

CHAPTER ONE: COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF HOW TO PLAY GO

The common misunderstandings focused on here will become much more clear when we look at the games, but an initial overview of what I will be pointing out will be useful.

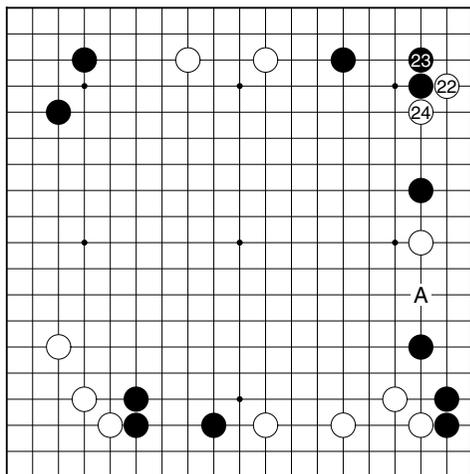
An extremely pervasive problem that kyu players have is *following your opponent*. That is, when your opponent makes a move you automatically respond in the same local area. This implies that your opponent knows which area of the board is the most important to play in at this moment. However, when you remember that your opponent is also a kyu player, you should realize that there is a very good possibility that he is mistaken. Except in an obviously urgent situation, that is, one in which your opponent will do great damage immediately if you do not respond (this is usually a matter of life and death) you should always take a moment before you respond to look around the board to see if there is not a bigger play elsewhere. This is important at every stage of the game—the opening, the middle game, and the endgame.

Following your opponent is an aspect of the general problem of *not paying attention to the whole board* when you play. Kyu level games usually include a lot of local interactions that involve both players ignoring much bigger possibilities elsewhere. This problem also shows up as *making slow plays*, which are plays that accomplish much less than could be accomplished by playing elsewhere. Slow plays often occur because of automatically connecting against a peep or an atari without considering whether it is the best/biggest thing you can do or playing atari just because you can or automatically protecting against a cut.

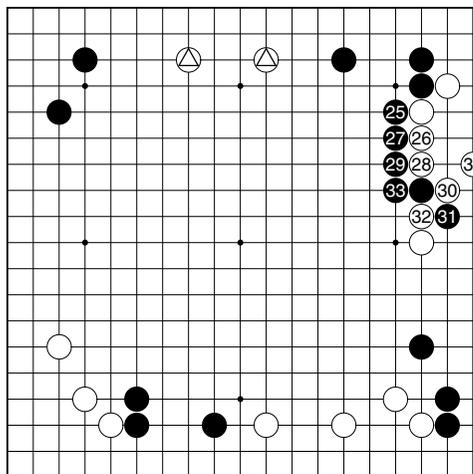
Another common misunderstanding is *not taking sente seriously enough*. Sente in go is extremely important; it is power and freedom—these are things you should want to have, just like in life. You should always find it painful to take gote and hence you should always check to see if it is really necessary to do so.

A somewhat different common problem is *assuming that your opponent's areas are bigger than your own*. This is sometimes referred to as *the red eye problem*, that is, being jealous of your opponent's potential. This problem emerges when you fail to compare your opponent's areas to your own. Precise counting is not the issue here; the problem is not even making rough estimates of the **relative** size of your and your opponent's areas. Kyu play-

White should immediately help his weak stone by extending to A, but White becomes focused on the upper right corner and worries that it is getting too big. ②② is a possible way to play there, but White is losing his whole board focus. Black defends correctly and White hanes at ②④. White is engaging in wishful thinking; White sees that if Black plays on top of ②④ he can run along the third line and connect to his isolated stone.



22 - 24



25 - 34

Black apparently was concerned about connecting to ①, but he should attack White with ②⑤ at ①, separating White into two weak groups. This is obviously a much better plan. Black is following his opponent blindly.

However, Black allows White's wish to come true, pushing along with ②⑤, etc. This is a case of Black following White without thinking through what is happening. He builds thickness where White already has the ① stones in place, erasing the thickness. This makes no sense. Moreover, he gives White a great result, allowing White to connect to his weak stone. See Diagram 1.

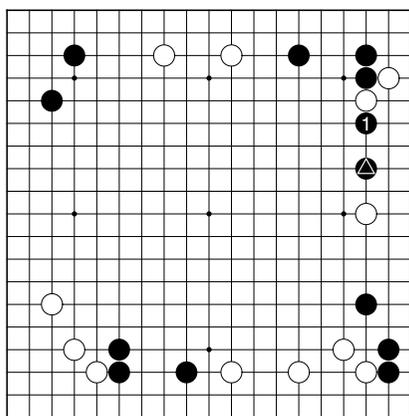
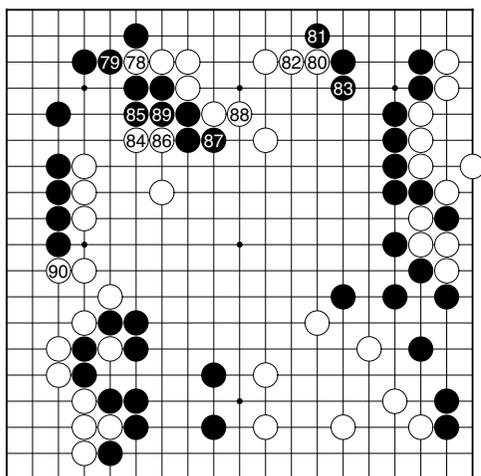


