

PREFACE

This book is the third in a series published by Slate & Shell on the ten-game matches played by Go Seigen when he was at the top of the go world. The first book, *Kamakura*, described the wartime match between Go Seigen and Kitani Minoru. That was followed by *Final Summit*, an account of Go's last ten-game match, the one with Takagawa Kaku in 1955-56. These two works thus bookend a period of seventeen years during which Go played mostly ten-game matches and some shorter matches with the top Japanese players. The present book is the start of an attempt to stack the shelf between these two book ends.

The aim, as before, is to present games in depth both in terms of colour and commentary so that the reader can enjoyably read and re-read them. I have used many pro commentaries in this series. The result is that a remarkable number of moves in each game end up with a comment, but we also see how much pros can disagree with each other.

This volume differs from the other two in one important way: size. It covers four matches, and a total of thirty games. It spans the period from 1942 to 1953, during which Go played matches with other players, which I intend to treat in later volumes. To stay in focus, therefore, I have treated the first match, during the war, in a somewhat perfunctory way. I was tempted even to relegate it to an appendix, but it seemed odd to dump a ten-game match in a book about ten-game matches into an appendix. And so it has been restored to its chronological place. It was a handicap match, and if you prefer to skip over it to get to the real 9-dan showdown, you will not be missing much as regards colour.

The first “real” 9-dan showdown was not in fact a ten-game match at all, and that has occasioned another decision. The first time in history two 9-dans played each other was in a four-game match played with komi. This match began just before the ten-game version, was part of the same hype, and was woven into the initial stages of big brother. I have therefore decided to treat the entire four-game match in the same way—colour and commentary—as the two subsequent ten-game matches. However, I have made a slight change to the flow in that I have grouped all four komi games together. At the end of each game there is a pointer to the next chronological game in the other match, so that you can flip back and forwards if you prefer. One reason for doing this might be to keep track of the openings—quite

a few were reprised and it can be interesting to follow who varied first and why. On the other hand, you may wish to look at the matches separately because one was with komi and one without, which made for different styles of play.

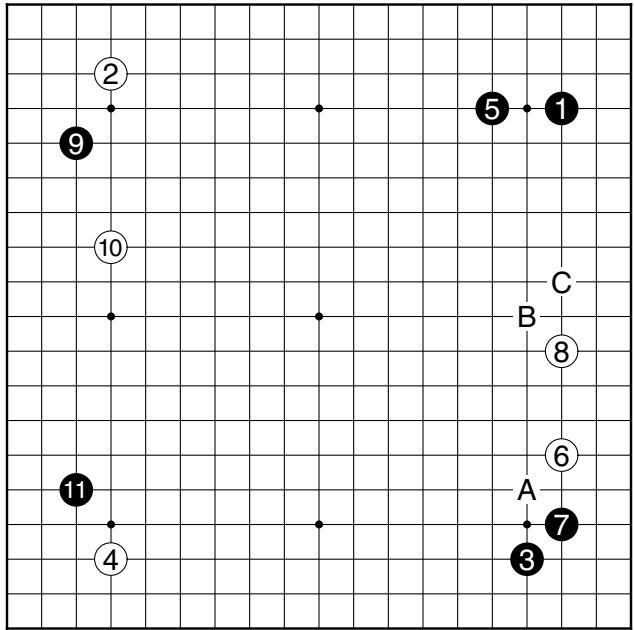
In *Kamakura* I gave a fairly detailed account both of Go's early life up to 1940 and the Japanese go scene in the same period. In *Final Summit*, I added biographical details for Go for the latter part of his career, and that included sketching in part of his life in the period covered by this book. To avoid repetition, there will again only be a small amount of biography for Go here, and I will also skip over many of the details of the Japanese go scene already treated. Likewise, I have added here only new bibliographical or terminological information. The interested reader is referred to the earlier books, both of which are indexed.

