White's marked stones at the top.

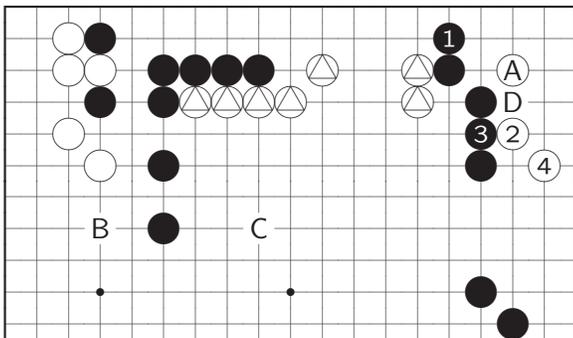
The pendulum of attack and defense had swung towards Black, and it was now his turn to attack.



Variation 46 for 46

If White defends at ① instead, Black can peep at ④ in sente.

Lee didn't like this prospect, so he extended thickly with ⑤ in the game.

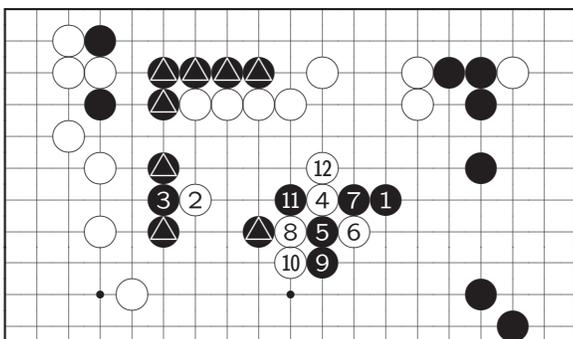


Variation 47 for 51

Descending at ① isn't the right strategy in this game, because White's marked stones are hard to attack.

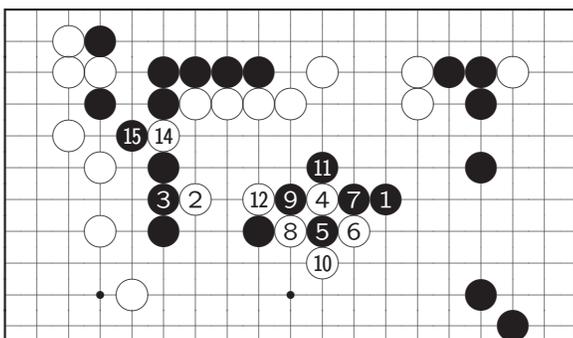
Observe how Lee probed at ① before exchanging B for C in the game. If Black insists on trying to attack with ① anyway (which isn't good), White might prefer to play around C later, instead of B.

Instead of ①, blocking at D is nearly always bad, because it allows White to bully the corner with the hane at ① and gains little in exchange.



Variation 48 for 55

Playing at ① (instead of ⑤) is also conceivable, but then White will break through with ④ to ⑫ and Black's marked dragon will be threatened.



Variation 49 for 55

If Black cuts White with ⑨ and ⑪ instead, White will start a ko by cutting at ⑫.

White has more ko threats, starting with ⑭, so he will be happy with this development.

⑬ at ⑤, ⑯ at ④

Offense Is the Best Defense

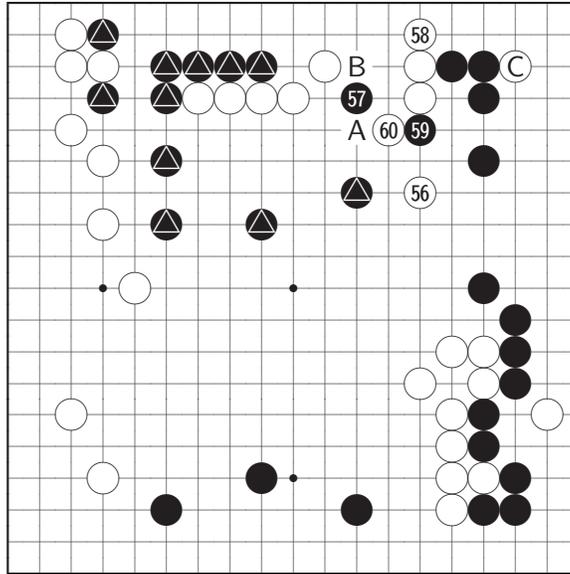
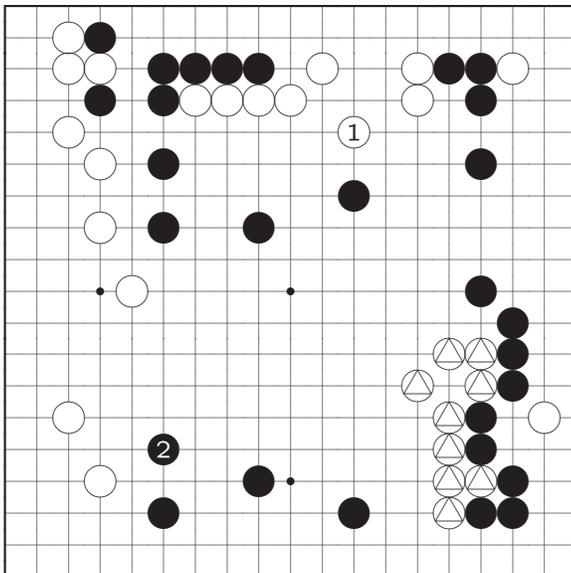


Diagram 12
(Moves: 56-60)

Jumping out with ⑤⑥ was typical of Lee's style of play. He prefers to counter-attack instead of defending whenever possible. White ⑤⑥ prevented Black's marked dragon from connecting to the right side.

Since White counter-attacked, instead of simply defending his group at A, Black fought back with ⑤⑦.

Descending with ⑤⑧ was more efficient than simply blocking at B. It threw a lifeline out to ⑤③, so that it might connect under or live in the corner later. Black cut at ⑤⑨ and ⑤⑩ was the best response.



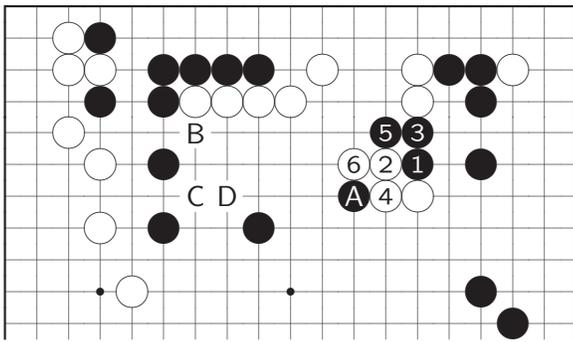
Variation 50 for ⑤⑥

Defending at ① is patient, but passive.

Black will take sente and the game will be slightly better for him after he jumps to ②.

The value of ② is that it reduces White's potential on the left side, while also fortifying Black's group at the bottom.

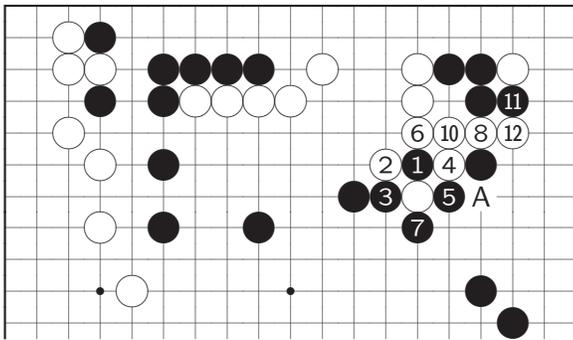
Remember that White's marked thickness is still lurking in the bottom right, waiting for the ideal moment to strike.



Variation 51 for 57

If Black tries to cut with ① and ③, connecting at ④ and falling back with ⑥ is playable for White.

Black A will be damaged and Black can't expect to separate White because White has too many sente moves like B, C and D.



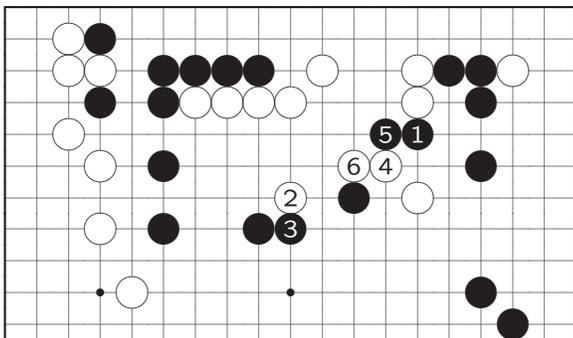
Variation 52 for 57

Cutting at ③ doesn't work, because ⑧ is a clever tesuji. White breaks into the right side up to ⑫.

If Black ataris at ⑫, instead of capturing with ⑨ (①), White will double atari at A and Black will be in trouble.

If Black plays ⑪ at ⑫, he'll have to contend with White's cut at ⑪.

9 at 1

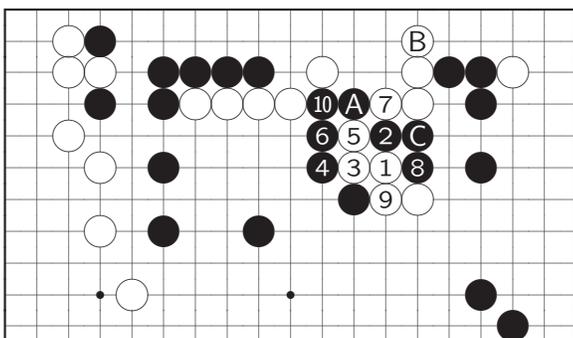


Variation 53 for 57

If Black attaches at ① without any sort of preparation, White will exchange ② for ③, and then play ④ and ⑥ to connect.

Black can't expect to gain much with such blunt tactics.

Let's see how Black's preparation in the game addressed this obstacle...



Variation 54 for 60

The idea behind the exchange of A for B becomes clearer after you read the previous variation.

Once A is on the board, cutting with C becomes much more effective.

If White still tries to connect his stones with ①, Black won't allow him to do so.

Because of the presence of A, Black can hane at ④ and defend at ⑧ in sente, cutting White in two up to ⑩.

White is in trouble.

Sometimes Retreat Is Best

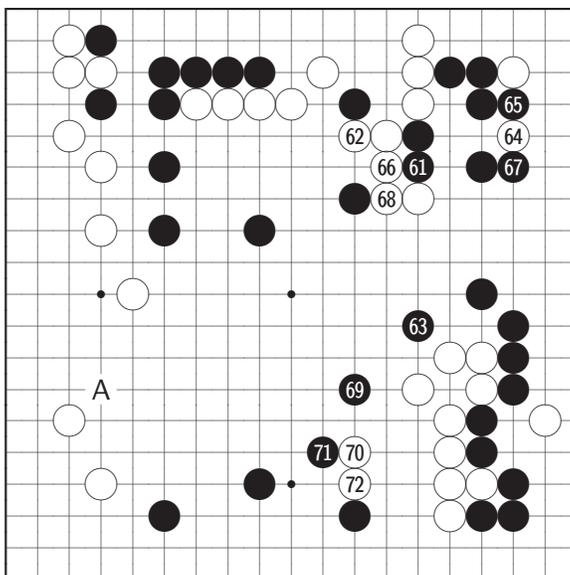


Diagram 13
(Moves: 61-72)

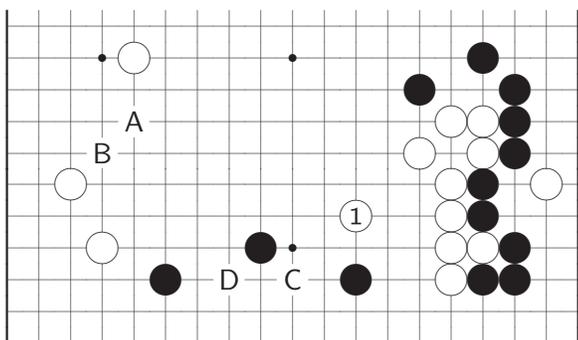
The result up to ⑥② was acceptable for both players, and the game was still well balanced. Immediately after the game, Lee said that he regretted ⑥④, but it doesn't seem to be bad.