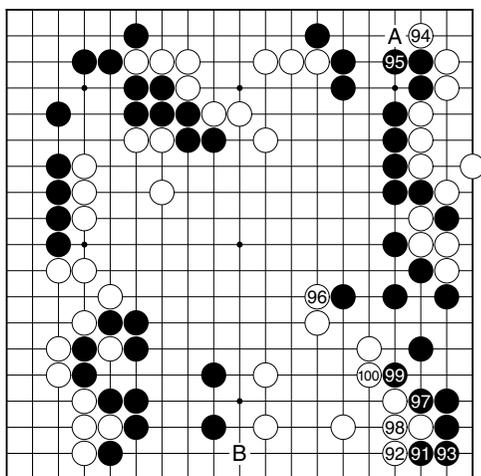
Diagram 1

We can say that go is about three things: freedom, space, and speed. These are basic human values and their essential role in go is part of the reason the game has attracted millions of players for thousands of years. In go, the

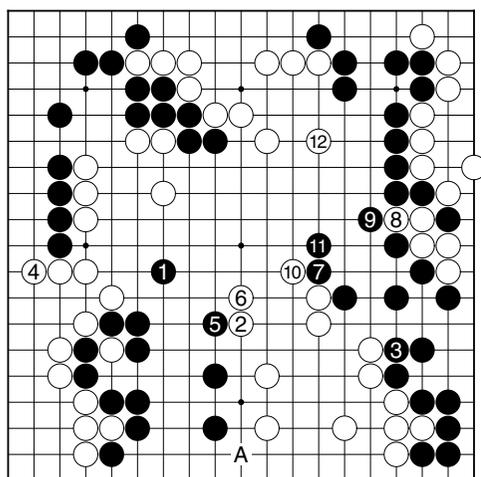


78 – 90

Black gains ground in the lower right corner with 91 and 93, but he should block at A with 95. The cut Black is protecting against is not a problem. 95 gives White a big benefit, including sente. White should end with gote here. White then continues the wishful thinking about the center. Playing 96 at B is much better. Black then uses sente to get more profits.



91 – 100



101 – 112

80 is another example of not following the opponent. That this happens often in this game is a sign of its higher quality. However, 83 is following the opponent—this is a very small play and not necessary. White settles some territory in the center and then makes the big move at 90. White is definitely ahead in the game.

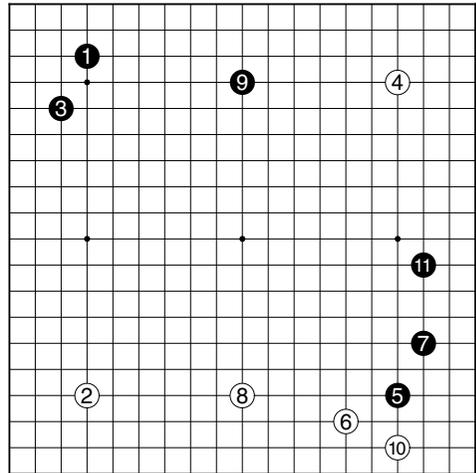
Black also ignores the big play at the bottom and White follows as both players fantasize about the center. Then Black makes a very slow play with 3. Black is not thinking about the game as a whole. He is behind and cannot afford to make such a small play. 4 is good although the double sente play at A is bigger. Both players then follow each other in the center again. The monkey jump from 4 on the left side is bigger.

CHAPTER FOUR: A 1 KYU vs. 2 KYU GAME

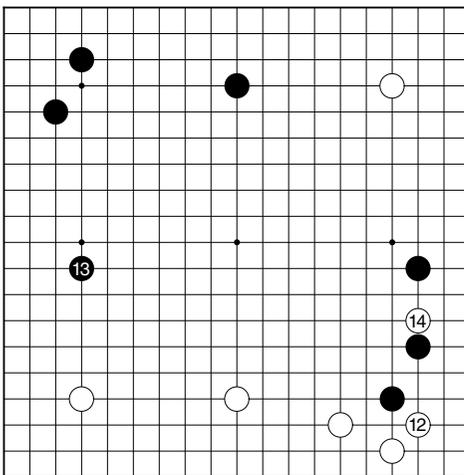
We have seen now that the gap between an 8 kyu player and a 4 kyu is not that difficult to cross. Some additional tactical knowledge is involved, of course, but not knowledge of difficult or highly complicated things. Nor is it necessary to be able to read out long, complex sequences. What is needed is the elimination of a few common misunderstandings about how to play the game. A small change in your understanding has a surprisingly big impact. Next we will see that at the top of the kyu ranking, the common misunderstandings are much less present, but not yet completely eliminated.

This is a no komi game between a 1 kyu (Black) and a 2 kyu. The initial opening moves are okay. White's going into the corner with ⑩ is also okay. Black's extension with ⑪ is a relatively new way of playing and is fine. Up to this point both players are paying attention to the whole board.

It's White's turn now and it is obvious that the left side is the biggest open area.



1 – 11



12 – 14

However, White continues in the lower right corner with ⑫. This is clearly a slow move from the perspective of the whole board. Black correctly does not follow his opponent by responding in the lower right, but plays in the biggest area with ⑬. Large areas remain open in the lower left and the upper right, but White is focused on the lower right. ⑭ again ignores the whole board. White also indulges in wishful thinking, hoping to gain a big benefit here if Black makes a mistake.