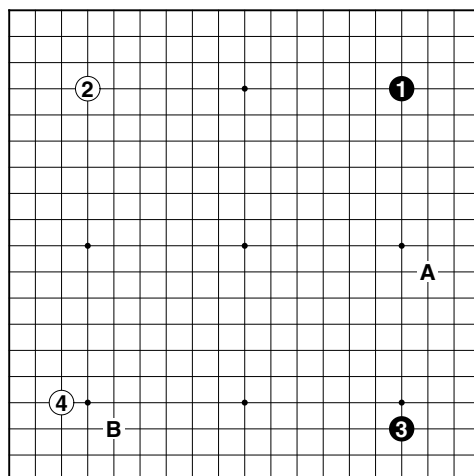


The game we are going to analyze is a very famous one. It is the decisive game of the best-of-five-game finals as a result of which Lee won his first world title, the Tongyang Securities Cup. Lee's opponent was Rin Kaiho of Japan, who was a top player at the time, having won both the Meijin and the Honinbo titles in Japan several times, as well as the international Fujitsu two years before, defeating China's number one player Nie Weiping in the finals. Rin has a very solid way of playing, making it difficult for his opponents to find any mistakes to exploit. Although Lee was dominating the Korean titles at the time, this was not seen as very significant, and at seventeen, Lee was clearly the underdog. However, at this point in the title match, the score was tied at two games each, and everyone was beginning to wonder if there was going to be a new record set for the youngest world champion.

Lee's style is calm and solid. Generally, he is not looking for dramatic developments, such as killing big groups. His aim is to play solidly without mistakes. The theory is that no one can really know what the best play is. Expecting to make the 100% best move every time is obviously unreasonable. No one can be perfect. So Lee is not looking for perfection and does not expect big, dramatic surprises. He simply aims to attain an average level of efficiency in his moves that is a little better than that of his opponent.

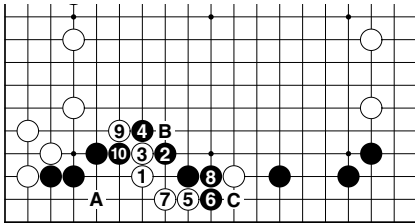
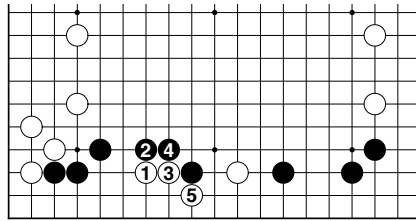
In the game, Rin is Black and Lee is White with a komi of 5.5 points. Basic time is three hours each, with the last five minutes treated as five periods of one minute as byoyomi. The date is January 27, 1992, and the game is played in Korea.

The point of ④ is to counter a possible low Chinese opening by Black. If Black plays at A, White B would be perfectly positioned to counter the influence of Black's structure, the main potential of which is toward the lower left. At the same time, White's corner enclosure would be ideal for developing the left side.



(1 - 4)

This ② is the safe play for Black, but the continuation is good for White. With a simple invasion White destroys a lot of territory. So this would be weak; Rin won't do this.



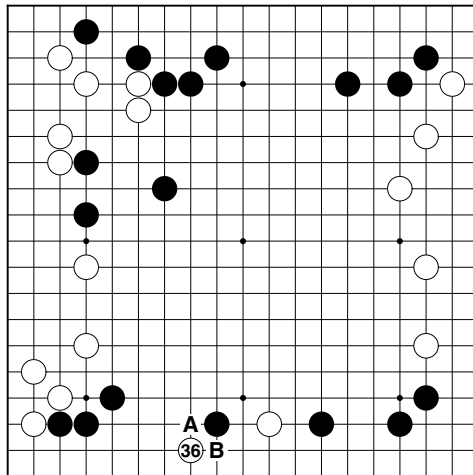
After the diagonal ②, up to this ⑩ is the standard variation. What happens after this depends on the reading ability, the strength of the players. A, B, and C are possible continuations for White, but this is not easy. This is probably why Ben

didn't like this: it's unclear and complicated.

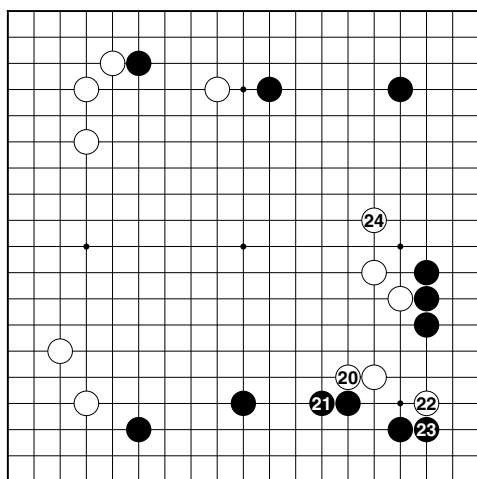
1 dan: Right.

Well, it's exactly the same for Lee Changho. It's not clear what will happen in this case, and Lee does not like uncertainty. He wants to avoid risks like this. This could lead to confusion, and the game could be decided here. So watch what Lee does. Of course, it is not that Lee can't handle such complications; it's just that he sees no reason to take such chances. That would not be a "calm and solid" way of playing.

