

Chapter 7 - A Sampling Of Major Fighting Scenarios

What we've done in this book thus far is to explain how to:

- Identify the important weak groups which should be the focus of play.
- Use the SWOT analysis technique to develop an appropriate action plan for exploiting those weak groups.

In this chapter, we illustrate a select few of the more important of those action plans.

As noted earlier, the first step in attacking a weak group will usually be a threat to enclose, because only enclosed groups can be killed. That threat will then typically elicit a response in which the target group attempts to flee, usually either into the open center or toward friendly stones. Our focus in this final chapter is on the methods for taking best advantage of that flight.

In most cases the attacker's only reasonable expectation should be that the attacked stones will succeed in escaping, so that any profit resulting from the attack will typically be realized elsewhere (usually, but not always, nearby). Consequently, all-out attempts to surround and kill will usually not only prove futile but unproductive as well. (Of course if the defender errs and the opportunity for a kill or other major coup does present itself, it should be seized, with alacrity and thanks!)

Capping

This is the commonest and most basic attacking technique - most often appropriate, but (as we show below) not always!

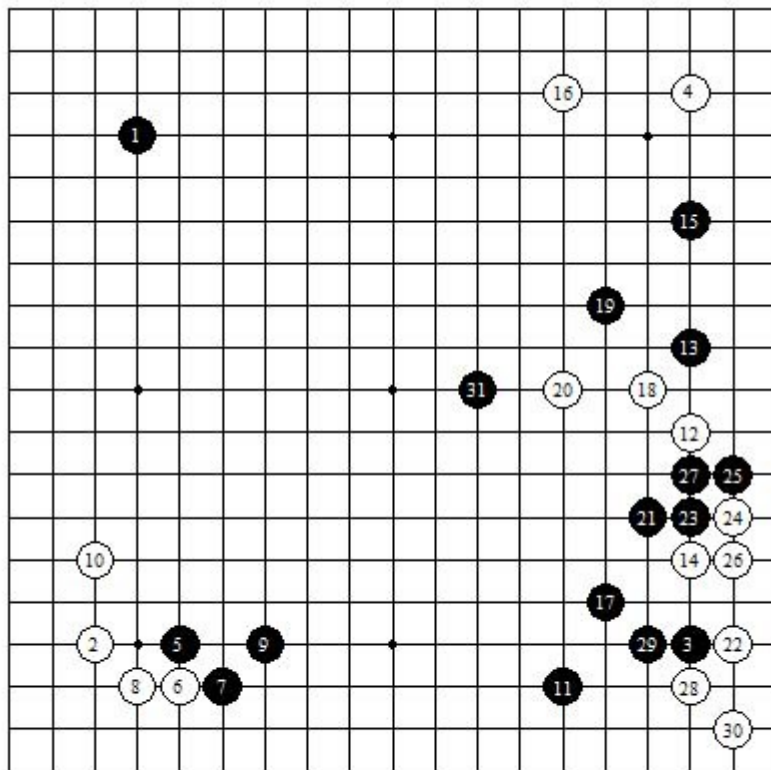


Figure 1
B1 - B31
White To Play

Figure 1 In this 2004 AGA-Ing Pro Cup match between Hui ren Yang 1P (White) and Mingjiu Jiang 7P (Black), B31 has capped White's weak 3- stone W12-20 group, blocking its easy path into the center.

Although Black has no reasonable expectation of killing these stones, this is nevertheless the best way to exploit their weakness, aiming to profit elsewhere by harassing them.

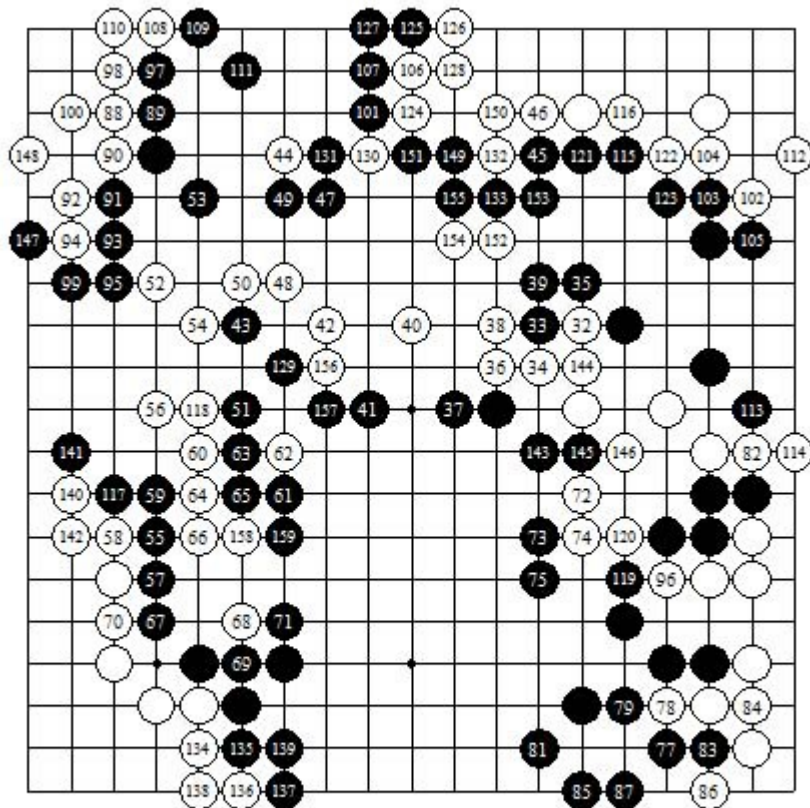


Figure 2
W32-B159
Game Continuation

Figure 2 This is how the game actually continued. (The details of the complex tactics involved are far beyond our present interest, and so will not be discussed here.)

White resigned after B159 because the impenetrable Black lower center moyo is just too large for White to overcome.