Omitting this repetition leaves more room for games. Following my usual practice, the commentaries here are written by me, but rely heavily on many professional commentaries spanning more than fifty years. Go Seigen's games have attracted many commentators who do not always share the same views as each other. I enjoy recording the differences and the changes of mind. Although not every ten-game match game is inspiring—the later games after a player has been downgraded in handicap are often humdrum—and some games are naturally short, on the whole this means commentaries are denser than usual. I make no apology for that, as I hope this book will stand more than one reading. There is also the point that the easy-read format pioneered by Slate & Shell, with numerous full-board diagrams, makes any commentary much easier to follow.

I also like adding colour, which I have gleaned from personal visits and from reading around the subject in newspapers and old magazines such as *Kido*, *Kien*, *Igo Club*, and so on. In my selected bibliographies I have tended to select books rather than magazine articles (the former being easier for others to acquire), which is rather unfair as it is often the magazines that are the most stimulating, especially the contemporaneous ones. The main period of Go's matches, which the Japanese refer to as the Showa 20's (that is roughly 1945-55), was blessed by a standard of go commentary that is rarely seen now. Obviously the meaty input was provided by pros, but I would also like to salute here fellow journalists such as Mihori Fukumenshi, Yamada

that the reddening of the leaves was more advanced than at his home in Sengokuhara—in other words it was noticeably colder this far north. In those days, the journey from Tokyo to Nikko took four hours, double the time for today.

The room they were playing in was, despite its name, the Room of the Holy Relic, in a secular area and had once been a temporary headquarters of the Meiji Emperor. It was now a library.



1 – 11

② to ⑧ was an opening Go had used countless times. It could even be called the Go Seigen Fuseki. Obviously there were lots of examples of it Fujisawa could study, so he had no special reason to try to block it. The whole opening up to ⑪ was to be repeated in Game 7.

⑥ was not a Go innovation—Kato Shin played it in 1943—but it was Go who took over the baton, though not till 1949, and then he rather hogged it. Although a couple of players did try responding to this at A or B, ⑦ was the almost standard reply simply because the checking move at C later was so appealing.

The first two times Go played this fuseki he played ⑧ at ① in Diagram 1, but he then abandoned it completely in favour of ⑧. Maeda Nobuaki said he believed this was because the Black move at A proved too good.

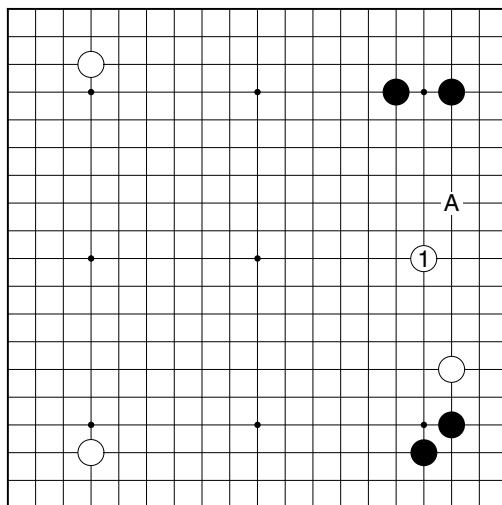
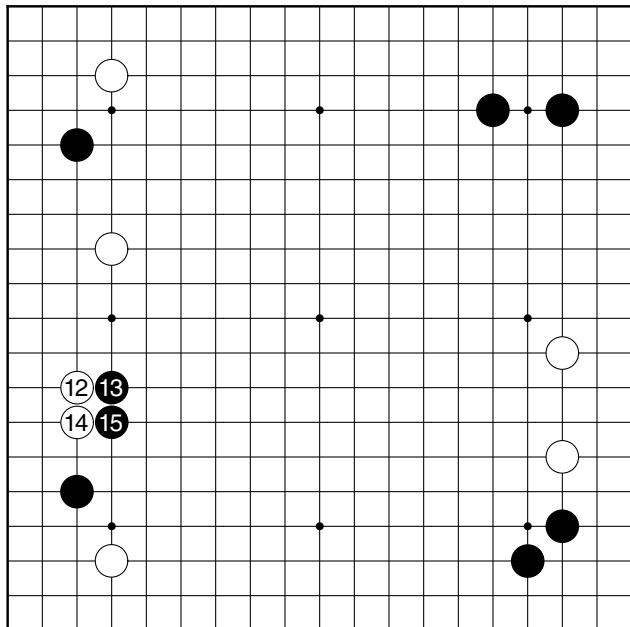


