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### BETWEEN E5 AND F5

‘Love lasts as long as success endures’ is a well-known adage among World Champions, at least among the World Chess Champions. Botvinnik had a clear preference for the French defence, Alekhine liked his own opening, Kasparov enjoyed playing the Sicilian, as did Fischer with the white pieces (– he had a patent on the move 6. Bc4). There are many observations telling us that a World Champion had to change his opening repertoire during a World Championship match since his opponent outclassed him in the domain where he was assumed to be King. We refrain here from heroic stories on the treatment of the French defence (as experienced by Botvinnik and Smyslov) and the Petroff defence (as experienced by Kasparov and Kramnik). In this Editorial we would focus on another aspect, another game, and an unexpected twist.

A fair game is a game that gives both sides equal opportunities to win. This simple statement is rather difficult to employ in practice. In many games it turns out that having the initiative (i.e., the first move) is an advantage. Such an advantage may even lead to a direct win if all the intricacies of the game are brought to the surface. Once the inequality of the winning chances of both sides are established, the top players and the game aficionados start finding compensation for the second player, e.g., by redefining one or more rules. This should bring back tension, excitement, and entertainment. Examples of compensation are to be seen in the games of Hex, Renju, 9x9 Go, and 19x19 Go.

In this issue of the Journal, the topic of compensation is discussed in an attractive contribution by Simon Billouet, Jean-Baptiste Hoock, Chang-Shing Lee, Olivier Teytaud, and Shi-Jim Yen (see pp. 241-246). Their starting observation is that the program MOGO playing 9x9 Go was able to win many games against professional players, with MOGO playing White, but had difficulties to win when playing Black. The obvious reason was the height of the usual komi, being 7.5. In their contribution they report on the first two wins by Black against professional players. The report on the games is a pleasure to read, but more fascinating is their analyses of the opening choice in combination with the proposal to change the komi from 7.5 to 6.5. With a komi of 7.5 White’s strategy in 9x9 Go is as follows: “play peacefully, just stabilising two groups, and win.”

The MOGO team deeply analysed the opening E5-G5-G4-C5-C6-B6-D6-F4-F5-G3-H4-H3, which very often leads to a white victory. Their analysis did not result in a move that would lead to a black victory. In their retrograde analysis they arrived at a change of move D6 into C7, with better results for Black. So, it was White’s turn to look for an improvement. This was found by not playing B6 but F4. As one can imagine, this

process was repeated again and again. Currently, the MOGO team is choosing between E5 and F5, both contenders for the very first move.

For the game solvers among our researchers, we now have an additional challenge. You may succeed to solve 9x9 Go with a komi of 7.5 by a forced variation, but the solution may be invalid for 9x9 Go with komi 6.5. It is of interest to see whether komi 7.0 leads to a draw by optimal play by both sides.

Some practical results of komi 7.0 are reported by Shi-Jim Yen, Cheng-Wei Chou, and Hideki Kato (see pp. 235-236). Under the Chinese rules with komi 7.0 it means that Black needs at least 45 points to win, and that 44 points results in a draw.

These two reports are completed by a note by Peter Drake on The Last-Good-Play Policy for Monte-Carlo Go (pp. 221-227). The essence is that a dynamic sampling policy takes advantage of information from previous playouts.

The information given by Guy Haworth is, as always, presented in compact form. Yet, the one-pager (p. 228) contains a wealth of information. Here we single out three statements.

- (1) KQNKRB (517) remains the max DTC record.
- (2) Bourzutschky intends to analyse all games and studies with significant sub-8-man play.
- (3) Questions have been raised about 2,950 of the 67,691 studies in Van der Heijden's remarkable database (2006) ending in the sub-7-man zone, about half of which were already known to be flawed or mis-transcribed.

Of course, the main articles on Chanciness and Time Management are most important. They are a welcome addition to our knowledge in this area.

The final conclusion of the decade 2000-2009 is that our knowledge on games has been refined to a large extent, whereas the finest detail is as far away as the Higgs particle in physics.

#### Reference

Heijden, H. van der (2006). <http://home.studiesaccess.nl/heijd336/home.html>. Study Database III in pgn format.

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