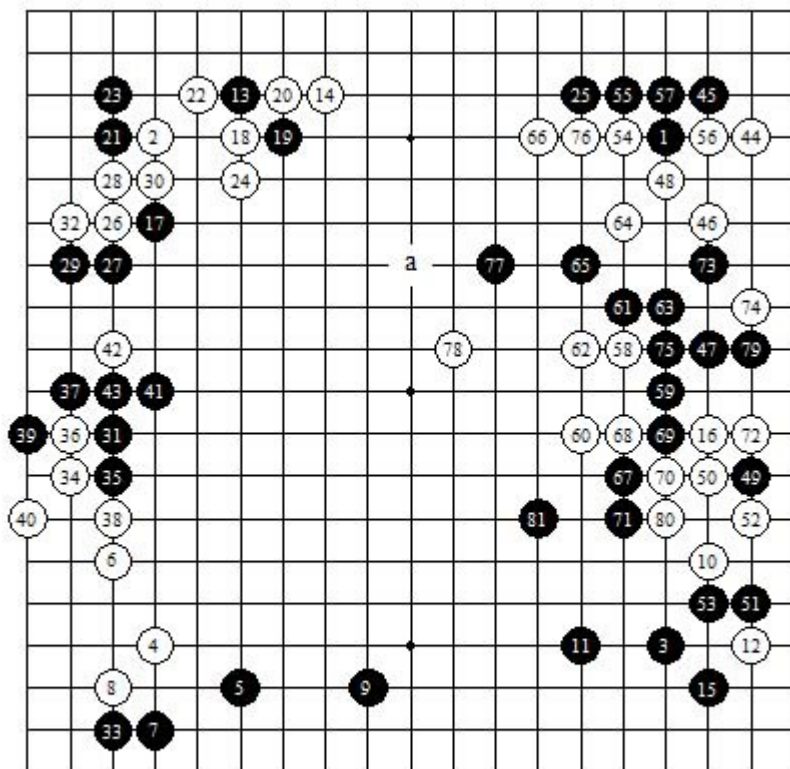


Figure 3
B1 - B81

Figure 3 in this 2005 North American Masters match between Jie Li 9D (White) and Thomas Hsiang 7D (Black), Black has just erred with B81. Instead, he should have secured his large weak group via the one point skip to “a”.

Now White can exploit this oversight - but how?

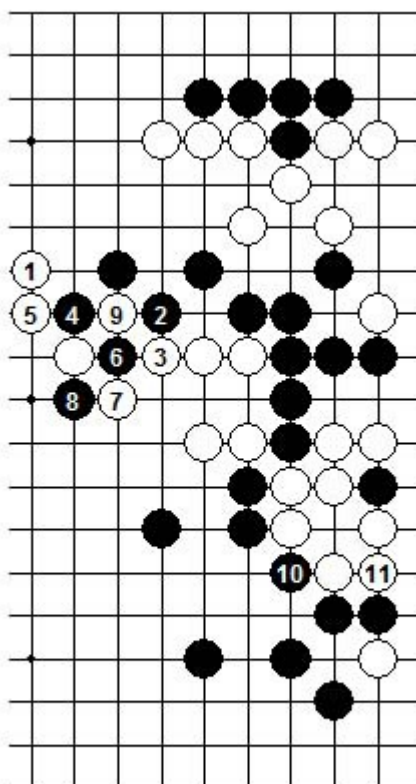


Diagram 1
Capping Leads to Ko

Diagram 1 Capping with W1 seems like the logical move, but here it's not best because it leads to a Ko which might involve dangerous complications.

Instead, 9D Li thought through those complications, and came up with an even better idea.

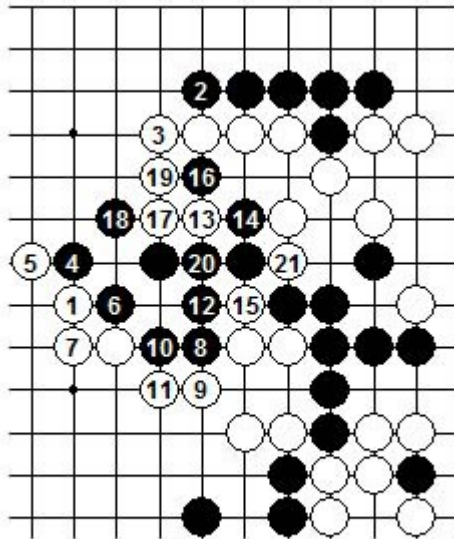


Diagram 2
Actual Game Continuation
Black Is Lost

Diagram 2 Instead of capping, the diagonal move of W1 here is even better, because it precludes that Ko possibility.

Next, Black thought it prudent to strengthen (and expand) his corner with B2 before answering W1.

Unfortunately that turned out badly because B2 induced W3, which then contributed importantly to White's attack on the weak Black group below.

After the B2, W3 exchange, Black had time to attach with B4, and at that point he must have believed that he was going to survive White's attack relatively unscathed.

But that expectation was dashed when the peep of W13 and the following W15 set up the later cut of W21, trapping the 8 Blacks on the right and leaving the rest of the big weak Black group fleeing with only 1 eye.

Only a few moves later Black was forced to resign.

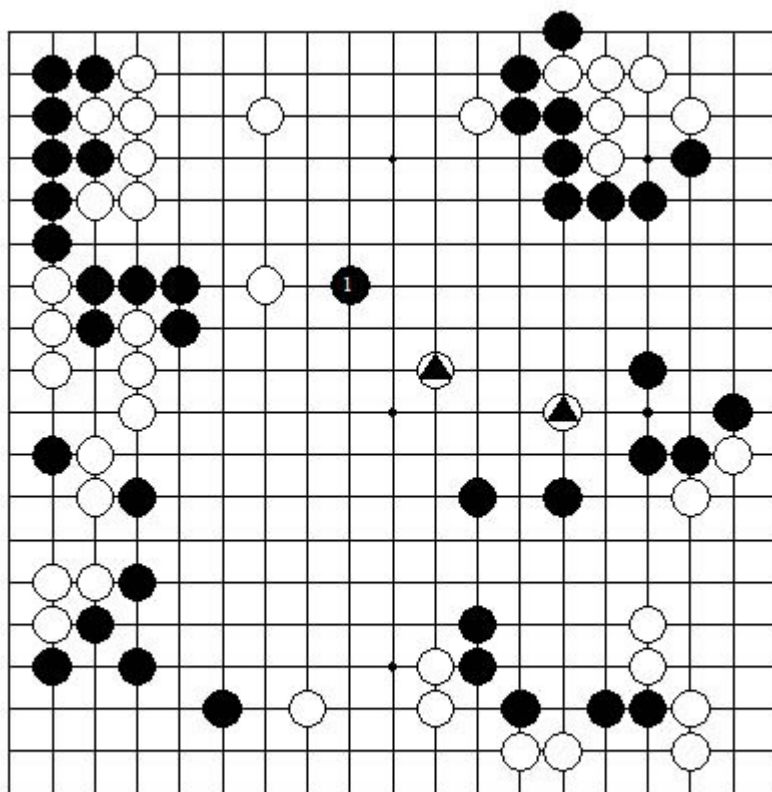


Diagram 3
B1 Aims To Prevent White's Connection

Diagram 3 In this 2006 Paris Open Championship Tournament game between Motoki Noguchi 7P (White) and Fan Hui 2P (Black), B79 (B1 here) was played to make it difficult for White's two marked stones to safely connect to his friendly stones in the upper left.