Diagram 1

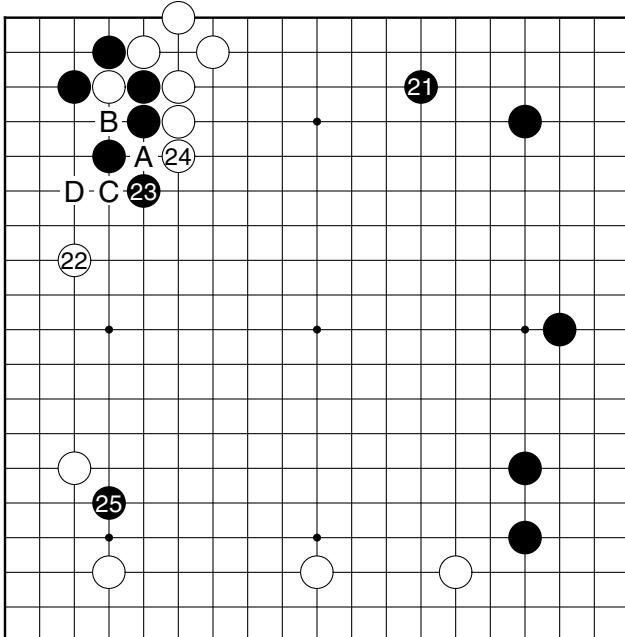
White's play here is rather the opposite of Go's usual fast-paced style. In fact, this fuseki has been described as *yottsu sumo*, which is the term for the stance where two sumo wrestlers grapple with each other, each with both hands on the opponent's belt. It is something of a stalemate position in which the wrestlers are typically quiet, with no kiai yells. The room was just as quiet now, apart from the faint gurgling sound of a stream in the garden.

Recall Go's statement that around this time he could allow two corner enclosures and still win late in the game.



12 – 15

The stillness was broken slightly by Fujisawa's exhaustion as he reacted to ⑫. It was somewhat odd that Fujisawa chose a plain way to play with ⑨ and ⑪ then suddenly changed course with the difficult move ⑬.



21 – 25

21: the go writer Katsumoto Tesshu, who was editor of *Igo* magazine, said he was asked by lots of amateurs why Black did not play 21 at ① in Diagram 5 in order to reduce White's moyo. He therefore made a point of asking Go. Go's response was that erasure was fine if there were no big points on the board. However, as long as there were big points, they were, well, bigger. In any case, 21 in the game has the extra dimension of inhibiting White from playing at 23.

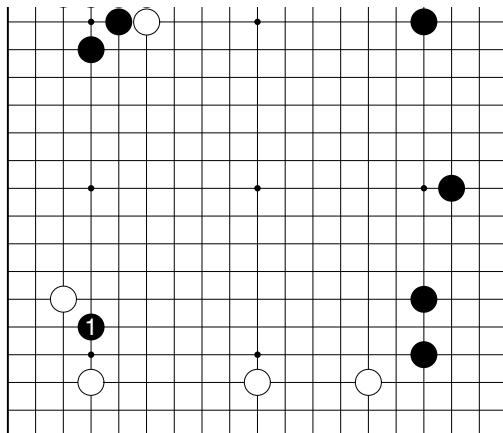


Diagram 5

22 in the game gets the last big point. This precise point was chosen as it revives the threat of a White play at 23 next. 23 is the only sensible move to avoid being sealed in (though that didn't stop Fujisawa spending an hour on it, the slowest move so far). ① and ③ in Diagram 6 might feel good because they are forcing moves, but ⑤ just gives White the excuse he needs to surround territory on the left, and White can also look forward to gains from the thickness at the top that Black has also given him.

