

## Report of the 30<sup>th</sup> IGF meetings – 5/24-26/2009

– By Thomas Hsiang

For the duration above, I attended the 30<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting and General Meeting of the International Go Federation, held in parallel with the 30<sup>th</sup> World Amateur Go Championship at Kakegawa City, Shizuoka, Japan. I also met with the officials of the Japan Pair Go Association. Below is a report of the important issues discussed in these meetings.

The IGF Board Meeting was attended by these Directors: Hiromu Okabe, president of IGF and CEO of Denso-Toyota; Runan Wang, VP of IGF and President of the Chinese Weiqi Association; Eduardo Lopez, VP of IGF; Thomas Hsiang, VP of IGF and VP of AGA; Martin Stiassny, VP of EGF; Korsak Chairasmisak, President of Thai Go Association and World Chinese Weiqi Association; Ichiro Tanioka, President of Osaka University of Commerce; Neville Smythe, National Secretary of the Australian Go Association; Young-Gu Cha, proxy for Han Sang-yul, Executive Secretary of the Korean Baduk Association; Maria Dolores Puerta, President of Venezuelan Go Association; and Viktor Bogdanov, VP of Russian Go Federation. The staff members attending were Ei Kanda, IGF Office Manager, and Yuki Shigeno, IGF Secretary. Attending as Advisor to the Board was Mrs. Hiroko Taki, VP of World Pair Go Association.

The first business was the election of a new president. Mr. Okabe submitted his resignation from IGF and recommended that the new Nihon Kiin Chairman, Hideo Otake 9p, be appointed IGF Director and President for 1 year. This was passed unanimously, along with my election as IGF VP, the election of Viktor Bogdanov as Director, the re-election of Maria Puerta as Director, and the election of Australia and US as auditors.

### ***New structure and support for IGF***

IGF's Secretary General Yuki Shigeno reported that a subset of the IGF Directors have been working hard the past two years to bring a broader support base to IGF. Earlier this year, the leaders of China Qiyuan, Korean Kiwon, and Nihon Kiin met in two meetings to discuss a format in which the three bodies will share the support of IGF with a rotating IGF presidency. The meetings were successful in establishing a general agreement to proceed. The operational details are expected to be

worked out this summer and to be presented to the next three-country meeting in August. A transition of the IGF presidency from Japan to China will take place in May 2010.

Separately, in 2007 the IGF Board accepted a proposal to open up a new category of membership, the “Association Members”, intended for cross-national Go organizations and Go foundations. The IGF Statutes were re-written in 2008 to establish this membership. In the first round of implementation, five organizations have applied for admission into IGF: the Japan Pair Go Association, the Korean Amateur Baduk Association, Taiwan Chi-Yuan, Iberoamerican Go Federation, and European Go Federation. The Board accepted JPGA and IAGF as members, leaving the other three applications for further study.

A third development is the establishment of a new organization, “Friends of Go International”, or FGI. Neville Smythe and Korsak Chairasmisak are leading this effort to seek out and bring together international Go promoters and philanthropists to develop resources to support Go. Chairasmisak, president of the Thai Seven-Eleven Chain, is well known in Southeast Asia for his broad and innovative support of Go education in schools. His experience will be key for FGI to move quickly in the next few years to become an integral element of IGF’s Go promotion effort.

A personal note: Two years ago, IGF’s financial status looked grim in the midst of Japan’s economic difficulties. The three-pronged effort outlined above now lends renewed optimism that IGF may yet emerge in good financial shape. This could be a model for the AGA Board to consider.

A second note: Because of internationalization of Go with the new IGF structure and because of the upcoming Asian Games and WMSG’s, the three countries (China, Japan, and Korea) finally decided that there is a need to unify the name of our game in English, henceforth officially as GO and not “Baduk”, “Weiqi”, “Wei-chi”, or “Igo”. Who knows, next we might actually agree on a rule set...

### ***WAGC and other tournaments***

This year WAGC celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the beautiful Shizuoka Prefecture. Starting 2010, WAGC will no longer be held only in Japan. Instead, hosts from around the world will be invited. Another change is

that in the future all participants will pay for their own travel cost.