This put the onus on White to either break through Black's encirclement - highly unlikely in this position - or to make life in this immediate area in the face of Black's surrounding strength.

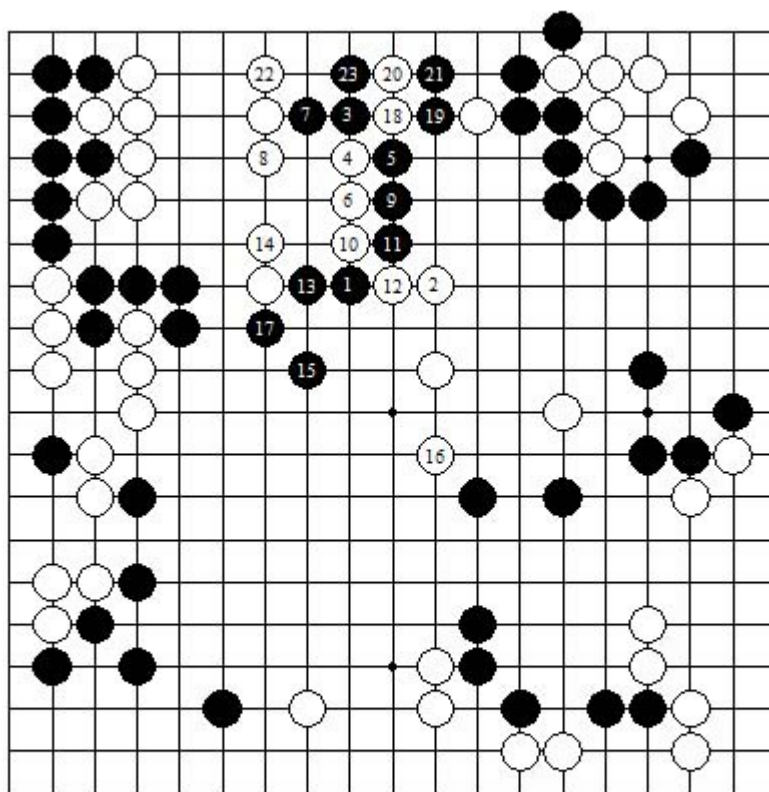


Diagram 4
Game Continuation
Black Profits At The Top
While White Is Not Yet Alive In The Center

Diagram 4 As this game developed, instead of trying too hard to enclose and kill the weak White center group, Black instead wisely chose to make profit at the top without unduly strengthening the target group. This succeeded so well that White resigned before the weak group's ultimate fate could even be decided!

This was superb strategy, and exemplifies how such an exploitation should ideally be carried out.

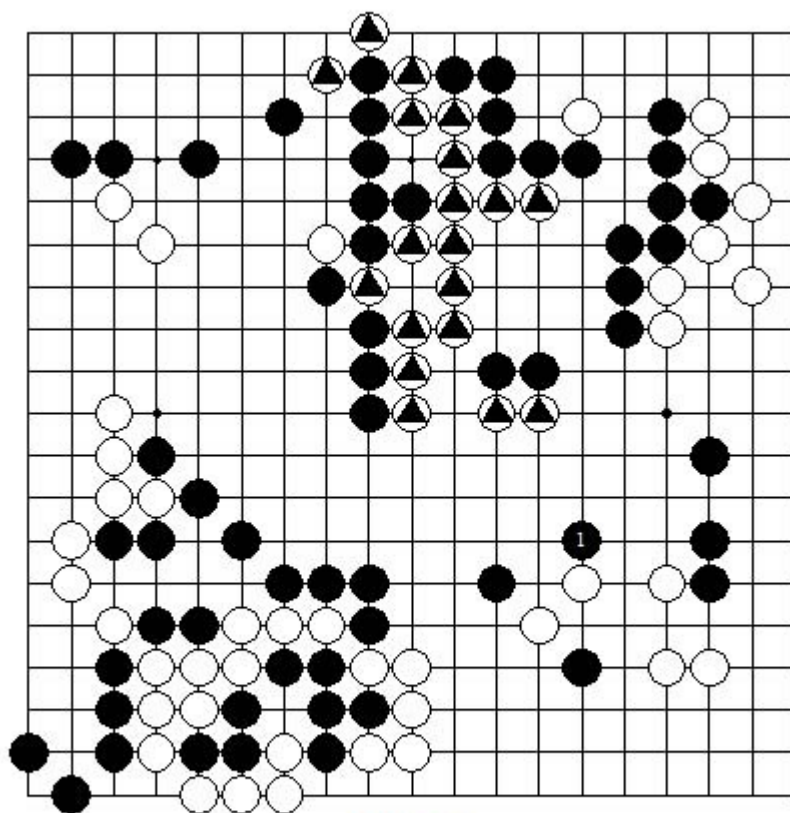


Diagram 5
B1 Aims To Prevent White's Connection

Diagram 5 In this game between a 2D and 3D, Black has suffered a huge loss of 8 stones in the lower left, so his only possible chance to win is if he can somehow manage to kill the large still eyeless marked White group in the upper center.

Since this group's only realistic chance to connect with friendly stones is with the Whites in the lower right, the attachment of B1 is a fine (and typical) way for Black to try to prevent that connection. Although that strategy didn't succeed in this game, it in no way detracts from the general principle involved.