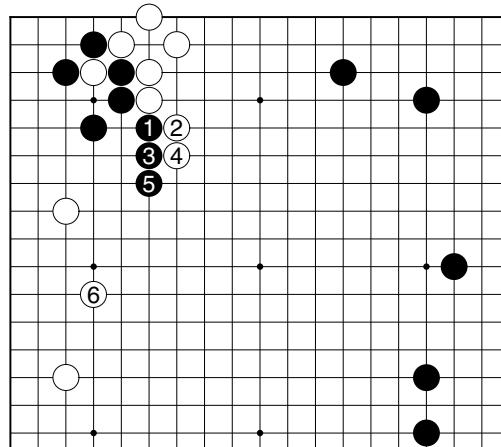


Diagram 6

White would like to play ④ at ① in Diagram 7, now that the big points are taken care of, but ② would be extremely disconcerting, both as regards the life of the group and the expansion of Black's framework to the right.

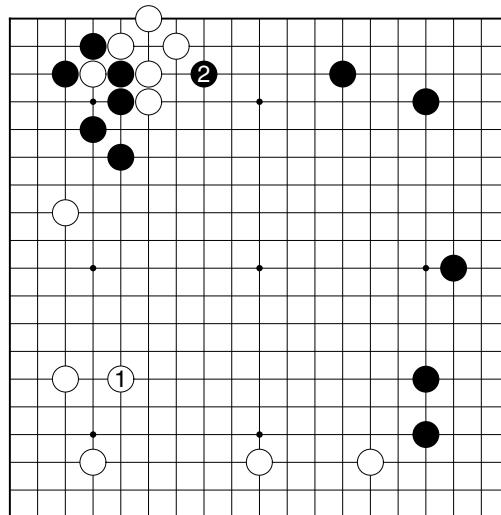


Diagram 7

Black would also have the option of playing thickly as in Diagram 8 to focus on the left and lower sides.

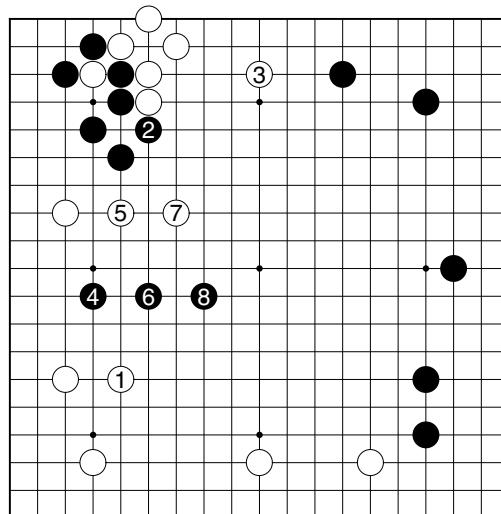
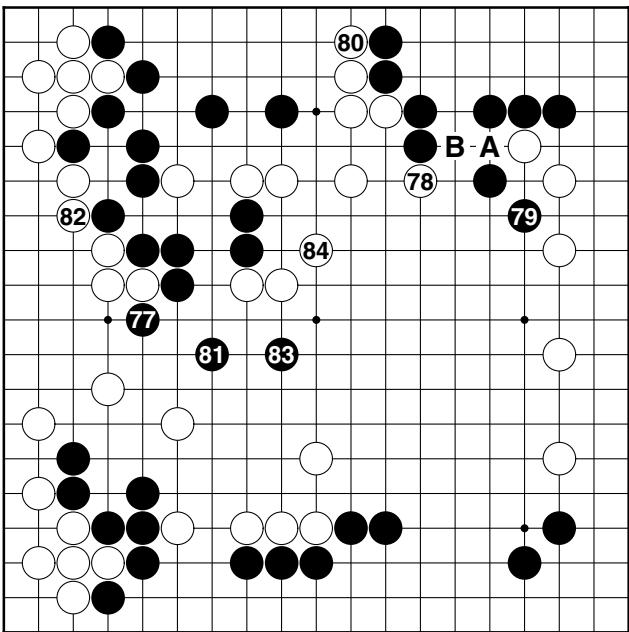