For 2010, Hangzhou bid and won the hosting right. For 2011, candidate cities have emerged from China, Thailand, and Japan. At this time, it looks like Shimane, Japan (on the north coast of Japan's Honshu, bordering Japan Sea), is the leading candidate.

For other tournaments, the Korean Prime Minister Cup will move back to October this year; the Hi Seoul World Businessman Baduk Fair, the Hangzhou World City-Team tournament, and the Children's Team Tournament (Thailand) will all continue at their traditional times.

International Pair Go Tournament will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary November 14 and 15 at Hotel Edmont, Iidabashi, Tokyo. Included in the celebration is the much-anticipated inauguration of Koichiro Matsuura, current Director General of UNESCO, as the first president of World Pair Go Association.

The World Student Oza, previously supported by Yomiuri Shimbun, was at in danger of being eliminated when Yomiuri pulled out its support earlier this year. Fortunately NKB, a Japanese advertising company and the sponsor of JPGA, came forth as a last-moment white knight to save this tournament for the next few years.

The 2010 Asian Games has announced the inclusion of Go as a competition item. IGF is working with the Asian Go Federation and the Chinese Weiqi Association to coordinate the Go event.

### ***WMSG, IMSA, and WADA***

The 2009 SportAccord was held in Denver in March, the first time the event took place in North America. This is the annual meeting for GAISF (the General Association of International Sports Federations, of which IGF is a member) that provides a forum for international federations to interact with each other and to organize international tournaments. For Go, most important is our engagement with IMSA (the International Mind Sports Association) and WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) during the week.

I participated in all meetings on behalf of IGF. During the IMSA meetings,

we had a long debriefing of the first World Mind Sports Games (WMSG) to tie up some financial loose ends and to plan on the second WMSG. For AGA, we should know that (1) there will be a second WMSG to be held in summer 2013; (2) there are a number of potential hosts for the 2<sup>nd</sup> WMSG, leading off with Dubai and Abu Dhabi; and (3) Go's participation will be similar in scale as in the first WMSG. IMSA itself was re-organized following this round of meetings and I was elected its Secretary General. Chess was assigned to develop a protocol for sponsorship and a set of criteria for bidding by potential WMSG hosts.

I met with WADA officials about Go's compliance with the anti-doping regulations. The issue has become pressing because of the upcoming Asian Games where all participants may be subject to drug testing. Go and Chess have coordinated our efforts in negotiating with WADA to have us placed under the "low risk" category and hence more relaxed testing requirements. Based on these meetings, an implementation plan for Go was drafted and passed by the IGF Board of Directors. The IGF Anti-doping Regulations, a FAQ, the WADA Prohibited List, and the Implementation Plan are available on the IGF website.

For AGA, we need to notify our strong players of the possibility of drug testing when they represent US and they must sign an agreement to subject themselves to testing. A notification letter has been drafted and will be sent out by the AGA President. In addition, the AGA Statutes need to be updated to include a statement that we agree to comply with the IGF anti-doping policy and regulations.

I should add that, in the three months after the SportAccord, the World Bridge Federation has further pressed WADA on the possibility of completely eliminating out-of-competition testing for mind sports. Go and Chess are fully supporting this effort.

The last business of IMSA was to define criteria for future members. We converged on three: that the game be universal, that the game be a skill game only, and that the federation representing the game be a member of GAISF. Backgammon and poker were refused because of the second criterion, while Scrabble was refused because it is based on English language and hence not "universal".

### ***Miscellaneous***

The D.P.R. Korea problem once again surfaced. The Japanese State Department continues to require North Korea not to use the name “D.P.R. Korea” and its flag. North Korea continues to refuse to attend WAGC under the name “North Korea”. There does not seem to be any resolution in sight.

The development of Go activities in Brunei was reported. A special lecture was given by the Thai Go Association on how to promote Go in schools and colleges. Go activities in Europe, Latin America, and Oceania were reviewed.

During the WAGC, the people from Ranka-online and e-journal were brought together to discuss collaboration between the two teams. As a result, the second half of WAGC was reported with this joint effort. It is planned that the 2010 WAGC in China and other future events will be reported similarly.