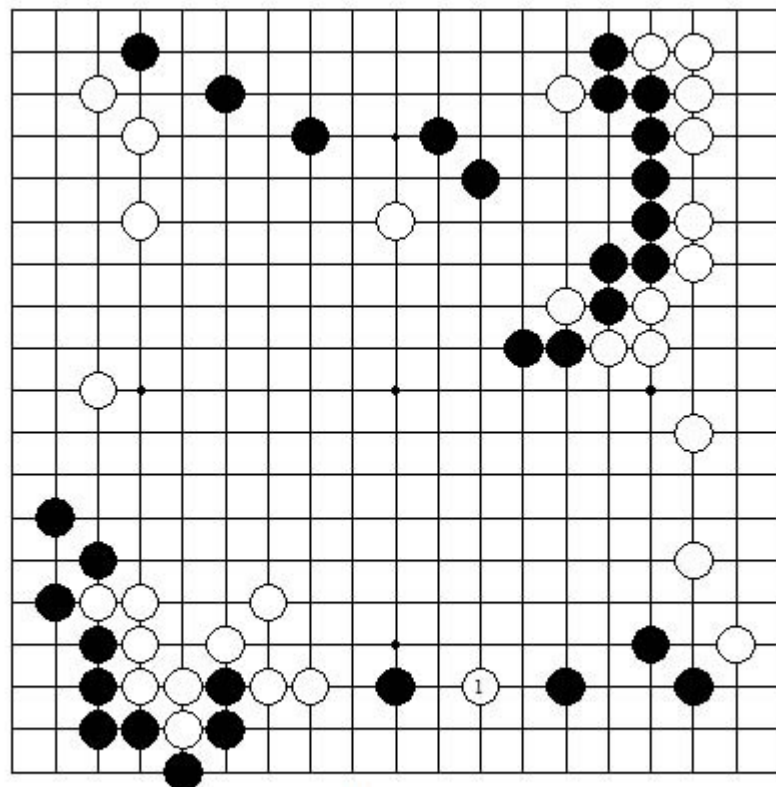


Diagram 6
How Should Black Respond To W1?

Diagram 6 In this game between two 4D's, when W1 invades Black's thin lower right position, with White's strength on both the bottom left and right side to run to, it would seem that this stone is not only quite safe, but actually may be stronger than the lone Black to its left as well.

But is it really? Black's clever response gives the answer.

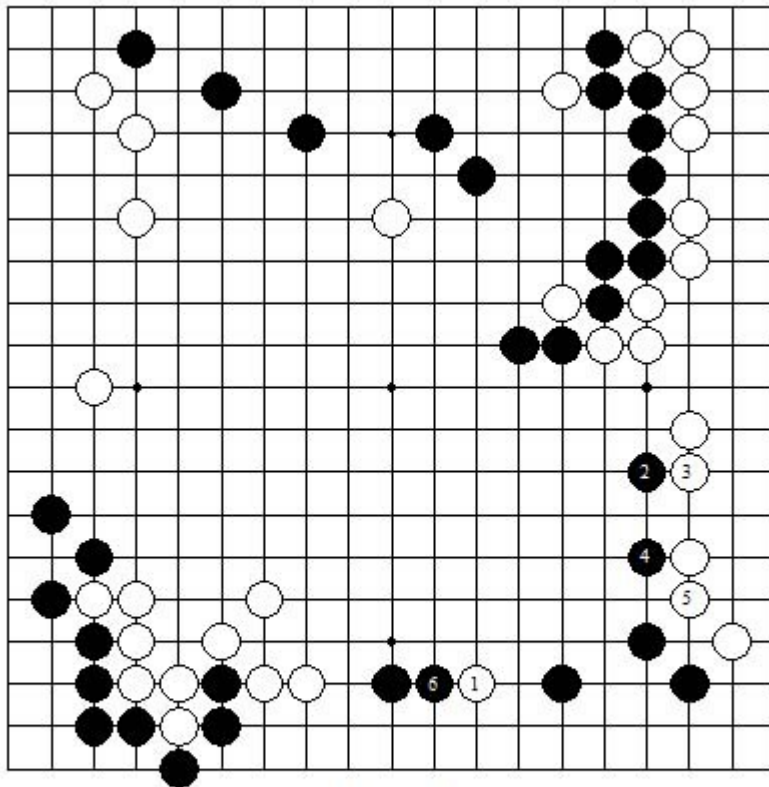


Diagram 7
Black's Clever Kikashi Of B2 and 4
Prevent White's Potential Connection On The Right.
Then B6 Strengthens Black And Leaves W1 Weak!

Diagram 7 After the twin kikashis of B2 and 4 followed by the attachment of B6, the lone White stone has now become weak and can only run straight up into the center, where Black is already strong.

The price that Black has had to pay for this is that W3 and 5 have given White a considerable profit on the right, but if Black's following center attack succeeds (as it did in this game), his compensation there will more than make up for that loss.

So this strategy is inherently dangerous, but can be very effective if adequately followed up.

The Steering Attack

Unlike the Cap, which typically offers the capped player several options in response, a properly placed steering attack stone essentially constrains the opponent to running in a single desired direction.

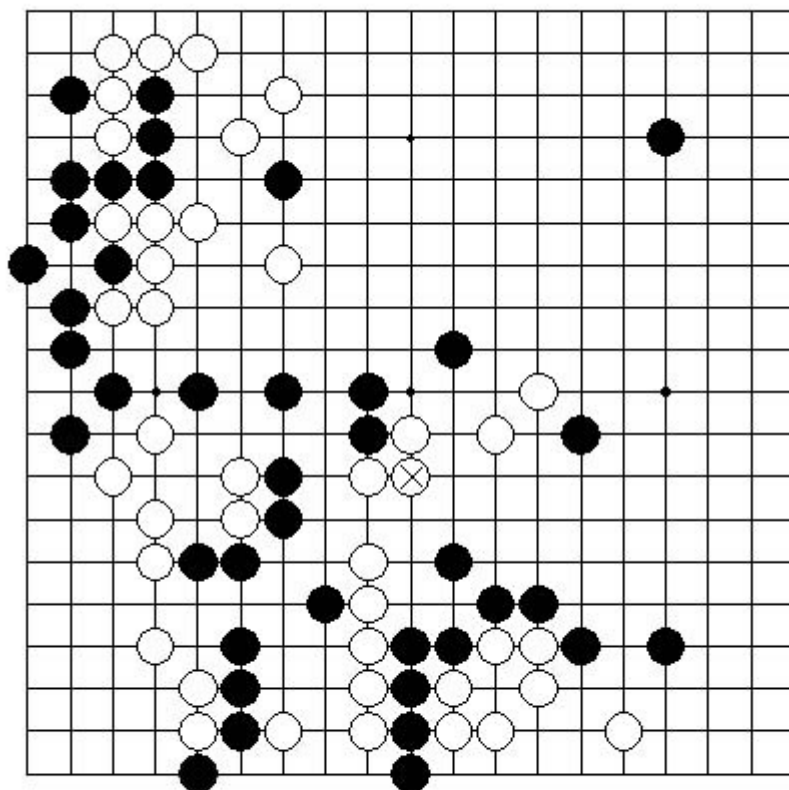


Diagram 8
Where Is Black's Big Continuation Here?