Black ⑥⑦ was the right response to ⑥⑥, and Black was probably content with the additional corner territory. White was able to connect at ⑥⑧ in compensation, so the game was still even.

Black's attachment at ⑦① was satisfying, and he became stronger on the outside with the sequence that followed. Nobody likes to play moves like ⑦②, but sometimes there are no better options. It takes a certain maturity to know when to fall back and defend staunchly, even if it feels blunt and uninspired.

Sometimes retreat is best is the last and most famous of the *Thirty-six Stratagems*, giving rise to the well known Chinese saying, "Of the Thirty-six Stratagems, retreat is best." This doesn't just refer to running away, but also knowing when to avoid meeting a strong opposing force head on; retreating only temporarily in order to regroup and await a better moment to fight.

Lee later said that ⑥⑨ and ⑦① were questionable, and that Black should have played at A to reduce White's left side instead. It seems, however, that Gu was satisfied with his moves in the game.

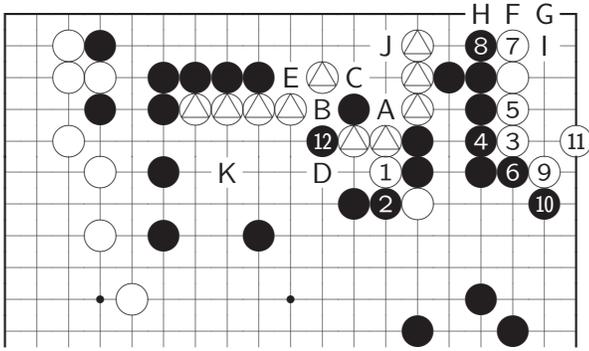


Variation 55 for ⑥④

Lee said that he should have played ⑥④ at ①.

The merit of ① is that it helps to preserve the power of White's influence. White doesn't have any weak groups now, so it will be easier for White to fight if Black tries to reduce the left side at A or B.

White ① also intensifies the aim of invading at C or D later, and Black's top left group is still a bit weak.



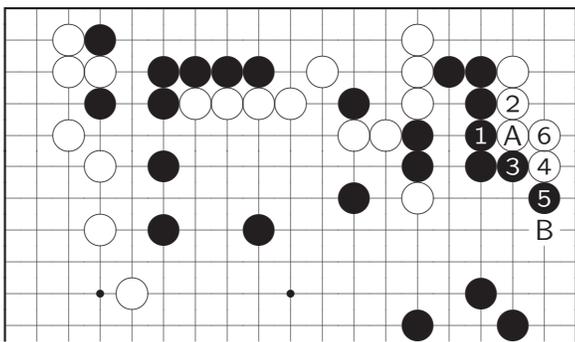
Variation 56 for 64

Pushing at ①, before playing ⑥4 in the game, is the wrong move order.

Black will let White live in the corner, with ③ to ⑪, and can later strike back at ⑫.

A and B are miai, so White can't cut at B. If White plays A to C, Black can exchange D for E. Since F to I is sente for Black (threatening the corner), White will be left with a troubling weakness at J.

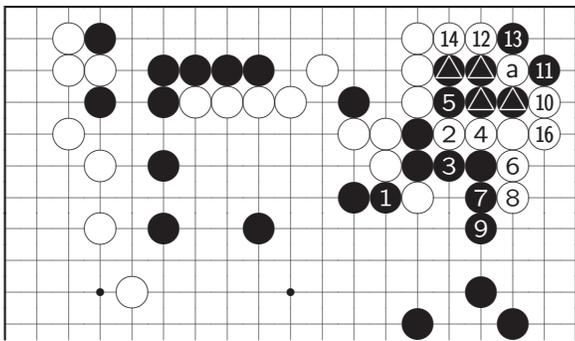
If Black reinforces around K during negotiations in the center, the marked stones will be endangered.



Variation 57 for 65

If Black responds to ①A with ①, White will be happy to connect at ② to live in the corner up to ⑥.

The exchanges from ④ to ⑥ leave bad aji inside Black's territory. For example, White can clamp at B later.



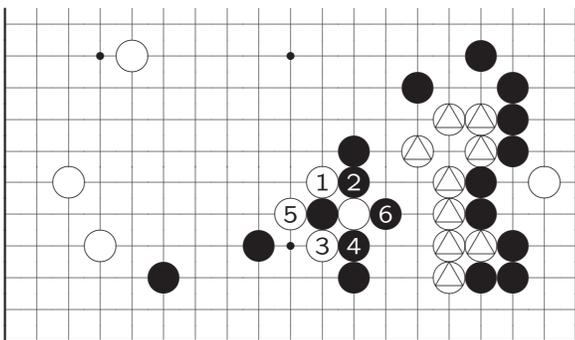
Variation 58 for 67

Cutting at ① is an overplay.

Black's shape up to ⑤ is hideous, and Black will lose the capturing race in the corner after ⑫16.

The marked stones are all dead.

15 at a



Variation 59 for 72

White shouldn't try to fight with ① to ⑤, because Black will counter-atari at ④ and isolate White's marked stones up to ⑥.

White's once proud thickness is now in serious danger.

When the position doesn't favor fighting, it's better to be patient and wait for future opportunities.

The Threat Is Stronger than the Execution

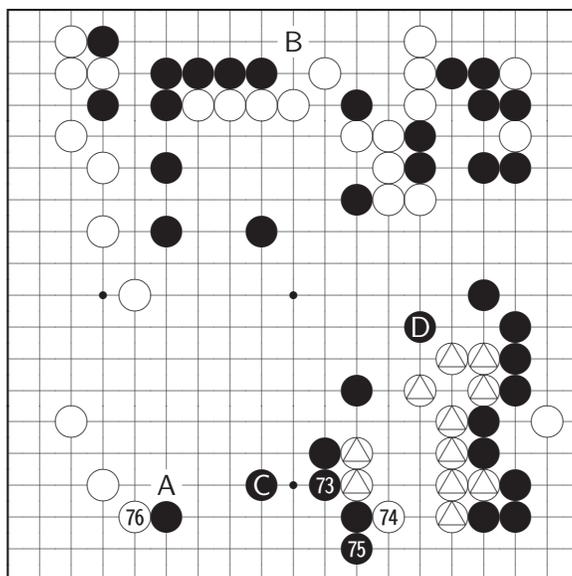


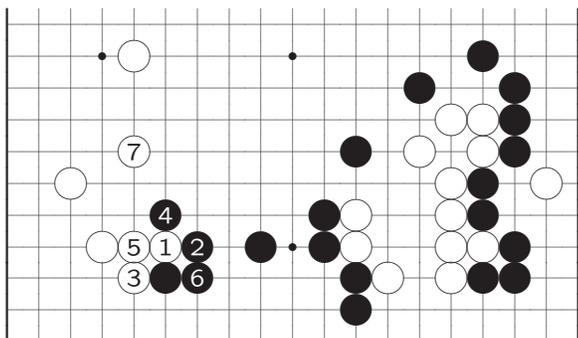
Diagram 14
(Moves: 73-76)

It looks like Lee thought the game was favorable for White at this point, so he chose the simple attachment at ⑦⑥. If he'd thought that he was behind, he would have played at A or B instead—both of which would have led to a more complicated game.

Some readers may look at White's marked group in the lower right now and conclude that White's influence wasn't powerful, because it looks very small. However, we should remember that White created this group in a part of the board where Black had a four to one advantage, and that White subsequently took sente three times (after ③, ④ and ⑤).

White's group was powerful, but the profit has been realized in other parts of the board—both in terms of points and by limiting the scope of Black's actions. It's important to understand that every decision involves some sort of tradeoff in Go.

The mere presence of White's power earlier in the game constrained Black's choice of strategies and led to the current position. As the chess grandmaster Aron Nimzowitsch was fond of saying, "The threat is stronger than the execution."

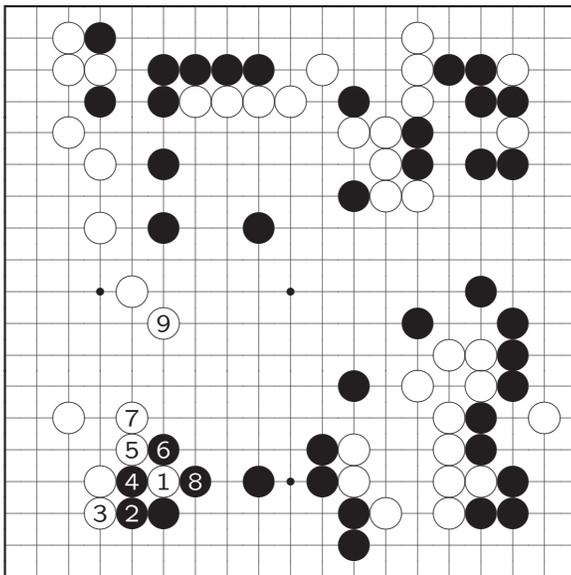


Variation 60 for ⑦⑥

Attaching at ① is conceivable.

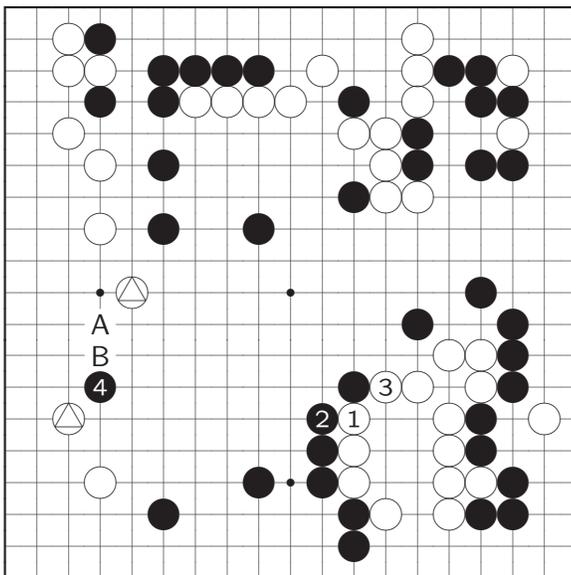
If Black answers normally, with ② to ⑥, White will be happy to complete a large territory up to ⑦.

This variation is slightly better for White than the actual game.



Variation 61 for (76)

Black could also think about resisting with ② to ⑥. Even though Black captures a stone with ⑧, the result up to ⑨ is also successful for White, because he secures a very large territory on the left side.