Diagram 8



77 – 84

Another alternative for 77 might seem to be 1 in Diagram 25, but White has an easy defence, able to connect up one way or the other after 8 while sealing Black in.

The purpose of 77 in the game is to avoid being sealed in, but as he is still pounding against a strong White position, there is not much benefit to him.

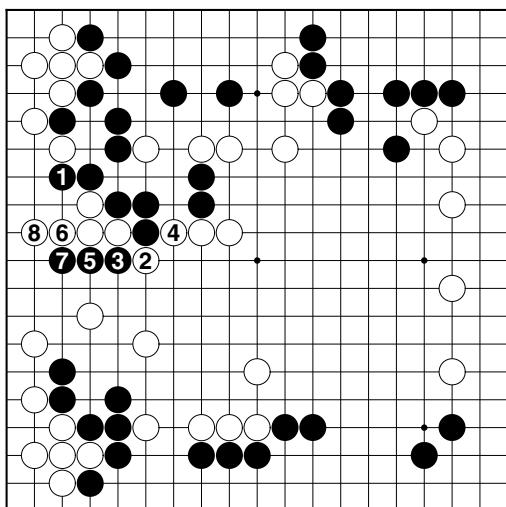


Diagram 25

⑧ was played to eliminate the ko of Diagram 24 for the future. It is another *honte*—a safe-and-sound move. Obviously it also aims at the weakness at A. At this stage Sakata felt the game was level—that is, Black has lost the advantage of first move. The damage to White's moyo on the left is compensated by White's activity at the top, but the upper side was more important in this game, said Sakata—hence Fujisawa's strategy was flawed.

If 79 is omitted, say for ① in Diagram 26, ② and ④ seal off the centre.

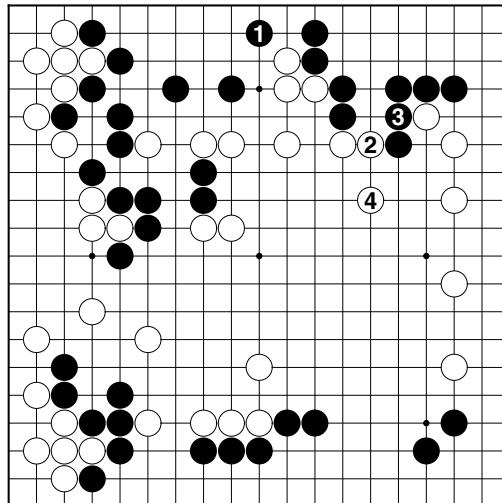


Diagram 26

Yet Sakata criticised 79 (and was apparently alone in doing so) as an overplay. He said the proper procedure was ① in Diagram 27 as this leaves White with nothing tangible.

