

## Epilogue

### Applying What You've Learned

If this book has successfully realized its design intent, a double digit Kyu reader who finishes it should have acquired a set of new ideas which provide a much improved understanding of how high level Go is played. That's a necessary first step, but real, sustained improvement will only result when those ideas have been permanently embedded in your thinking processes, so that their application has become an automatic, almost instantaneous response, rather than requiring the conscious application of a mental checklist. To realize that goal, there is no adequate substitute for playing many, many games, getting practical experience in implementing those ideas in the face of determined and competent opposition.

But that raises a serious problem for most beginners/intermediates, because they will typically be playing most of their games against "equal" or only somewhat stronger opposition. The difficulty this presents is that the caliber of those opponents is not likely to be sufficiently high to afford the opportunity to confront (and therefore learn to counter) the most incisive moves. The unfortunate consequence is that it will often be possible to get by and even prevail with inferior plays that the far stronger opponents you will encounter later in your Go career will almost certainly severely punish. And so, despite your best efforts, by playing against only equal or marginally stronger opponents you will almost necessarily be learning many "things that ain't so", which will therefore later have to be unlearned if you are to make the much desired advance to the higher skill levels.

Fortunately, it's relatively easy to transcend this important difficulty by watching/studying the games of professionals and amateurs who are strong enough to make few egregious errors. In earlier, less technically sophisticated times, being able to watch such strong players on any kind of consistent basis was impossible for any but the relatively few fortunate individuals who lived in communities in which there was a large local Go club with sufficiently strong members. But today, being able to do this is feasible for everyone, 24/7, through the advent of the internet!

**KGS** And **IGS** are by far the largest internet Go communities in the world, and also the preferred home of many of the world's top ranked professionals, a number of whom play there regularly, albeit mostly anonymously. For these reasons, they're my preferred choice. But some of the ethnic Go servers (especially the Chinese and Korean) are perhaps even stronger, so for those for whom the language barrier isn't a problem they form an excellent (or even superior) alternative.

But watching the games of professionals or the very highest rated amateurs is IMHO not the best way to proceed, at least for the "average" double digit beginner/intermediate! The reason is that the highly refined technique and exquisite positional judgment of these

ultra-strong players enables them to employ strategy that is often essentially incomprehensible to anyone not close to their own stratospheric skill level. So until you've reached at least low single digit Kyu rating you will be well advised to concentrate your watching on players in the 1d to 5d range, where the strategy employed will usually be more or less comprehensible to you, while the protagonists' technique will still be sufficiently well developed to minimize most egregious errors.

But even that isn't sufficient, because in order to really profit from your watching it must be an active rather than a merely passive experience!

What this means is that move-by-move you must mentally assume the role of each player in turn, evaluating the whole board situation, performing your own SWOT Analysis, and deciding on what you believe should be the best next move. Then as the player actually makes his move you must compare that with your own idea, and, in the many cases in which they differ, try to figure out why the move actually played was preferable to your own choice.

Since this process of analyzing the differences will typically take much more time than is available between moves in real time, in order to be able to adequately conduct this kind of analysis, it will usually be necessary to save the game and then replay it later at your own pace. Although that may seem to be a lot of extra work, the payoff for going through this exercise on a regular basis can be immense! The ultimate result will be that, perhaps slowly and possibly quickly but in any event surely, you will begin noticing that your own move choices and those of the strong players you are watching will become identical more and more of the time, as your playing strength soars as well!

If ever there was a "royal road" to Go mastery, this is it! And it's fun as well - "the best of all possible worlds".

Enjoy!