Variation 62 for (76)

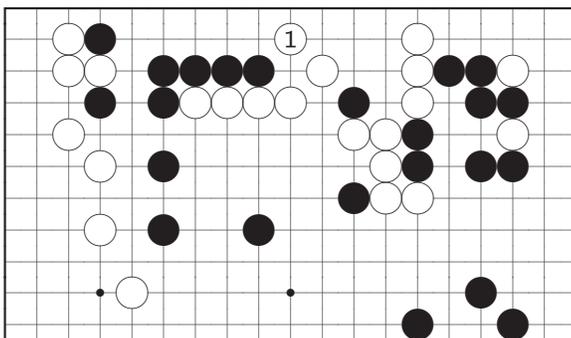
Reinforcing with ① and ③ is slack. Black will take sente and reduce the left side with ④.

It will be hard for White to attack ④, because it is Black's only weak group.

Notice how ④ makes it very difficult for White to connect the marked stones.

When stones are more than one line apart both vertically and horizontally, you can usually separate them by playing at one of the middle points (④, A or B in this case). We call this a bad relationship.

Knight's moves and jumps (long and short) are common shapes when developing, because they're harder to separate in this way. That's because they only stretch out in one direction at a time.



Variation 63 for (76)

White could also consider playing at ①. This diagonal move is bigger and more important than it looks.

In addition to strengthening White's group at the top, it also dampens Black's ambitions of invading or reducing the left side because it weakens Black's top left group considerably.

Caution Is Both Friend and Foe

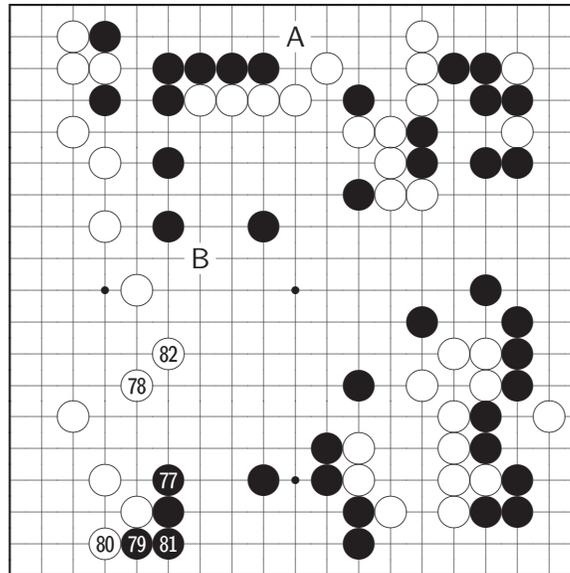


Diagram 15
(Moves: 77-82)

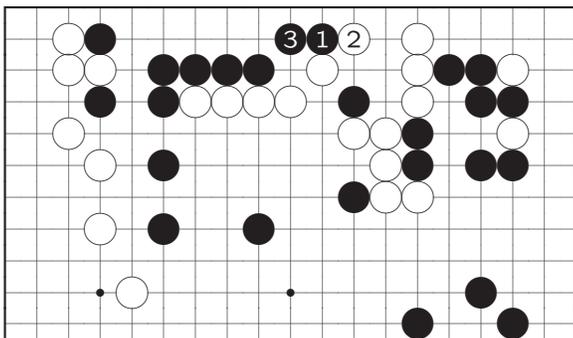
The sense of danger must not disappear: the way is certainly both short and steep, however gradual it looks from here; look if you like, but you will have to leap.

—W. H. Auden, *Leap Before You Look*

The hane at 79 was a big endgame move. We can see from this that Gu thought the game favored Black. If he'd thought that the game was better for White, he would have looked for a more aggressive tactic to reduce White's left side.

White 82 was too cautious, and was a questionable move. Lee doesn't normally play like this unless he has a clear lead. He might have thought White was ahead, but (as we'll see later) Black's thickness gave him invisible potential.

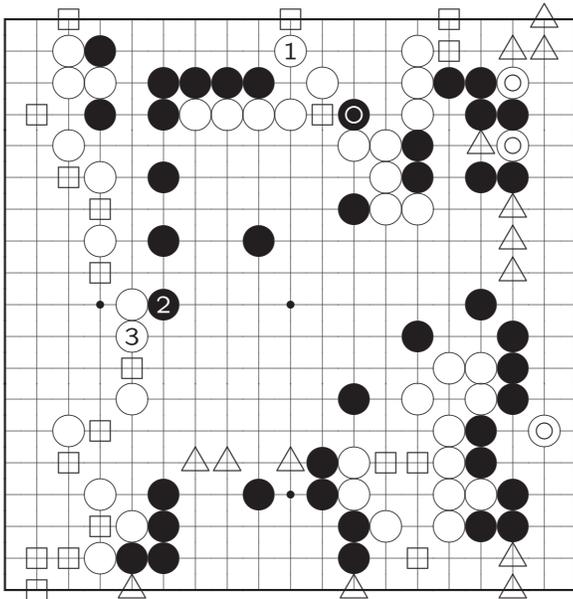
Instead of the kosumi at 82, playing at either A or B would be more active.



Variation 64 for 79

Since White didn't play at the top, reinforcing with 1 and 3 is also a good idea (instead of 79).

Let's evaluate the position at the time of 82 above...



Variation 65 for 82

White should have played at ①. If Black attaches at ②, securing the left side with ③ is satisfactory.

Black:

Right side: 44, lower side: 19, and top to center: 2.

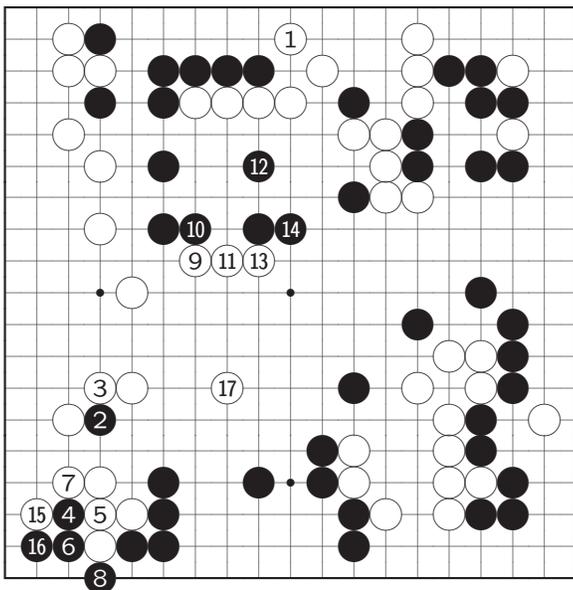
Total: 65 points.

White:

Left side: 48, upper side: 13, lower side: 4, and komi 7.5.

Total: 72.5 points.

It's Black's turn and Black has more potential in the center, so the game is actually closer than it looks. However, as we can see, White has more territory and is slightly ahead.

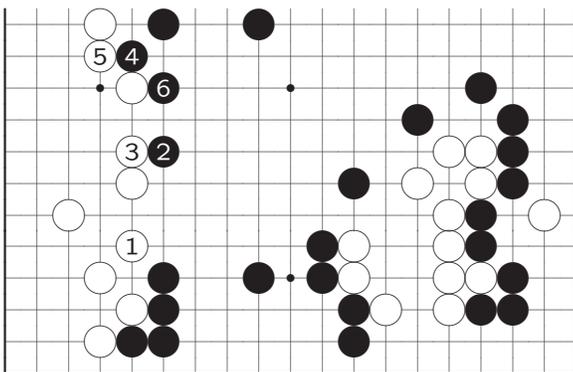


Variation 66 for 82

If Black invades the left side or the corner—with ② to ⑥ for example—White can let him live small and attack Black's top group with ⑨.

Up to ⑰, White compensates for the territorial loss in the lower left while erasing Black's potential in the center.

The result is even.



Variation 67 for 82

Reinforcing at ① isn't a good idea.

Black can easily develop the center with ② to ⑥ and this variation is good for Black.

Gu Li's Ingenious Probe

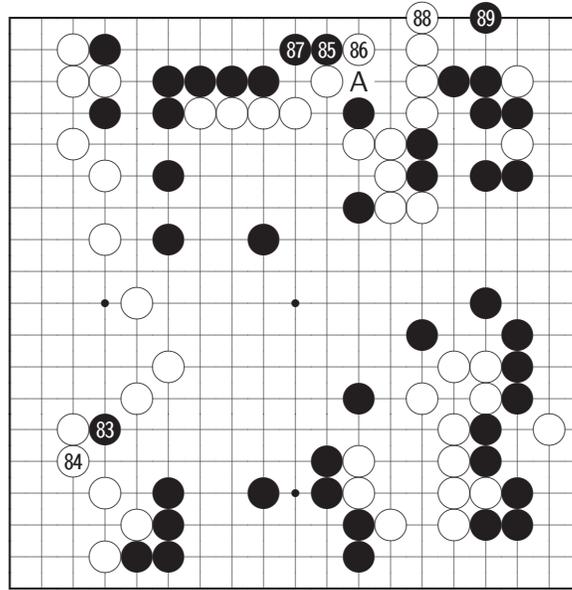
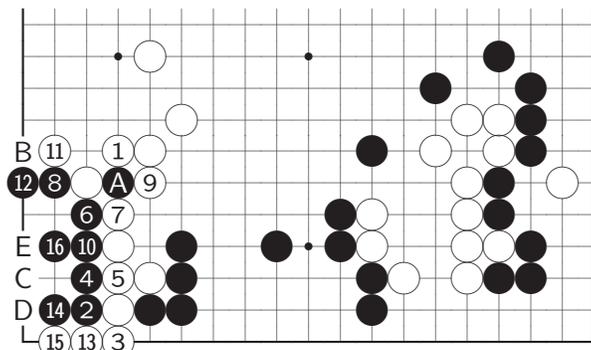


Diagram 16
(Moves: 83-89)

The attachment at 83 was an ingenious probe. This exchange was of great help to Black later in the endgame. It's difficult to come up with this kind of move and falling back to 84 was unavoidable.

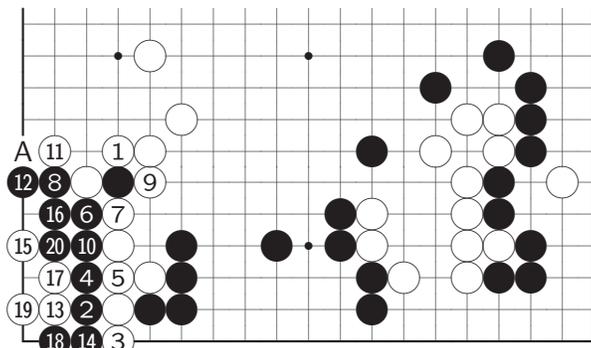
White 88 protected A in sente, but gaining 89 as part of the natural flow of play was enough for Black.



Variation 68 for 84

If White responds to A (83) at 1, Black will be able to live in the corner with the moves up to 16.