Diagram 8 In this game between two 4D's, White's large weak center group offers Black an ideal opportunity to begin the creation of a large Moyo in Sente by forcing White to move in a desired direction.

Do you see how?

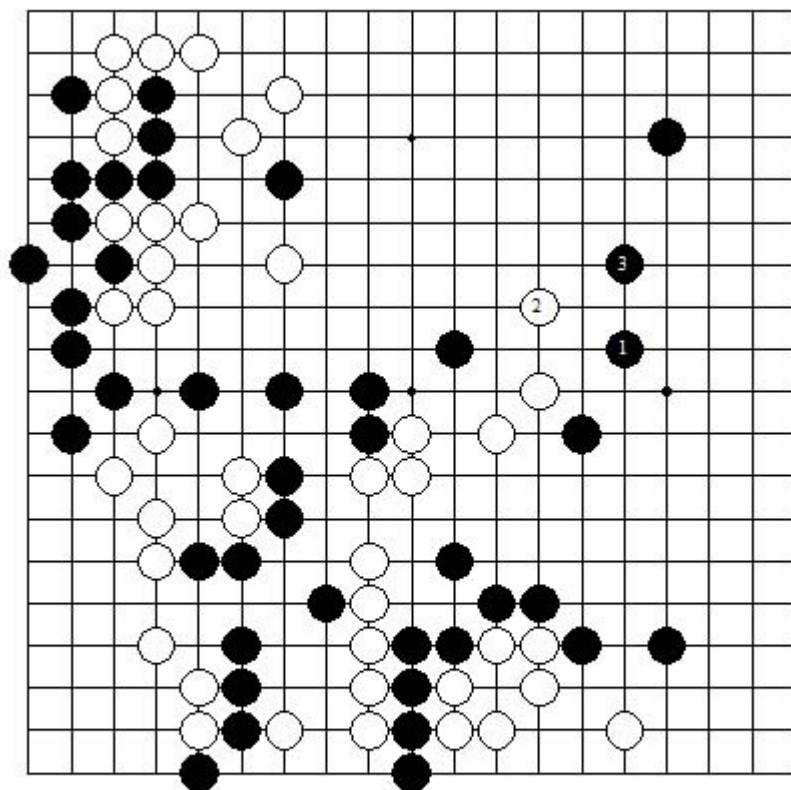


Diagram 9
The Knight's Move of B1 Steers White Into the Open Top,
Allowing B3 To Begin Creating A Huge Moyo On The Right Side

Diagram 9 B1 blocks White's progress to the right, forcing his group to flee up into the open top, allowing B3 to begin sketching out a large moyo on the right side. Although this area is still much too large and open to all become territory, it does provide Black with considerable potential. How much of that potential territory can later be realized as solid territory is, of course, still to be determined in subsequent play, but it does provide Black with a significant winning chance.

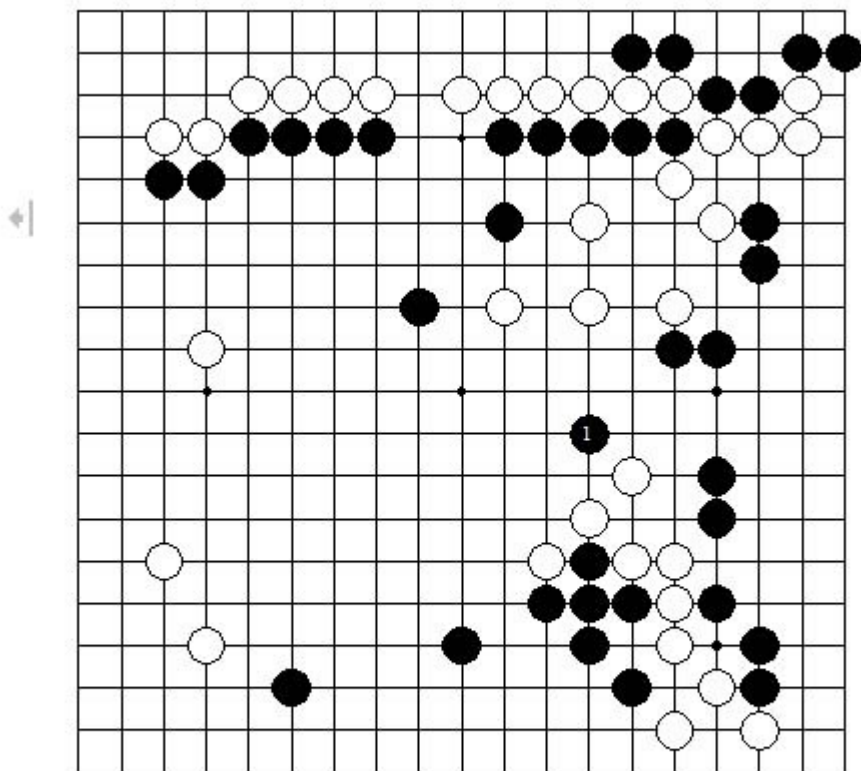


Diagram 10
B1 Is A Devastating Splitting Attack Against White's Two Weak Groups

Diagram 10 In this position from a game between two 5D's, Black has set White up for the devastating splitting attack of B1, which is also on the key shape point of the lower White group.