This is the game move. Here things becomes interesting. Lee believes the opening remains mysterious, so he has focused on studying the middle and endgame. This is an example of the result: this move is Lee's invention. Black has only two choices: A or B. This is Lee's style, to give his opponent two choices and say, "Okay, you pick." Again, he shows his opponent respect. But he makes what was potentially complicated become simple. If Black descends to B, White pushes up at A, which is clearly good for White as it splits Black's left side position. Black must play A; he can't give up his three stones to the left.



(36)

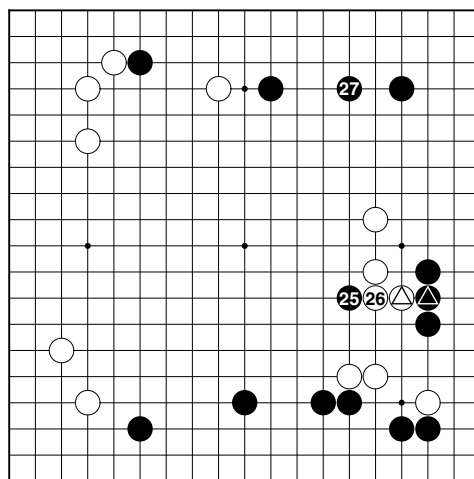


(20 – 24)

Lee doesn't like to leave unfinished shapes that his opponent can attack, but 20 and 22 are nevertheless a surprise. White seems to be helping Black secure a large territory, pushing on the fifth line and solidifying a position that could have been easily invaded. Actually, Lee is keeping the game in balance; he has already secured some territory so he allows Black to get some, even taking gote, in return for center influence. Lee is also

simplifying the situation, and he is not letting Black create a large, complicated fight. Chang's whole-board plan is being effectively countered.

25 is a good move, threatening to separate White. Lee gives his opponent full respect by connecting at 26. This creates an empty triangle and makes the \triangle - \triangle exchange a bad one for White, but Lee is not bothered. "Good move," he seems to say, "I'll respond, of course." White's stones are now firmly connected.



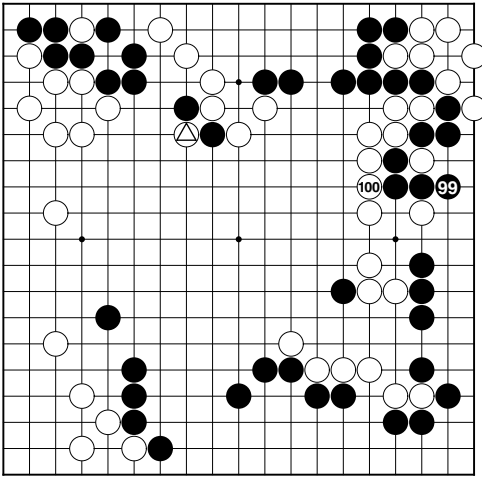
(25 – 27)

Black protects his weakest area with 27.

Where would you play next as White?

1 dan: I think I would attach on top of the single black stone in the upper left. Now that Black is stronger at the top, his extending this stone would be more of a problem.

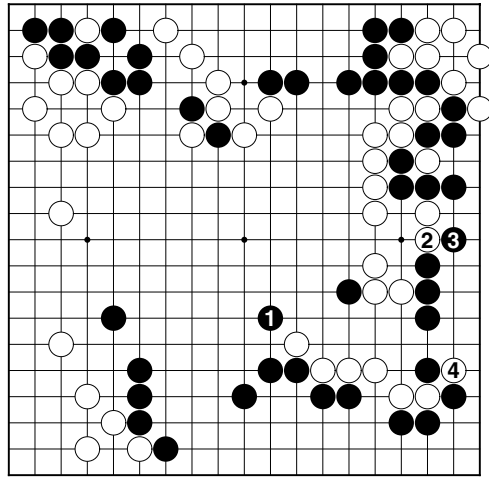
4 kyu: I would be inclined to play on the left side around the star point. That's the big area.



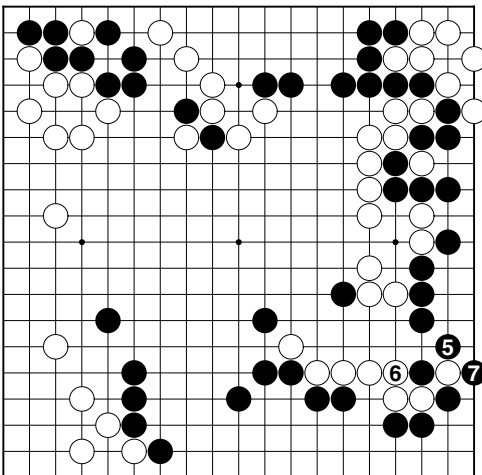
Black saves his stones on the upper right edge with 99 and White blocks on the outside. This is a dramatic success for White. Not only is his group in the upper right corner alive, but, thanks to \triangle and the originally “dubious” moves in the lower right, White now has significant center potential. Lee has managed to bring the game back into balance and cancel Black’s advantage.

(99 – 100)

① is a good move, reducing White’s center potential while expanding Black’s. Before he does anything in the center, which will be complicated and risky, Lee exploits a number of small weaknesses in Black’s position to gain some small benefits. Collecting these safe profits as soon as possible is typical of him. ② and ④ are clearly sente.



(101 – 104)



(105 – 107)

The sente sequence here solidifies the connection between White’s stones above. Lee habitually makes his positions as safe as feasible. We have already seen that this has obvious benefits in a ko fight.