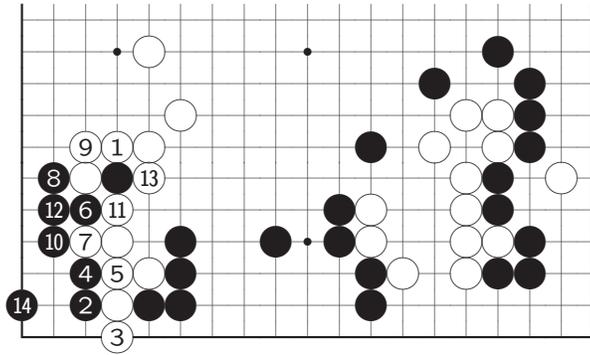
Note that blocking at B (aiming at C to E) will be sente for White.



Variation 69 for 84

Attaching at 13 is worth considering, but Black will still be able to live in seki up to 20.

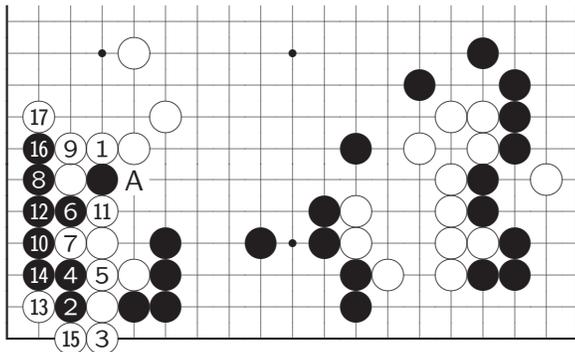
This is worse for White than the previous diagram, because he will lose territory on the left side when Black plays at A later.



Variation 70 for 84

It's very hard for White to capture Black's stones in the corner.

White may try 7, but Black lives with the sequence to 14.

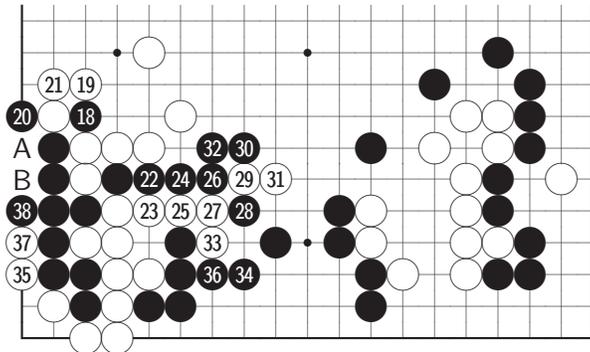


Variation 71 for 84

Instead of capturing the cutting stone at A in the previous variation, White might try to capture the corner with the clamp at 13.

Black can't make two eyes in the corner after 15 and 17, but the position is not that simple and we need to be mindful of our own weaknesses when attacking.

The variations are long, but let's have a look to make sure that White can't win the capturing race...

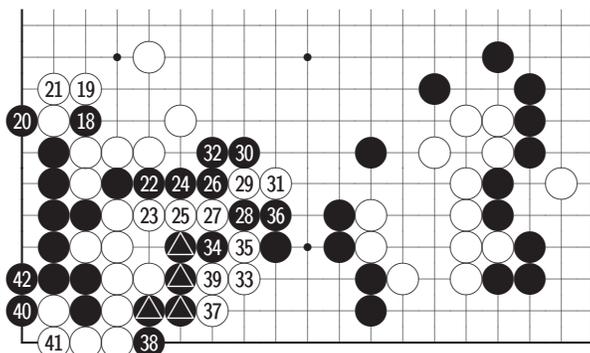


Variation 72 for 84

Cutting at 18 is a clever asking move.

The sente exchange of 20 for 21 effectively gains Black a liberty in the capturing race, and White is captured up to 38.

If White plays 37 at A, Black at 37 wins the race. If White tries 37 at B instead, Black A wins again.

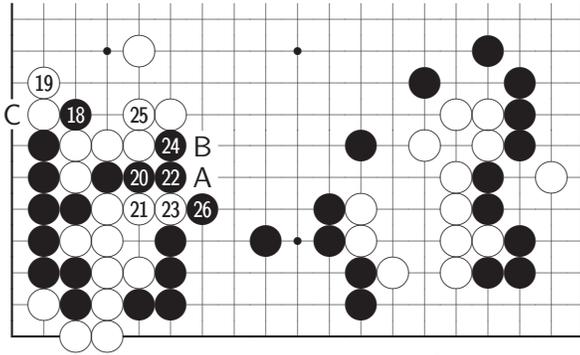


Variation 73 for 84

It's also worth considering the flanking maneuver at 33, turning to attack Black's marked stones instead.

Black will cut at 34 and can still win the capturing race with the precise combination of 38 to 42.

Playing 33 at 35 leads to a very similar result after 36, because 33 and 34 are miai next. White will face the situation in either this or the previous variation, and Black will win the capturing race either way.



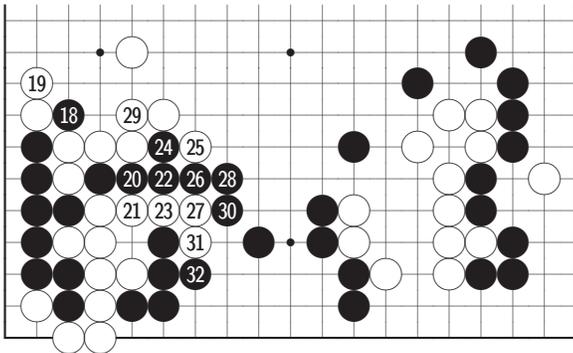
Variation 74 for 84

Extending to 19 denies Black an extra liberty, but leaves behind bad aji of another kind.

After 23, 24 is a crude yet powerful move, which makes miai of 25 and 26.

Since the ladders starting at both A and B favor Black, White is in trouble.

Once Black blocks at 26, White has fewer liberties than in the previous variations, so preventing Black's atari at C doesn't achieve anything and White dies.



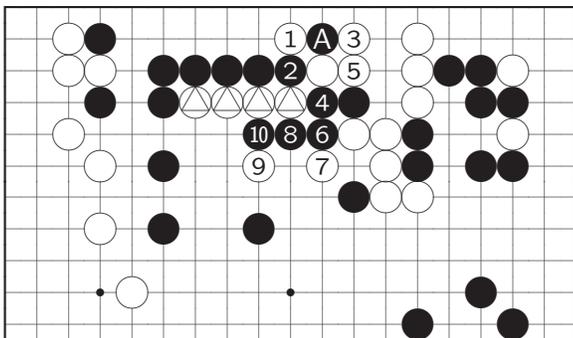
Variation 75 for 84

Struggling to gain liberties with 25 to 27 accomplishes nothing.

Eventually White needs to go back to defend at 29, allowing Black to wrap up the situation nicely with 30 and 32.

White loses the capturing race yet again.

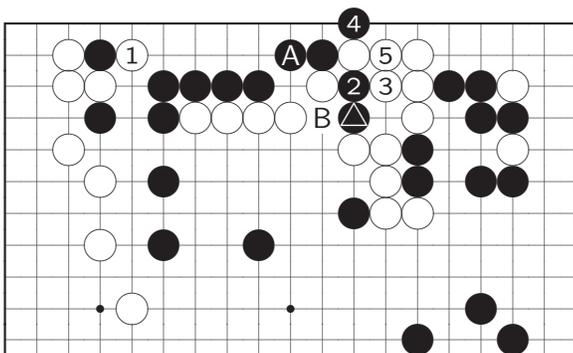
As we can see from the foregoing analysis, A ends in failure, which means Black can live in the corner.



Variation 76 for 86

White can't resist A (85 in the game) with the hane on the inside at 1.

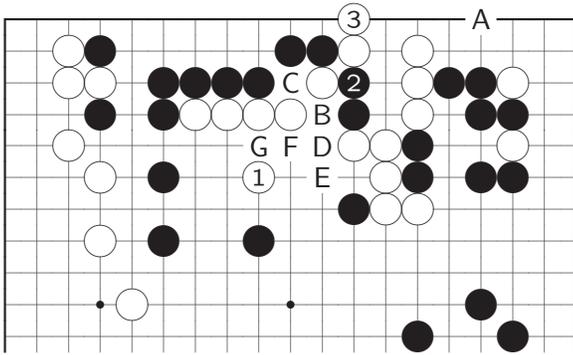
Black will fight back with 4 and 6, and will capture White's marked stones up to 10.



Variation 77 for 88

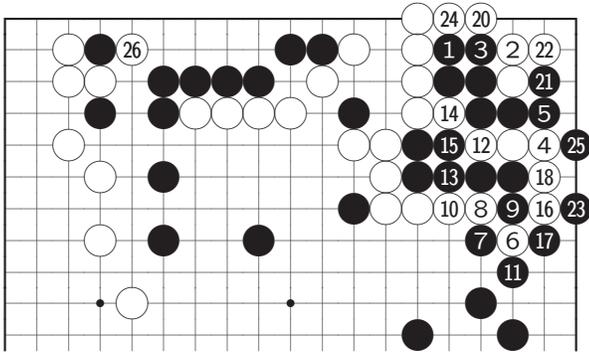
If White doesn't defend his group at the top after Black extends to A (87), Black can cut at 2 and destroy White's shape up to 5.

White has only one eye, and Black will even be able to save his marked stones by playing at B later.



Variation 78 for 88

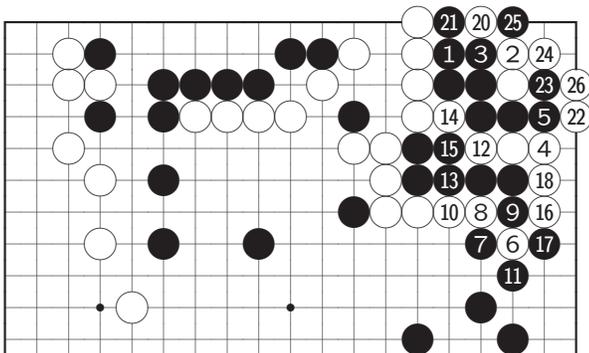
It would have been better for White to defend at ①. This preserves endgame possibilities for later, like White's small monkey jump at A. If Black tries to save his cutting stones with B, White is ready to counter with C to G.



Variation 79 for 89

Blocking at ① looks like it secures a bigger corner for Black, but it leaves behind bad aji. White will poke at the corner, with ②, ④ and ⑥, until Black's position gives way—one way or another. For example, White will be very happy to reduce Black's corner territory in sente with the moves through to ⑫. He can then use sente to take a big point, like ⑮.

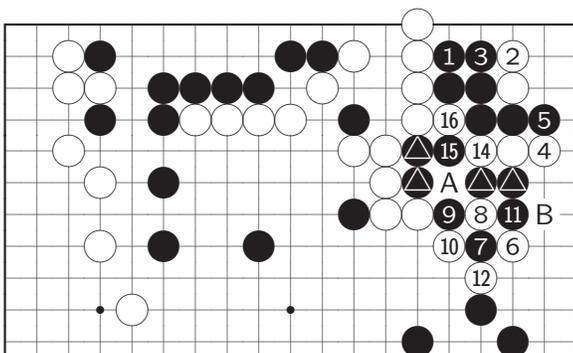
19 at 6



Variation 80 for 89

Black can't cut and capture White's stones with ⑮. If he tries to do so, White will counter with ⑮ and it will be Black who is captured up to ⑮.