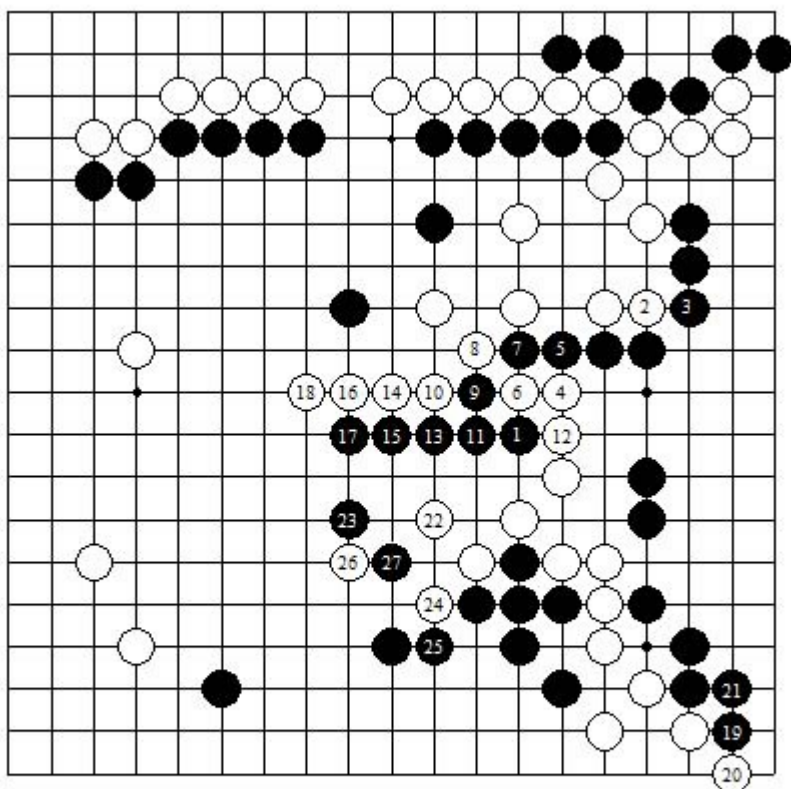


Diagram 11
Actual Game Continuation
White Resigned After B27 Because His lower Group Can't Make 2 Eyes

Diagram 11 The choice and timing of the best splitting point and the ultimate outcome of the resulting fight are both a function of the opponents' skills, but unless gross blunders occur the end result should more often than not be favorable to the attacking player.

The Running Battle

Now let's look at the early stages of a game contested between an 8D and a 7D involving a classic running battle, in which, for many moves, almost every move can be explained by the Sector Line concept!

It's my bet that, just by using this simple concept, you will not only be able to come close to predicting these strong players moves surprisingly often, but also would probably not have made the overplay of W15 in Dia 13 that ultimately cost 8D White this game!

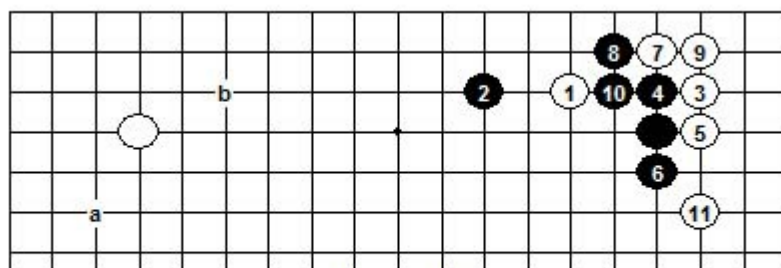


Diagram 12
This Would Be The Wrong Choice of Joseki By White

Diagram 12 If W3 now dives into the 3-3 point to seize the corner as shown here, this Joseki will inevitably follow, and that would leave Black with both thickness which helps neutralize White's thickness below, and Sente with which to play at either "a" or "b" in the upper left corner, again with a result White felt was unfavorable to him. So instead ...

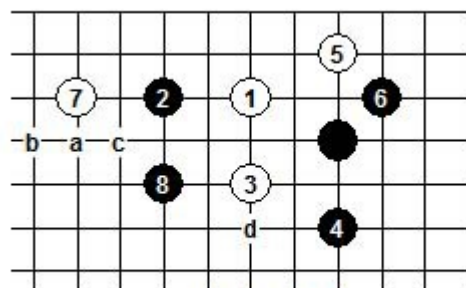


Diagram 13
A Running Battle Begins

Diagram 13 The one point center skip of **W3** to break the Black Sector Line was necessary if White didn't want to become enclosed, and that was the first key move in his strategy.

It also enclosed both the Black corner stone and B2 in White's own fairly distant Sector Lines.

Most important, it was Sente because a following move at 4 would force Black into a low, nearly enclosed position in the upper right corner. So...

B4 Prevents White's good play at this same point and breaks the White Sector Line, while increasing Black's space. But it's Gote because it doesn't establish a Sector Line of Black's own.

W5 Since Black has no enclosing move next, White is free to try to establish some eyespace, and this "slide" threatens to follow at 6 (the 3-3 point), to both steal the corner territory and provide the White stones with almost certain life.

So it retains Sente.

B6 Prevents White's play on the key 3-3 point and so retains most of the corner territory. This assures Black of almost certain life, and equally important, keeps the White stones unsettled!

But despite those wonderful assets it's Gote, so White is again free to pursue his own objectives.

W7 This is the second key move in White's strategy, so it's important that you thoroughly understand its rationale! What he intends to do is to counter Black's strategy of negating the value of White's center thickness below by building a compensating White moyo in the upper left!

At least equally important, this stone prevents B2 from extending to the left to make eyespace, retains Sente by enclosing B2 in a White Sector Line, and also threatens to capture it by continuing with W"c"! (Pretty good for a single move!)

B8 This is close to being the only logical response because B2 has no base, and attaching to W7 at "a" would only induce W"b", B"c" to strengthen W7 in Sente and thus play into White's moyo strategy. B"c" instead would not only be too slow in moving out into the center, but would also not threaten White in any substantive way.

In sharp contrast, B8 breaks White's Sector Line and establishes one of Black's own which encloses W1-5, while also threatening to follow with B"d" to lock those White stones in.

So B8 seizes Sente, and begins a classic running battle in which each side has a weak group in potential danger.

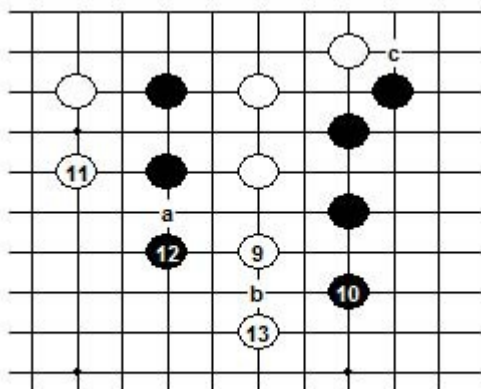


Diagram 14
The Running Battle Continues

Diagram 14 Becoming enclosed would force the White stones to either live small in Gote or die, so escaping is essential.

This one point skip of **W9** is the best way to do that, because it retains Sente by threatening to continue at 10, which would force Black into a low position on the right edge.