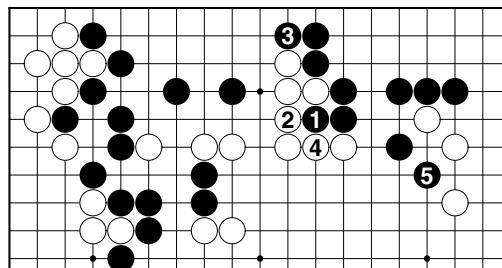
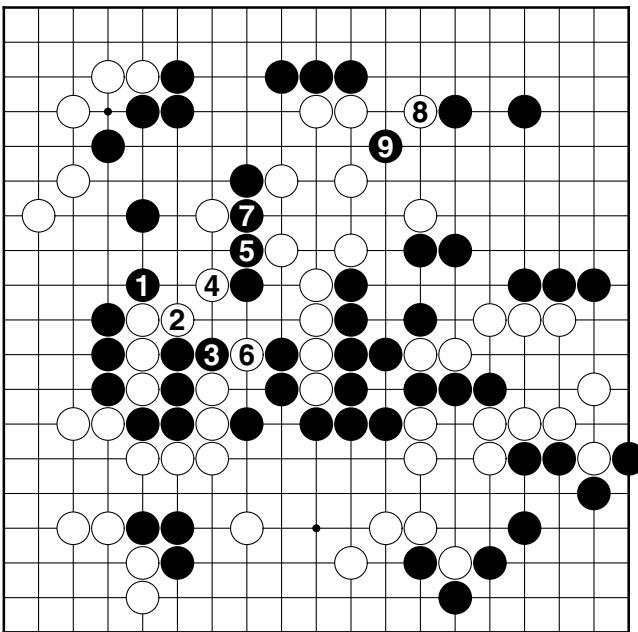


Diagram 27

⑧〇 is a very good point, and big. It aims at destroying Black's eye shape to the left, and also at pushing in at B. At the same time it is a thick move which creates eye-making possibilities for White. It indirectly forces Black to flee on empty points at ⑧① and ⑧③. Meanwhile White settles his own shapes with ⑧② and ⑧④.

The second day was at crawling pace and 83 was the sealed move. Despite his sleepless night, the gregarious Fujisawa was up for the entertainment of the evening. The family that ran a sister inn called the Kagetsukan was noted as a team of talented table tennis players, and so the go party was taken there by the head of the local Yomiuri office.

When they arrived, they were daunted to see the table tennis room bedecked with a vast array of gold and silver trophies. Fujisawa gulped and counted the plaques: over fifty. Further inspection revealed phrases like “All-Japan Championship”. This was serious opposi-



101 – 109

If ⑤ mistakenly interposes the ①–② exchange of Diagram 24, he will find that ④ is now an effective forcing move allowing White to connect up at ⑥.

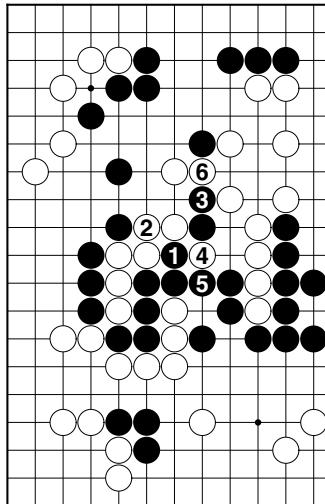


Diagram 24

Once Go realised he had fallen into a confused fight, he wiped sweat off his brow with a towel and then resumed gazing at the board with eyebrows tightly knitted like a crosspatch. As he still had eight hours left, time was not a problem. When White played ⑥ he had captured five stones and for the first time Yamada realised that, in his unflustered state, Fujisawa might actually win this game. However, at this point he went into byoyomi.

In a separate room, Yamada asked Sugiuchi, Yamabe, Kuwahara Munehisa, and others and they all said Black had no way back. Yet Yamada still had a premonition Fujisawa would lose. It was again this issue that he seemed to create his own bad luck.

⑦ is a good move, limiting White to one eye, but is gote. So White is able to play ⑧. Though essentially this is a key point for life of this group if Black defends

his territory, it actually starts a trade in the corner since Black opts to kill the group. This may be seen as the crux of this game.

Once Black gets to ⑨, he can now kill the central White group, but at the cost of a significant loss on the left and more to come on the right. Black can still win but he has chosen to do so by riding a tiger. Yet Black has to take this route because simple defence as in Diagram 25 is not enough. Black still has to protect against the aji at A, but even without that his territory in this corner is smaller than White's in the lower left.

