

# American GO Association

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## The 2005 World Amateur Go Championship and Meeting of the International Go Federation

*by Thomas Hsiang 7D  
US representative and guest official*

*EDITOR'S NOTE: By his outstanding play in recent US Open tournaments, Mr. Hsiang had also earned the right to play for the US in the WAGC tournament. He placed seventh in a field of 65 players, with a 6-2 result.*

I was in Japan from May 21 to 31 to attend the International Go Federation (IGF) meetings and to participate in the 26<sup>th</sup> World Amateur Go Championship (WAGC) tournament held in Nagoya. Below is my report to AGA.

### The IGF Board Meeting and General Meeting

#### **The new Board make-up**

Kudo Norio was elected IGF president to replace Kato Masao. For his replacement as the Office Director, Fujisawa Kazunari was elected. Son of the famous Shuko, Fujisawa impressed me as dynamic and smart. We can expect a more active role of the Office Director in the future. For the term-expiring Director positions, Maria Dolores Puerta of Venezuela was re-elected and Umesawa Yukari of Japan was newly elected. *Hikaru-no-Go* fans will surely be glad to hear about the latter! Her election also puts IGF in good standing with IOC that requires 20%+ female make-up of the board.

#### **The Intellympic Games (IG)**

Erik Puyt, IGF vice president, reported on the continuing development of Go on the international scene. IGF is now a provisional member of the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) and expects to become the 99<sup>th</sup> permanent member in 2006. During the April 19, 2005 GAISF meeting in Berlin, the four mind sports, chess, bridge, go, and checkers, as represented by FIDE, WBF, IGF, and FMJD, agreed to found a new group, the World Mind Sports Confederation (WMSC) under the aegis of GAISF.

The long-term mission of the new confederation is to push collectively for the inclusion of mind sports in the Olympic movement. More immediately, it seeks to have Go and checkers listed as IOC-recognized sports (bridge and chess already have that status) and to organize the first IG event on the 2008-09 time frame.

The Declaration document and the minutes of the first WMSC meeting will be forwarded to the AGA president, as will a letter from IGF to support its members in seeking recognition of Go by the individual NOC's.

IGF is asking for a one-time, voluntary contribution from its members to fund its participation in WMSC. An example of the use of this fund is the presentation to IOC for recognition of Go as a sport. At the IGF meeting, Japan, Korea, and EGF agreed to make contributions. I urge the AGA to consider a contribution as well.

### **Rules**

At the request of Terry Benson and Chris Kirschner, the AGA representatives to the Ing group on international rules, I brought up the question of the necessity of international rules for Go as an Olympic game and suggested that the Ing group be designated as the body to devise such a rule set. Discussions followed. It was pointed out that rules debates and rules evolution are common and ongoing among many Olympic sports and should not be a hindrance to Go participation in the Intellympics. The IGF Board generally welcomed the work by the Ing group and, if an international rule set emerges, would likely adopt it for broad use. As for the request for IGF designation of the Ing group, it was decided to wait until the group makes an official request to IGF

### **Other Business**

Three new members were admitted to IGF, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, and Cyprus. A long-idle member, the Go Club of the Philippines, was expelled. Germany was elected to replace Japan as the IGF auditor. Continuing development of the World Rating System was discussed and suggestions were made. A request by the Korean Baduk Association (KBA) for IGF to support a new international amateur tournament to be held in October 2006 was favorably discussed, some concerns were also voiced. KBA president Kim In visited IGF later in the week and received the IGF response. More will follow. I have made direct contact with a North Korean sports official, Mr. Ryu Song-II. He speaks fluent English and welcomes contact with American go players. I have his contact information, including email address, for anyone interested.

## **The 26th World Amateur Go Championship**

### **The field**

This year, a total of 65 countries and regions participated, making the WAGC event the largest ever. The favorites were China; the three pros-in-waiting, North Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan; the one pro from South Korea (he obtained the pro rank after registering for the WAGC); and an old guard from Japan, Kikuchi Yasuro (sensei of Yamashita Keigo, among others). Outside of these six, the field is wide open. Eight or nine EGF 6d's, plus US, Canada, and Australian players vie for the ten top spots. The final finish was China (8-0), North Korea (7-

1), Taiwan, South Korea, Germany, Japan, US, Hong Kong, Canada, Australia, closely parallel to the general perception of player-strength ranking. In the Swiss system with so few rounds, luck of the draw is important in the final standing. The tournament organizers recognized this and did well to give awards to all ten finishers.

### **Surprises**

To me, the biggest surprise was the strength of play by the North Korean and the Vietnamese players. These two countries are closed to the Go world and little is known about their players. The North Korean player displayed an amazing familiarity with new *josekis*, adding his own innovations that surprised the top field. This indicates the maturity of their training system and the depth of their research. In my game with him, I fell for a trap move in a new *joseki* and had to fight my way back throughout the game. This also happened in the North-South Korean game; the South Korean got trapped early on and lost his composure (this, according to the Chinese pros watching the game). The Vietnamese player listed himself as 3 dan but scored 5 wins, including two against EGF 6 dan's.

Another surprise was the Mongolian player, Tungalag Ravjir, who was also the only female player in the field. She displayed an excellent manner and playing strength, defeating three dan-level players on the way to a respectable 3-5 record. I asked the Chinese Director, Hua Yigang, if China had a hand in training the Mongolian players; he said that he was just as surprised as I was because they know nothing about Go in Mongolia. Ms. Ravjir's efforts earned her the Asada Fighting Spirit Award.

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