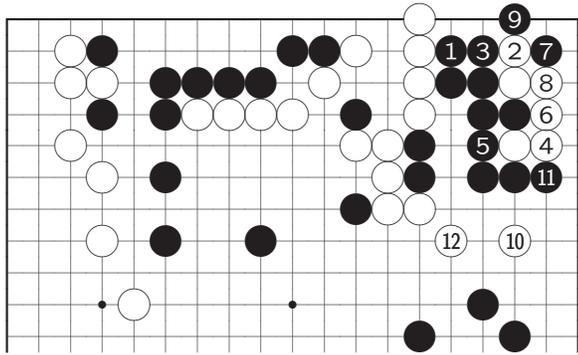
19 at 6



Variation 81 for 89

Switching to the atari at ⑨ doesn't help Black. The sequence up to ⑮ is severe, and if Black connects at A next, White can capture Black's whole dumpling shape (marked) with B.

13 at 8



Variation 82 for 89

Even if Black connects solidly at 5 and plays to capture the invaders with 7 and 9, 10 is still effective. After 10, 11 and 12 are miai, and White is satisfied.

Stay Connected

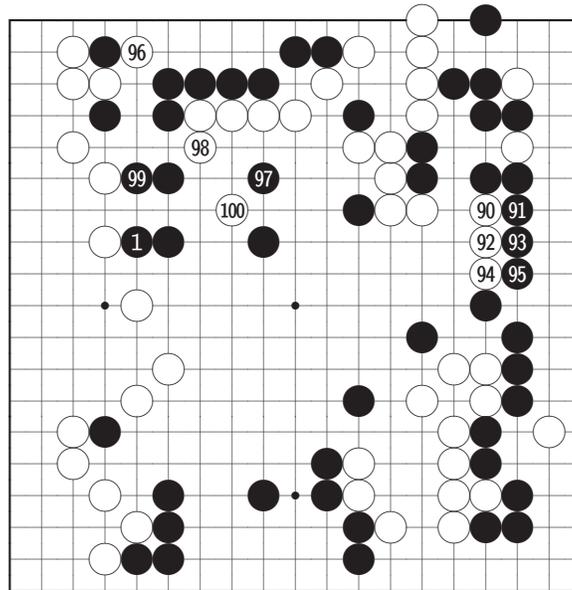
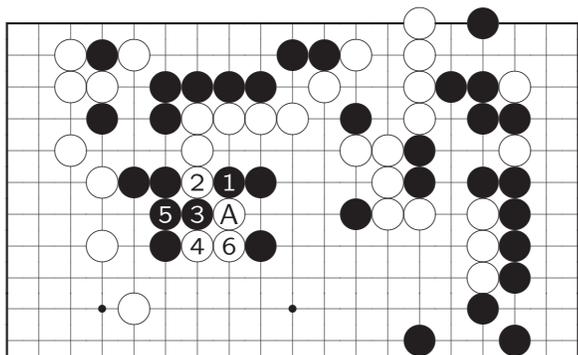


Diagram 17
(Moves: 90-101)

After reducing the right side in sente up to 95, White returned to harassing Black's center dragon with 96 to 100. Forming a bamboo joint with 99 and 1 (101) was good style, staying connected and strong.



Variation 83 for 101

Black shouldn't try to cut off A with 1 and 3. Black's group will be split in two by 4 and 6, and the result is bad for Black.

Good Things Come to Those Who Probe

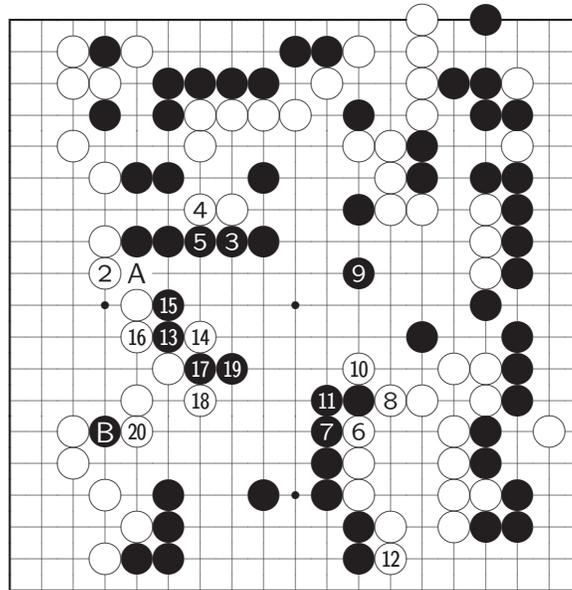


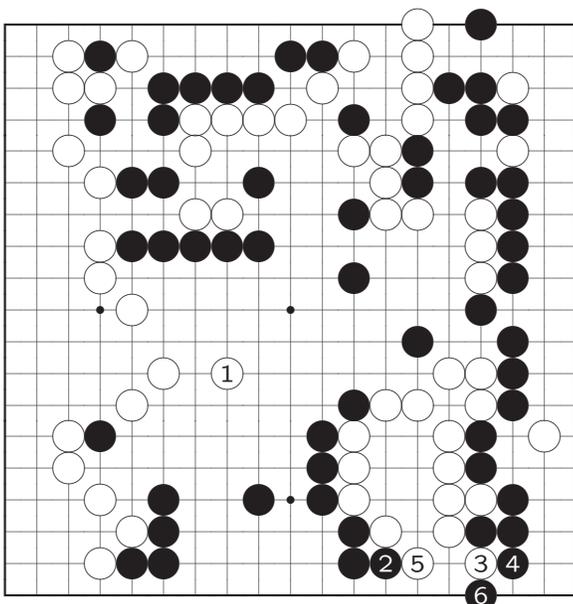
Diagram 18
(Moves: 102-120)

Lee regretted ②, and later said it was a mistake. White should have played at A instead and then ⑬ wouldn't have been anything special.

The combination of ⑩ and ⑫ was another small mistake. Jumping to ⑲ would have been better.

The razor sharp edge of ⑬ caught the light as it hit the board. Lee had not expected this move and was forced to parry frantically. White ⑭ was the best response, but it didn't greatly help White.

Black's masterstroke at ⑬ forced White defend at ⑳, so Black kept sente. All of this flowed from the wonderful probe at ㉑. With some patience, Black was able to enjoy the fruits of his earlier labor.

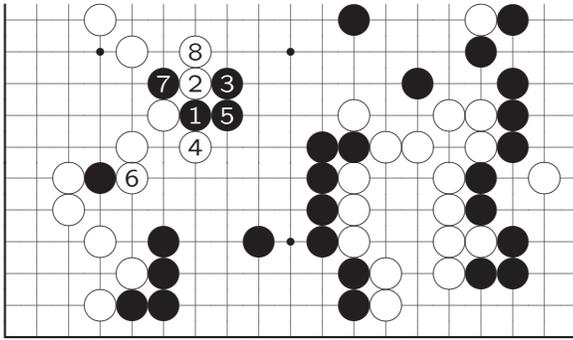


Variation 84 for ⑩

White should jump to ① instead of playing ⑩ in the game.

Black will bully White's bottom right group with ②, ④ and ⑥, but the game is still very close.

After ⑥, White can tenuki—managing to defend the bottom right in sente once again.

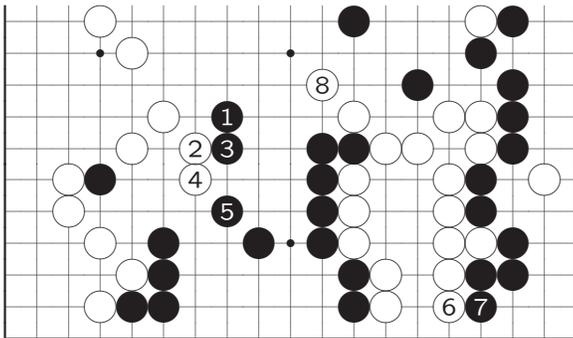


Variation 85 for 113

If Black attaches at ① (instead of ⑬ in the game) White will hane at ②.

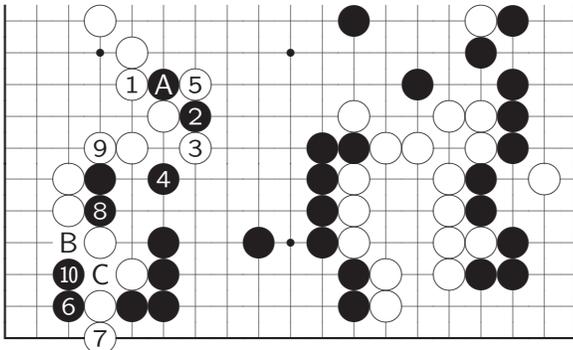
If Black now tries to play at ⑦, White can extend to ⑧ and capture his stone.

This is quite different to the result in the game.



Variation 86 for 113

If Black simply caps at ①, White will reduce Black's center area up to ⑧ and the game will be slightly better for White.



Variation 87 for 114

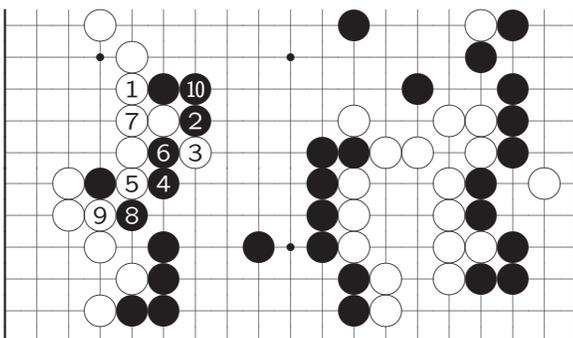
Let's see why A (13 above) was a brilliant move.

If White answers A with ① and ③, Black will unleash a formidable combination with ④ to ⑩.

Black ⑩ makes miai of B and C, and White is in trouble.

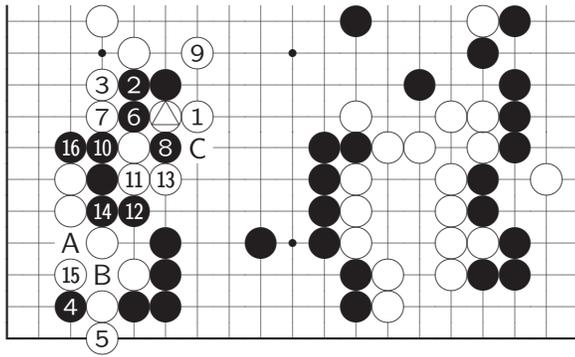
If White plays ⑦ at ⑩, Black at ⑦ is good enough.

Instead of ⑨, if White defends the corner at ⑩, Black breaks into White's territory with ⑨.



Variation 88 for 114

If White answers ④ with ⑤, Black will gain a huge number of points in the center up to ⑩.



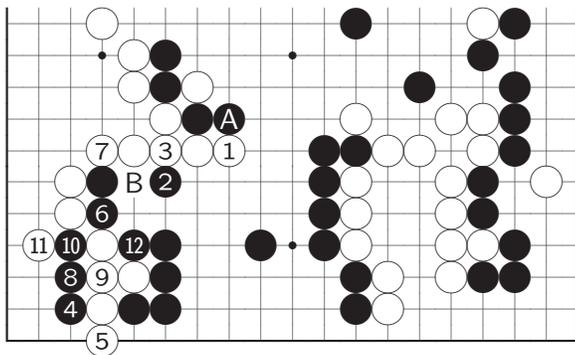
Variation 89 for 114

Extending at ① is White's strongest attempt at resistance, but Black will still break through up to ⑩.