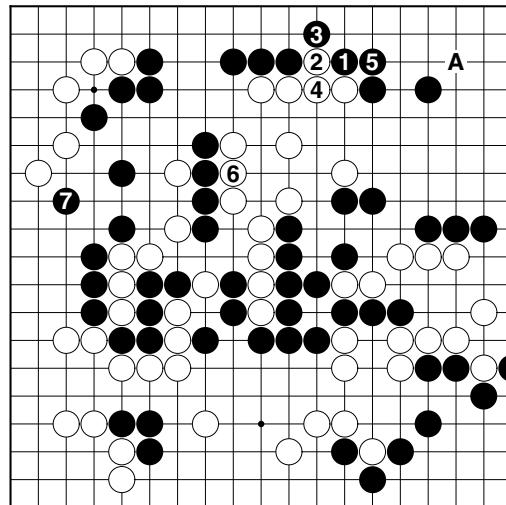
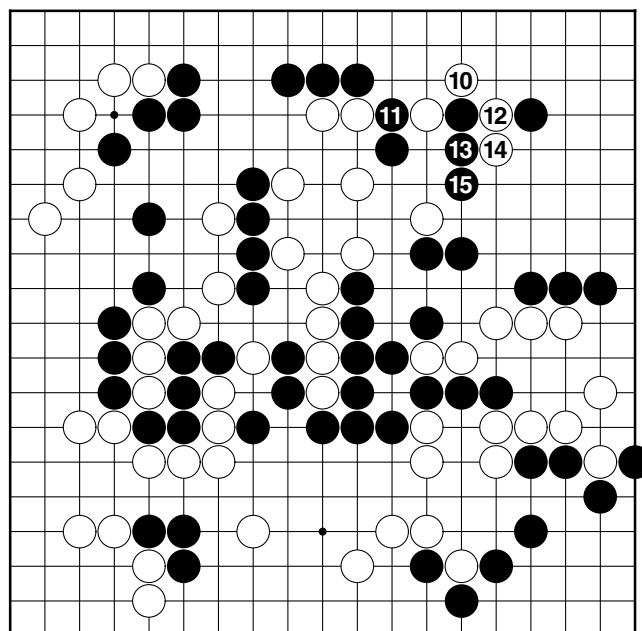


Diagram 25



110 – 115

⑩ gives himself the option of life or a trade. His judgement is formed by the fact that he has a large territory of sixty points in the lower left, which Black's upper territory cannot match. The simple connection at ① in Diagram 26 aims only at life, and after ② that is a

wildly optimistic hope. ⑩ reduces White to one eye.

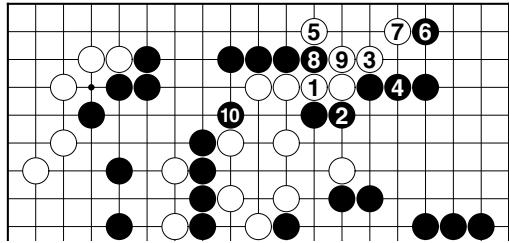


Diagram 26

If ③ in Diagram 26 is at ① in Diagram 27, White still dies.

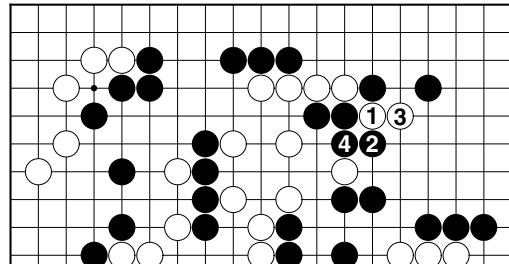


Diagram 27

Diagram 29 shows yet another unsuccessful variation for ⑩. Note that White A here is not a sente forcing move.