B10 Prevents White's good move at this same point and increases Black's potential right side territory, while aiming toward making that territory really huge if he can further coordinate it with his strong lower right corner.

But despite that it's Gote because it makes no serious enclosure threat against the W1-9 group. (W9 already broke what would have been Black's new Sector Line.)

W11 Because the W9 group can't be enclosed immediately, White can afford to use his Sente to play here because it encloses B2-8 within a new White Sector Line, while threatening to continue with W"a" to lock-in those two Black stones and almost certainly kill them.

This is a fine double purpose move, because it also coordinates with White's upper left corner stone, beginning to construct the large White moyo in that area White was aiming at when he played W7.

B12 Black must break out of the new White Sector Line, and this is the best way to accomplish that because it in turn puts the W1-9 stones within Black's own new Sector Line, and threatens to continue with B"b" to enclose him. So Black once again has Sente.

W13 Even if White allows B"b", after W"c" it would still be possible for his enclosed group to live, but that scenario would be bad for him. So he has no real choice but to skip out to break the Black Sector Line thus.

Although W13 actually encloses the weak B2-12 group within a new White Sector Line, it's one with a very distant (and therefore not very threatening) anchor point, so Black is really free to continue as he wishes.

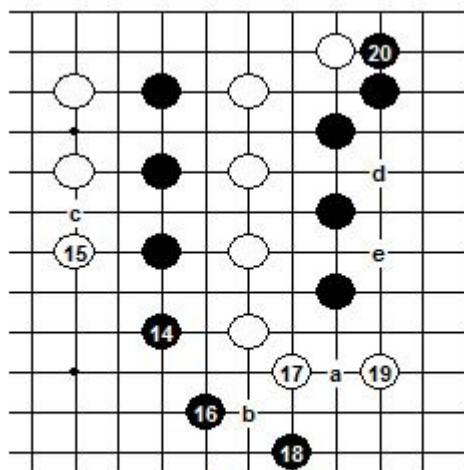


Diagram 15
W15 Errs By Allowing
B16 To Partially Enclose Him

Diagram 15 B“a” now to further expand his right side is both large and feasible, but then W14 will follow and that would be bad (although not disastrous) for the weak Black 3 stone string of one point skips! So instead ...

B14 offers the weak Black string the most future alternatives, so it’s safest.

But either B“c” or 15 is also feasible, with the choice between these options more a matter of the player’s judgment than of necessity.

W15 was the key turning point in this part of the game! Unfortunately, it was somewhat overambitious, despite being the most consistent with White’s moyo strategy in playing W7 and 11. It mistakenly emphasized the creation of White’s potential upper left moyo over the safety of his weak stones on the right, and thereby violated the earlier noted key principle of: “Urgent Moves Before Big Moves”.

Instead, W“a”, “b” or 16 to strengthen his weak group were preferable alternatives, and, as with B14, the choice between them would be a matter of the player’s best judgment rather than of necessity.

Because W15 yielded Sente to Black in the running battle it was also the riskiest choice, although one it seems that White undertook willingly because he lusted after the big moyo he was trying to create on the left, and as an 8D he undoubtedly had absolute confidence that his tactical ability would suffice to rescue him from any resulting difficulties on the right. But even as strong a player as he would almost certainly have been better advised to play one of the other, safer choices noted above.

B16 Because the Black string isn’t enclosed or even nearly so, Black is now free to be aggressive.

Seizing the opportunity offered by White’s failure to reinforce the weak White group, this important play once again encloses those stones within Black’s Sector Lines, and forces a response.

W17 Breaks the new Black Sector Line, but still leaves the White group within a more distant Black Sector Line anchored in the lower right corner, and that's a measure of the size of White's error in playing W15.

B18 Reestablishes the more dangerous close Sector Line, and continues to force White's response.

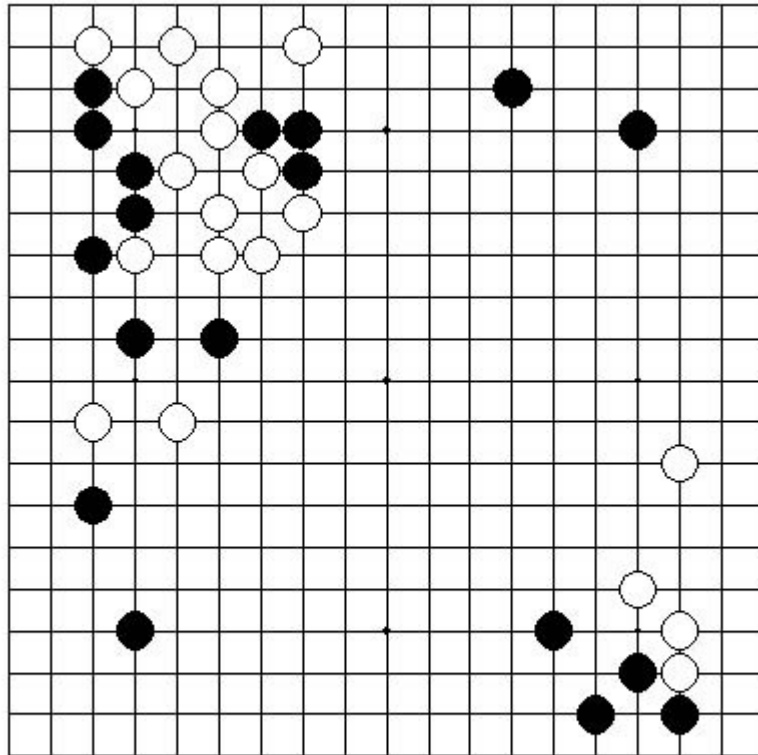
W19 Not only breaks both of Black sector Lines, but also gives White access to some badly needed potential eyespace on the right edge. Equally important, it also threatens to play at 20 next, occupying the key pivot point in the corner. That would not only increase White's own eyespace while reducing Black's, but would also actually threaten the life of the Black corner because of its weaknesses at "d" and "e".

Because that would be too good to allow ...

B20 This is now the key move, stabilizing the Black corner stones and destabilizing White's, which are now no longer certain of making 2 eyes!

What happened next to the weak White stones will not be shown because it's entirely tactical and therefore outside the scope of our interest in the basic Sector Line/connectivity/enclosure themes we're discussing. But it may be illuminating to note that despite 8D White's exceptional tactical prowess he wasn't able to make 2 eyes locally, and in the process of attempting to achieve life or break out of Black's enclosure he overstepped the time limit and lost the game! A classic example of the difficulties that can follow from ignoring the indications provided by Sector Lines!