Instead of ⑮, if White saves the left side with White at ⑮, Black will extend to ⑮, making A and B miai.

If White uses ⑦ to fall back at ⑩, Black still cuts at ③ and White can't capture any black stones.

If White ⑨ connects at ⑩, Black will push at C and White's marked cutting stones will be in danger.



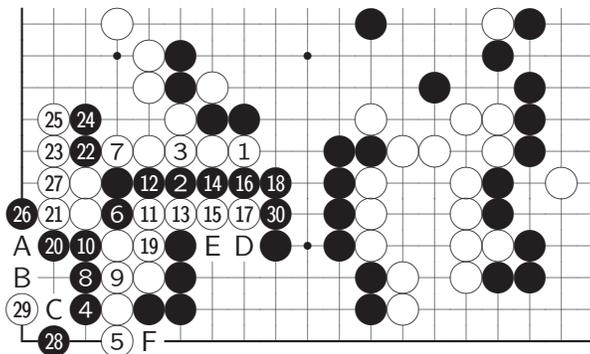
Variation 90 for 120

After ⑰ (at A), White defended with ⑳ at B in the game.

If White pushes at ① instead, Black can once again peep at ②, clamp at ④ and pinch with ⑥.

If White tries to resist, Black will capture White's corner stones up to ⑫.

The timing and placement of ④ is very important, as we'll see in a moment.



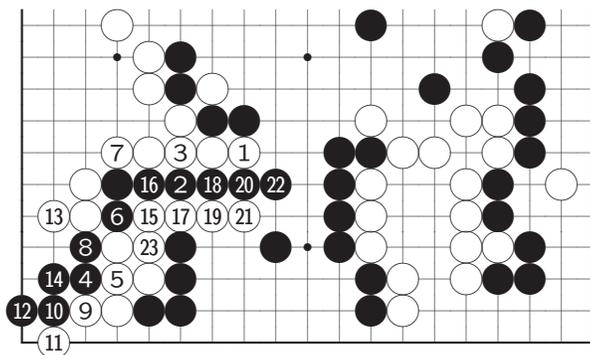
Variation 91 for 120

White can extend his liberties by pushing out with atari from ⑪ to ⑰ and connecting at ⑱.

However, ⑳ is a vital point and ㉘ is a tesuji for capturing races. White ㉙ stops Black from making two eyes, but Black gains liberties from the exchange.

Black will eventually win this capturing race.

Even if White tries to start a ko with A to C, Black will be fine as long as he just fills White's liberties from the outside with D to F.



Variation 92 for 120

Black's clamp at ⑨ in the previous variations was very important, because ④ and ⑧ don't work.

If Black continues with ⑩ and ⑫, White can capture Black's corner stones through to ⑳.

Thickness Still Pays in the Endgame

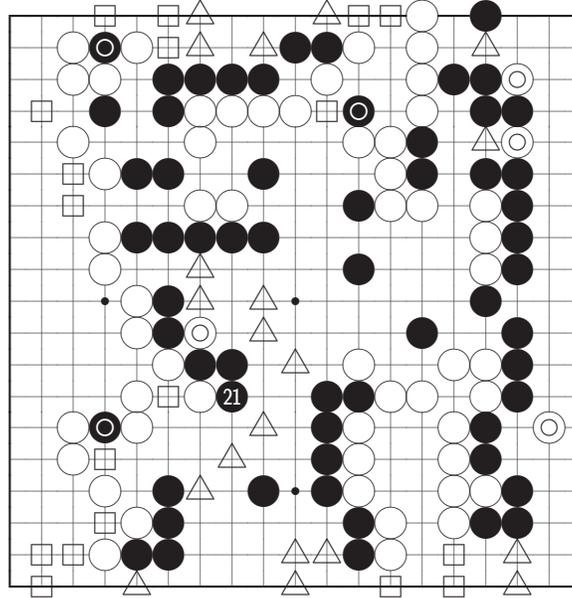


Diagram 19
(Move: 121)

The game was reversed when Black blocked at 21. Let's count and see how big Black's lead was.

Black:

Right side: 48, lower side through to center: 25, and the top: 4.

Total: *77 points.*

White:

Left side: 54, upper side: 6, lower side: 10, and komi 7.5.

Total: *77.5 points.*

The game still looks very close, but Black has more potential in the center and can expect to earn more points than White in the endgame. This is because Black's stones are stronger overall and this works in Black's favor to grant him invisible points.

In other words, Black can threaten and harass White more than White can harass him. So these invisible points will materialize as actual points in the endgame.

If this isn't completely clear right now, don't worry. We will observe how Black bullies White throughout the remainder of the game, to see how thickness works its magic in the endgame.

Take the Road Less Traveled (Especially When Behind)

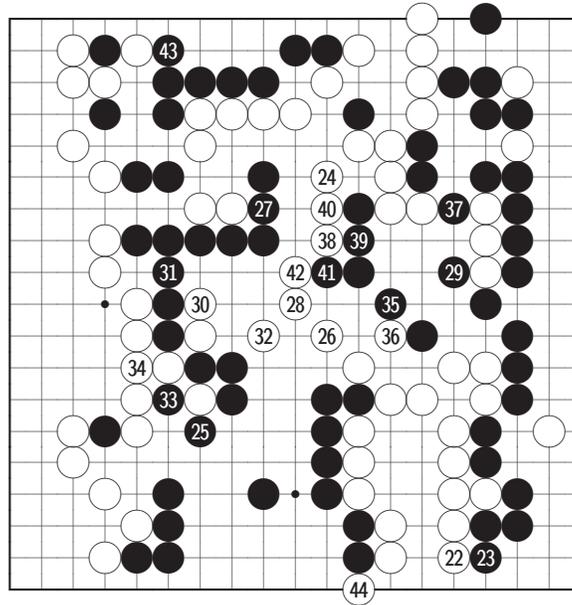


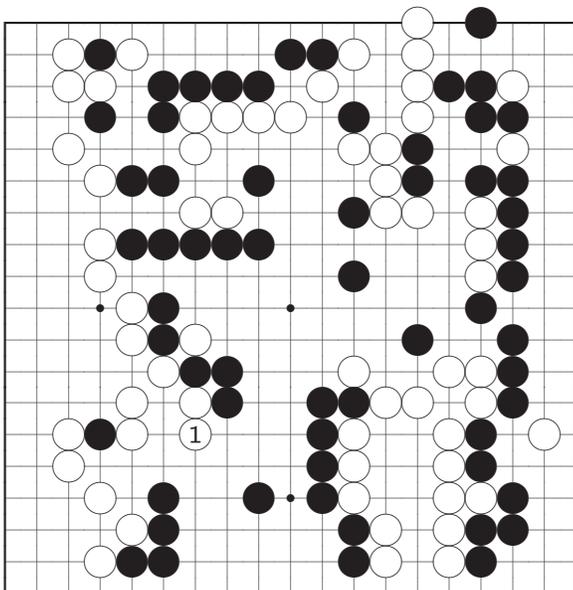
Diagram 20
(Moves: 122-144)

Lee reinforced with ②④, but he was already behind.

Black ataried at ②⑤, and moving towards the center with ②⑥ was the right idea for White.

He chose to continue on into the center with ②⑧ and ③⑩. This path made the endgame more complicated. When you're behind, it pays to look for interesting variations, rather than easily anticipated sequences.

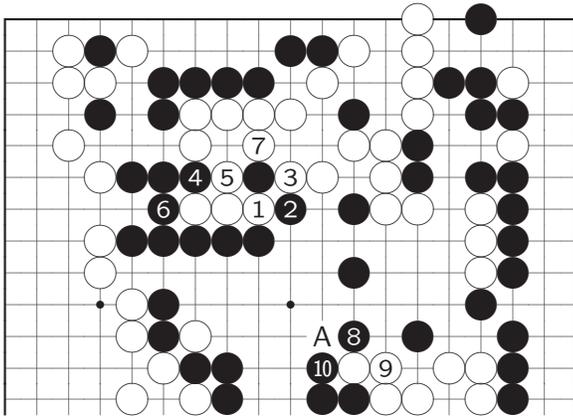
White isolated Black's group at the top up to ④②, intending to gain some points by bullying it. However, it wasn't easy to do so, because White had to worry about his own weaknesses too.



Variation 93 for ①②④

Instead of ②④ in the game, White could also extend to ①.

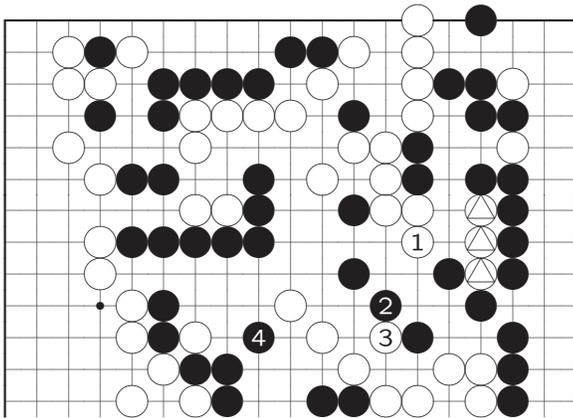
The game is still very close, but it's slightly better for Black.



Variation 94 for 126

If White cuts with ① and ③, instead of stepping into Black's center area with A (⑫), Black will sacrifice in sente and build a huge territory in the center.

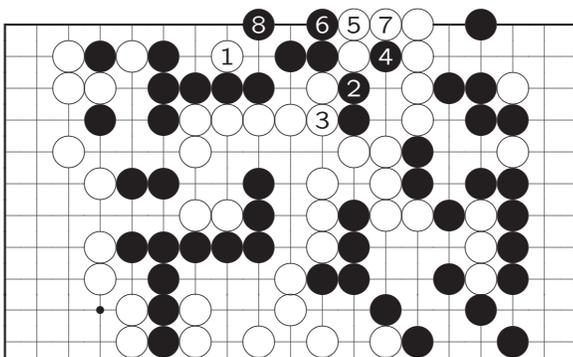
Black ⑧ is a nice tesuji in the midst of this sequence. It makes ⑨ and ⑩ miai.



Variation 95 for 130

If White saves his marked stones with ①, Black will defend the center area with ④.

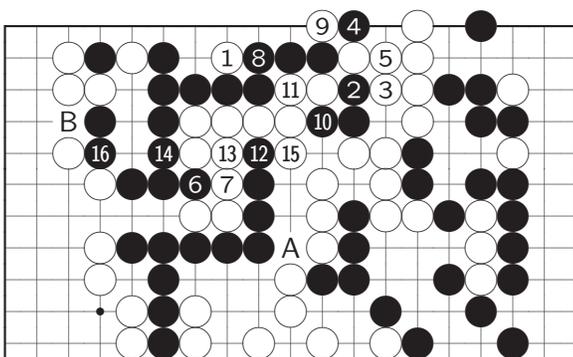
This is still slightly better for Black. The difference is about 1.5 points.