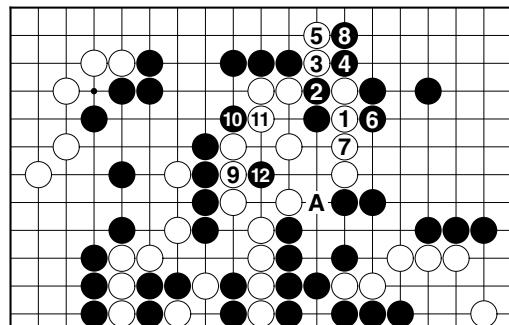


Diagram 28

If 13 defends the corner as in Diagram 29 White is comfortably set after ②.

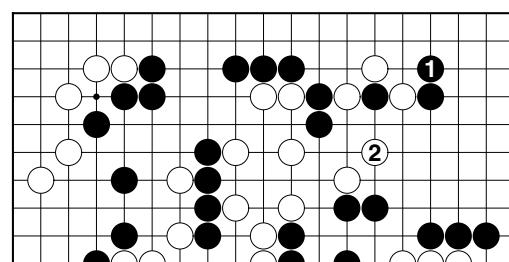


Diagram 29

⑯ was slack, said Go. The *Yomiuri* report described it as a knee-jerk move. Go may have been trying to keep the time pressure on Fujisawa. Correct play was ① as in Diagram 30. If White persists with ② and so on, he loses quickly.

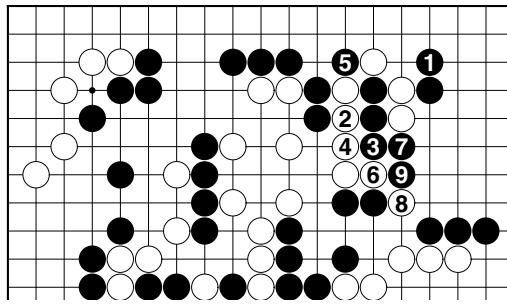


Diagram 30

White would therefore have to replace Diagram 30 with Diagram 31. Even if the White group lives here, the result is a win for Black.

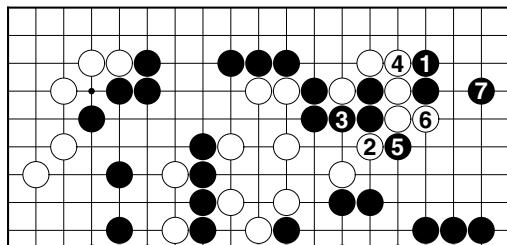


Diagram 31

Another commentator suggested Diagram 32 for 15.

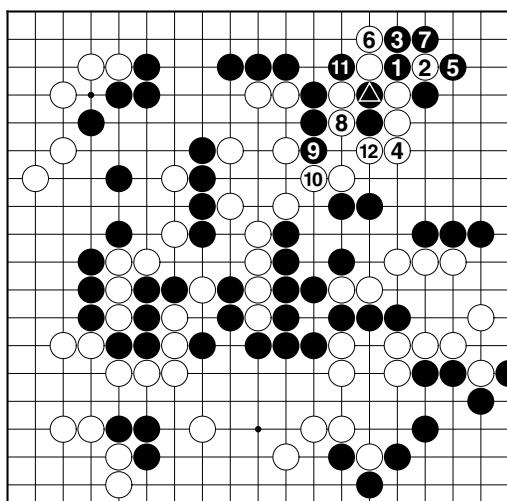


Diagram 32 (13 at Δ)

Since this line ends in death after the throw-in, White would actually switch ④ to ① in Diagram 33. Then he can make something in the corner, but Black will still be content.

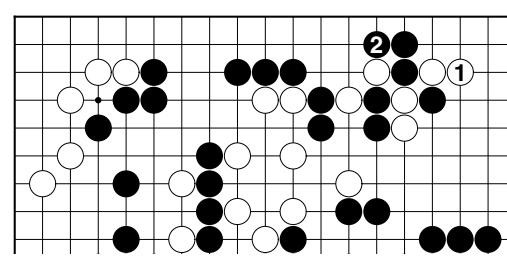


Diagram 33