Variation 96 for 144

Locally speaking, Black's eyespace at the top might appear to be unsettled, but there's aji in this position which ensures that Black's group is already alive.

If White tries to attack with ①, cutting at ② is a lovely tesuji. Black ⑥ becomes sente, so Black can easily make life up to ⑧.



Variation 97 for 144

If White tries to resist with ③, Black can counter-attack and destroy White's eye shape in sente up to ⑮.

Black still won't face any problems living, because ⑭ makes half an eye in sente.

After ⑯, A and B are miai for Black and White is in serious trouble.

Even Dead Stones Still Have Value

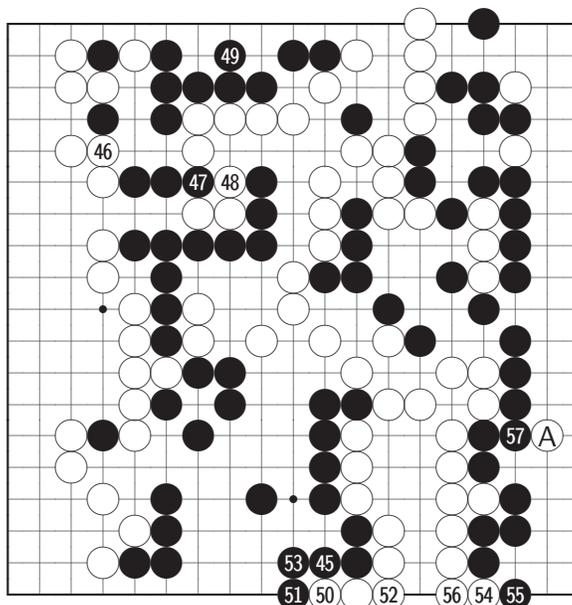
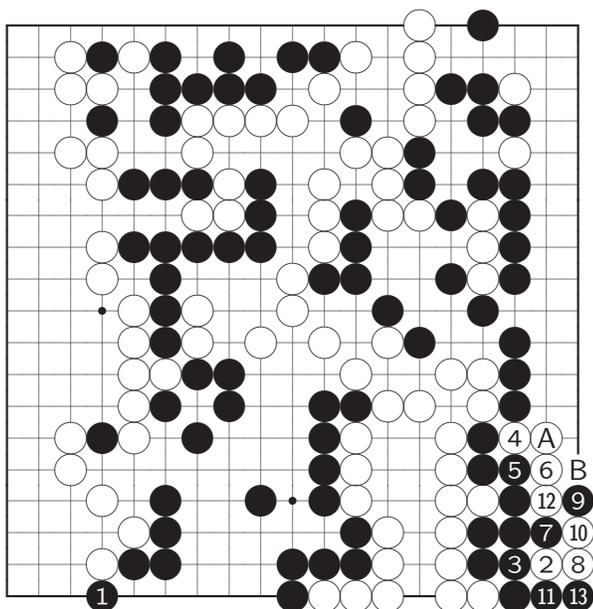


Diagram 21
(Moves: 145-157)

White ④⑥ invalidated the previous variation, so Black had to live up to ④⑨. Defending at ⑤⑦ was necessary too, because ⑤A still had some life in it. This meant that ⑤④ and ⑤⑥ were sente.



Variation 98 for ⑤⑦

⑤⑭ at ⑤⑧

If Black doesn't defend the lower right corner, instead playing at ⑤① or elsewhere, White can mobilize ⑤A with ⑤②, ⑤④ and ⑤⑥.

The sequence up to ⑤⑫ demonstrates good technique for reducing Black's liberties in the corner, and ⑤⑭ (at ⑤⑧) is a tesuji which makes miai of ⑤⑩ and B.

Black's whole corner is captured up to ⑤⑭, so Black would have to compromise after ⑤②.

Bully Weak Groups and Steal Their Lunch Money

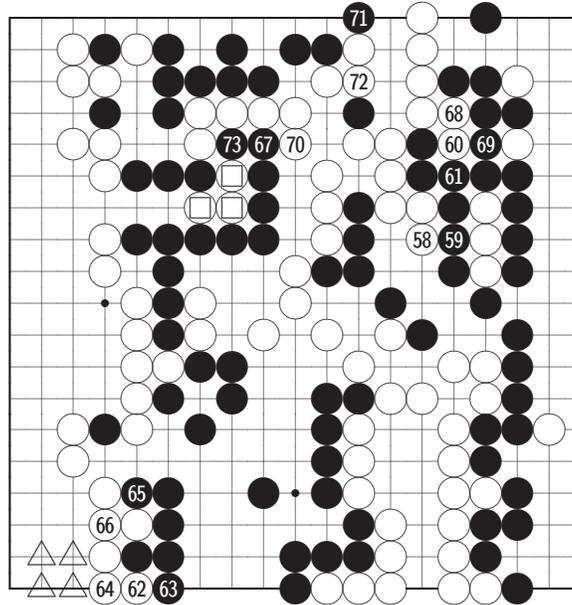


Diagram 22
(Moves: 158-173)

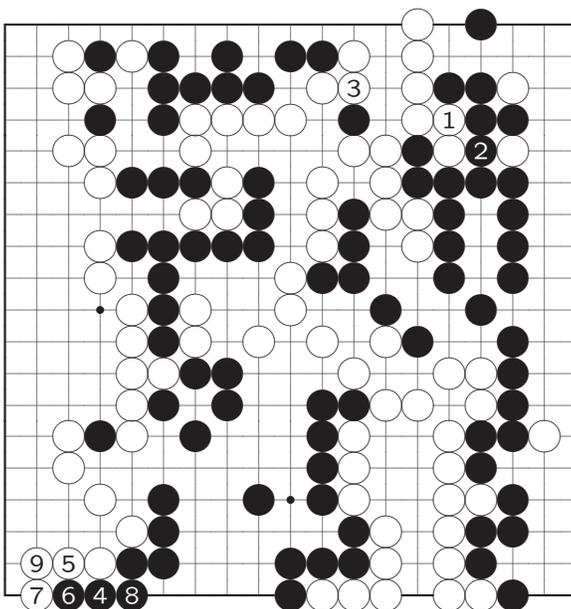
The hane at ⑥② was a big reverse sente endgame move, worth five points. White gained the four marked points inside his territory (by preventing Black's sente hane at ⑥④) and Black lost one point at ⑥③.

As a rule of thumb, reverse sente moves have the same value as the sente move they prevent.

Black bullied White with ⑥⑦. Lee couldn't save his three stones and had to defend at ⑦⑩ instead.

White ⑦⑫ was also unavoidable, and Black stole White's lunch money with ⑦⑬ (the squared stones).

From ⑥⑦ to ⑦⑬ we can clearly see the power of thickness in the endgame. Observe how White's territory inevitably gave way to Black's relentless bullying, backed by thickness. The game was practically over.



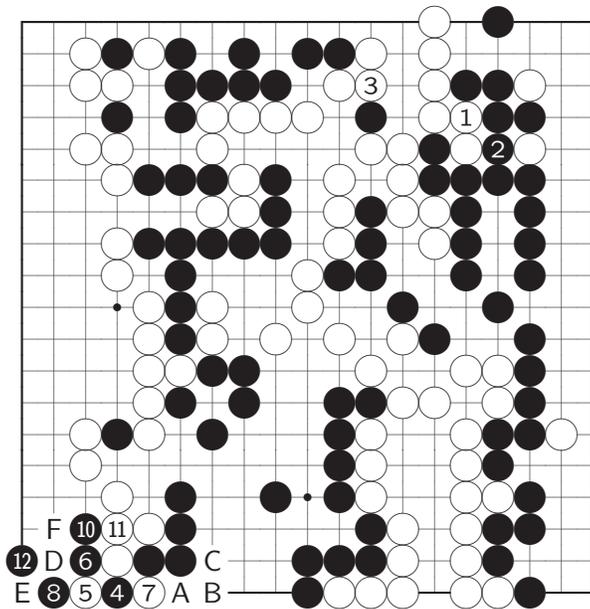
Variation 99 for ①⑥②

If White plays at ③ instead, the hane at ④ will be annoying for White.

Falling back to ⑤ is the proper move, but Black has reduced White's corner greatly in sente.

Up to ⑨, we can see the justification for the marked points in the diagram above. White's territory is four points smaller and Black's is one point bigger in this variation.

Black is clearly winning the game after ⑥.



Variation 100 for 162

9 at 4

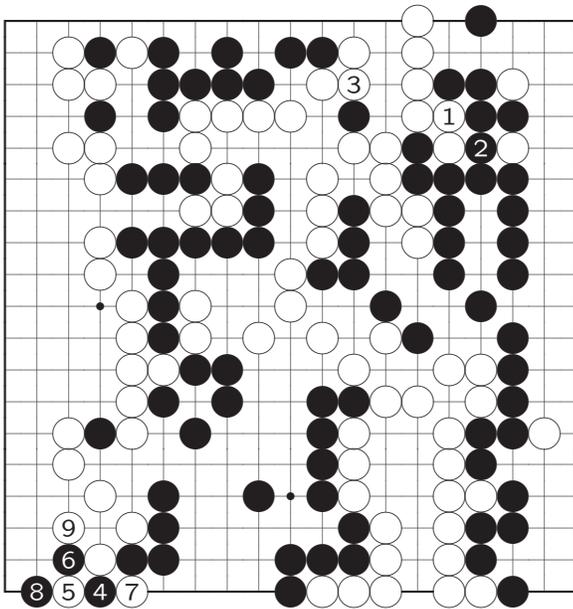
If White hanes at ⑤ and doesn't want to fight a ko, Black can live in the corner with ⑥ to ⑫.

Since Black's territory at the bottom isn't large and is quite thick, White gets the worse end of this deal.

White can only expect to exchange A for B in sente later, and White won't be able to capture anything with C.

If the bottom area were a large and valuable territory, and answering A at B wasn't possible, then trading like this might be acceptable for White.

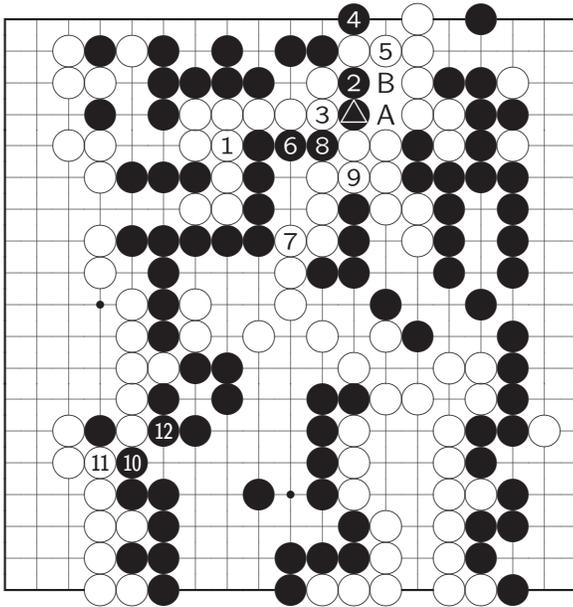
Instead of ⑪, if White plays at D; Black at ⑪, White E, Black A, White at ⑧ and Black F crushes White.



Variation 101 for 162

10 at 4

White can resist at ⑨ and start a ko, but this is a picnic ko for Black.

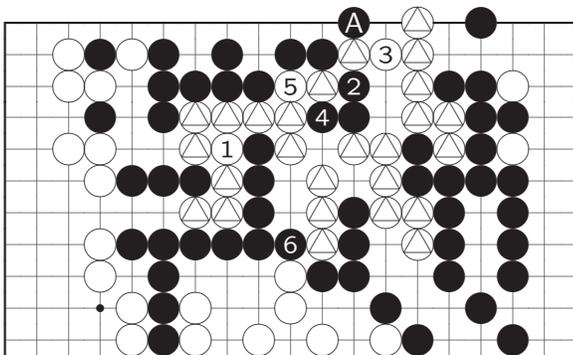


Variation 102 for (170)

Instead of (70) in the game, if White saves his the three stones with (1), Black will squeeze up to (9) in sente.

White will still have to capture the two marked cutting stones later (at A and B), so his territory will collapse like a paper bag.

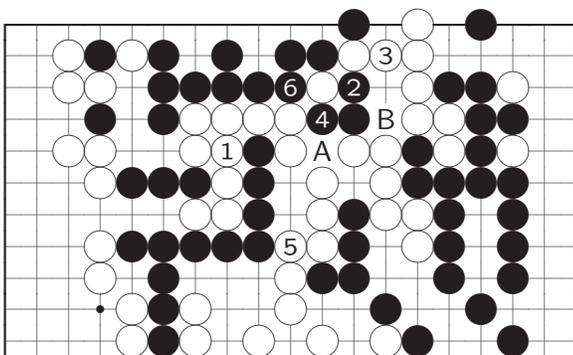
Black is winning by about 2.5 points at this stage.



Variation 103 for (172)

After A (71), if White tries to save his three stones with (1), Black will play (2) and (4) in sente, before cutting at (6).

White's marked group only has one eye, so the game is over.



Variation 104 for (172)

Even if White connects at (5), Black will simply capture a stone with (6).

White can't save all his stones because A and B are miai for Black.

Gu Li Evens the Score

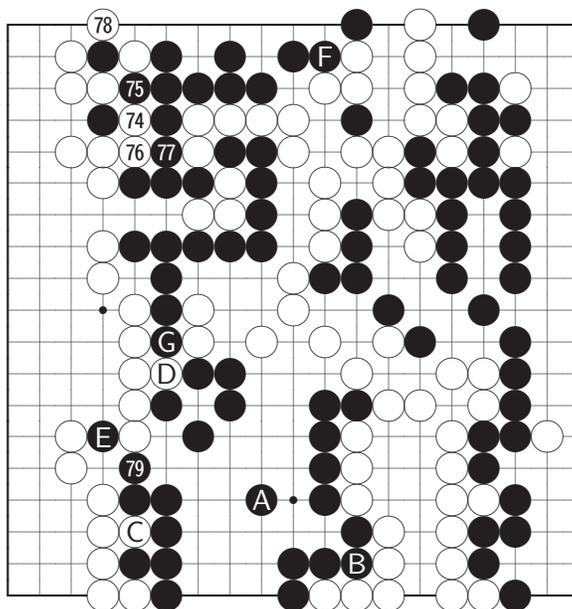


Diagram 23
(Moves: 174-179)

179 moves: Black won by resignation.

Black was winning by 3.5 points at this stage, so Lee resigned. The overall score for the Jubango now stood at 2–2, and Gu Li was on a winning streak.

This game was quite peaceful as far as games between Gu Li and Lee Sedol go, but if you look carefully you'll see that there were many subtle conflicts beneath the surface. They went unplayed because both players read deeply, but you'll discover many interesting variations when you study the game carefully.

The players started with a new pattern up to 27 (A), and the game was well balanced up to 75 (B).

Lee played some overly cautious moves with 76 (C) and 82 (D), and Gu took the initiative with 83 (E) and 85 (F).

Black 113 (G) was the winning move and Gu didn't give Lee any chances to catch up afterwards.

It was a game that was uncharacteristic of Lee and Gu. Firstly, there was no all out fighting. Secondly, the opening was playable for both and Lee thought he was ahead in the middle game (when he played C and D). Thirdly, Gu pulled ahead near the finish line and his endgame play was excellent.

Lee is usually behind after the opening and catches up again in the endgame against Gu, but Gu didn't allow that to happen this time.

This was Lee's fourth consecutive loss against Gu (including the games from other events). There had never been four consecutive wins between these two players before, so the next game was very important. If Lee couldn't turn the tide of the match soon, the situation would become desperate.

After the game, the players reviewed together for nearly an hour. They also talked and drank a lot at the dinner party afterwards; becoming good friends again over beer.

Both players were doing their best throughout each game, but they still got on well together once play concluded. They're very lucky to be such good friends, as well as rivals.

How to Order Relentless

You've just finished reading the first sample chapter of *Relentless: Lee Sedol vs Gu Li*. We hope that you enjoyed it and learned a lot!

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2013 Chinese A League: Round 17

October 20, 2013, China: Komi: 7.5 – *Lee Sedol 9d (Black) vs Gu Li 9d*

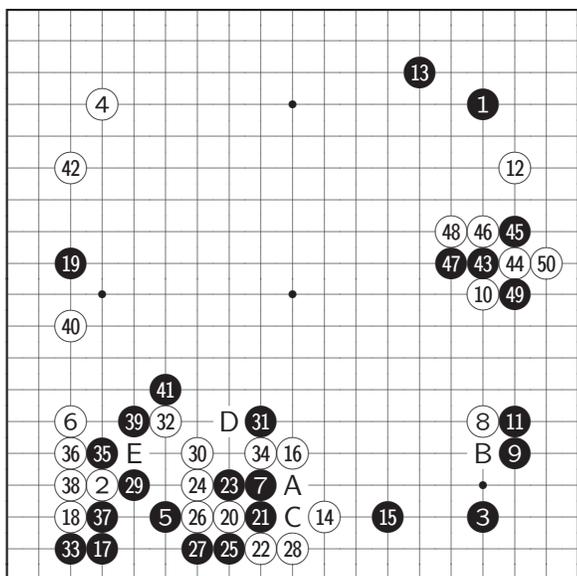


Diagram 1
(Moves: 1-50)

This was the last game before the Jubango began.

Black started with a modified Kobayashi Opening up to ⑦, and ⑧ to ⑩ made miai of ⑪ and ⑫.

White ⑧ can also be at ⑪, and because Black played ⑦ instead of A, approaching at B is also conceivable.

Invading with ⑭ and ⑯ was light and flexible, and ⑰ should have been at ⑳ or C.

White ⑳ struck at Black's vital point and ㉔ was severe. If Black cuts at ㉖ instead of ㉕, White will connect at ㉕. Either way, ② is a ladder breaker.

Black ㉑ was the best haengma for managing Black's bottom left group, but the unassuming power of ㉓ allowed White to capture the cutting stones with ㉔.

If Black plays ㉓ at D, he finds himself in a tight spot after White at ㉓, ㉕ and White E.

Black ㉑ was thick, but ㉒ was big and the opening was better for White.

Black harassed White with ㉑ and ㉒, but White's responses up to ㉓ were strong.

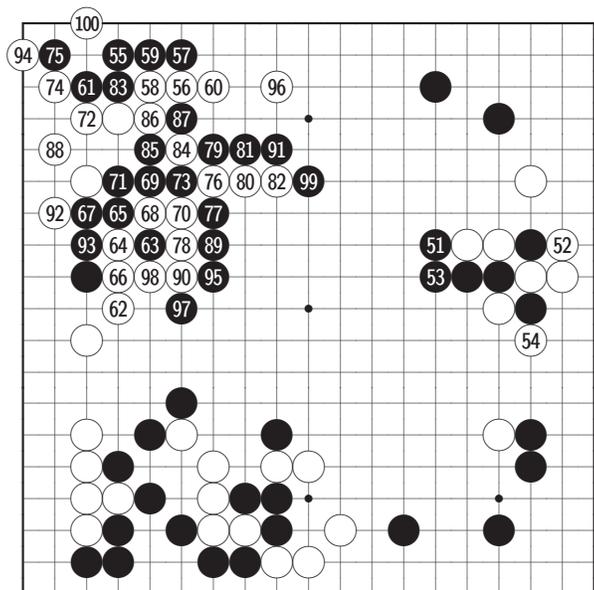


Diagram 2
(Moves: 51-100)

Black 51 was the right continuation and the result up to 54 was playable for both sides.

Black approached at 55, and 56 was thick and solid. However, 58 was a thank you move. Simply playing 60, 61 and 72 would have been better.

White 64 was a mistake, and 67 damaged White's position. Instead of 64, he should have pressured Black with 98. Doing so makes miai of 64 and 78.

White 72 prevented Black from connecting, but 76 should have ataried at 83 first.

Black 83 revealed a surprising vital point and quietly redirected the flow of play in Black's favor.

Pushing at 91 was the right choice, even though it allowed 94 to occupy the key point for eyespace.

The powerful hane at 99 realized Black's advantage.

Eventually, White needed to play once more at 100 to capture Black, demonstrating the potency of 83.

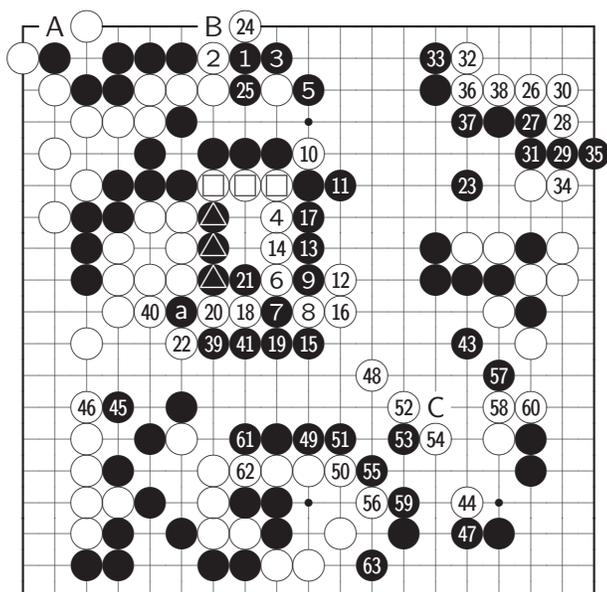


Diagram 3
(Moves: 101-163)

142 at a

Black 101 and 103 were quick-witted moves, which exploited Black's dead stones. If White blocks at 103, instead of 102, Black at 102 makes miai of 125 and A.

Black became thick at the top after 105, and could also aim to save his corner stones with B later.

Black 107 and 109 were severe, and White found it difficult to fight because of Black's center thickness.

The marked stones lived in seki after 112 to 122, while Black consolidated his lead with 123.

Black adopted a firm posture with 125 and 143. His calm play sparked feelings of desperation in White.

White went all out with 148, but Black's responses from 149 to 159 were solid and precise. If White plays 158 at 159, cutting at C captures White's center group.

White saved his center stones by connecting with 160, but 163 captured White's large group at the bottom.

163 moves: Black won by resignation.

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