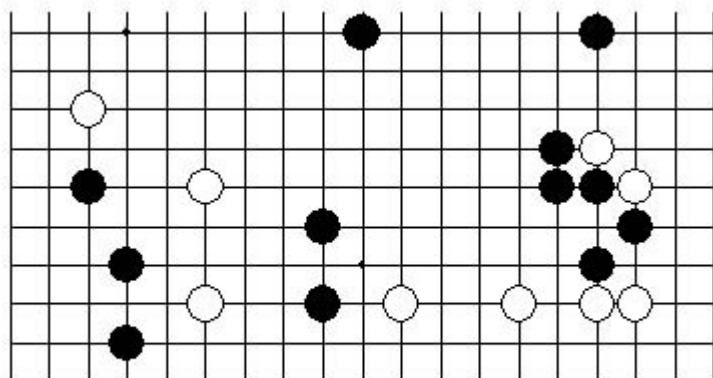
Chapter 7 Problems



Problem 1 In this position fairly early in a game between two 4D's, the question is how Black can make best use of his Sente.

Problem 1

What's Black's Key Play Here?



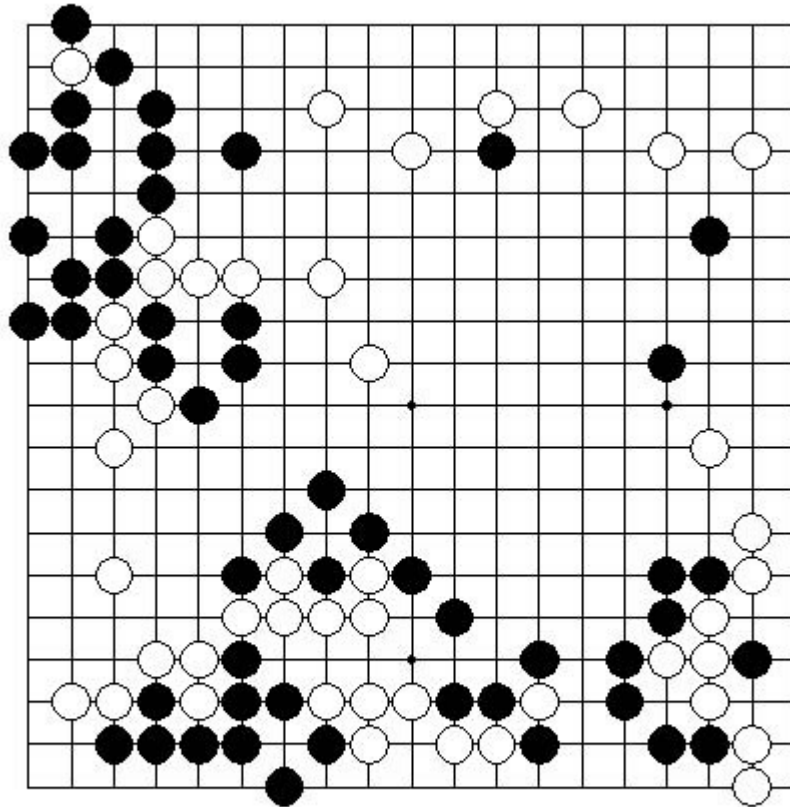
Problem 2
Where Should Black Play?

Problem 2 At this critical point in the early middle game of a 5 stone handicap game between a 7D (a really strong amateur) and one of the world's top 9 Dan pros, a SWOT Analysis of this position shows that the focus of attention must be on the situation in the lower left center!

There, both the White two point skip and the nearby Black one point skip are weak and potentially vulnerable.

Almost equally important, because the Black Sector Line from the lower left corner stone to the Center Handicap stone intersects the White Sector Line from the side stone to the upper 2-point skip stone, neither is currently operative.

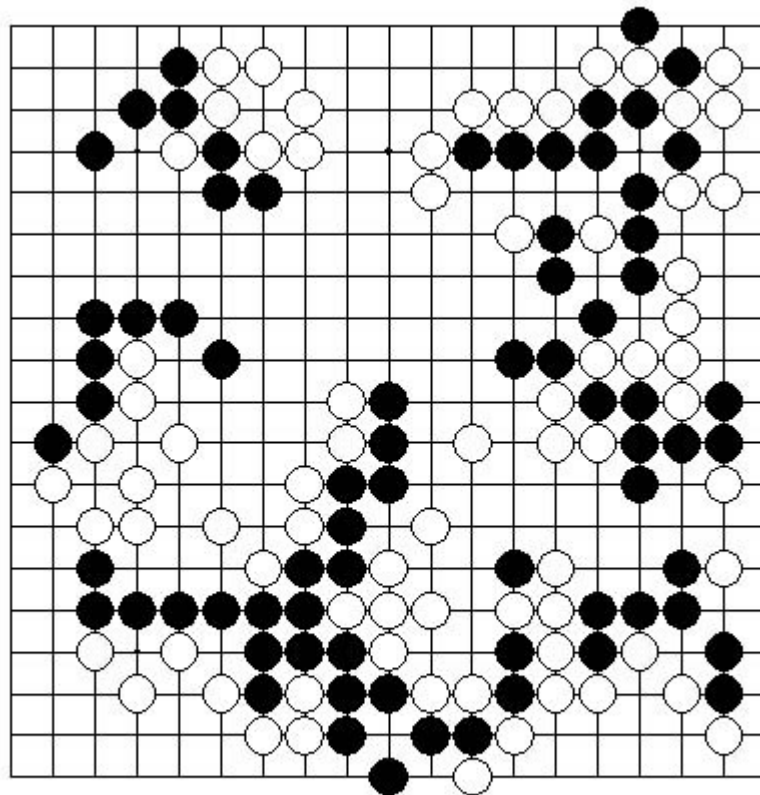
Given those facts, with Sente where should Black play now? And why?



Problem 3
What Should Black's Objective Be Here?

Problem 3 As earlier noted, our objective in this book is to help the reader determine the relevant theme(s) in any given position, rather than trying to find the absolutely best move. So in this position from a game between two 5D's, your task is to identify Black's most appropriate objective, and then suggest a plausible move to begin carrying it out.

If you have the right plan and your suggested move plausibly advances it, your answer is counted as correct whether or not the move you chose was actually best.

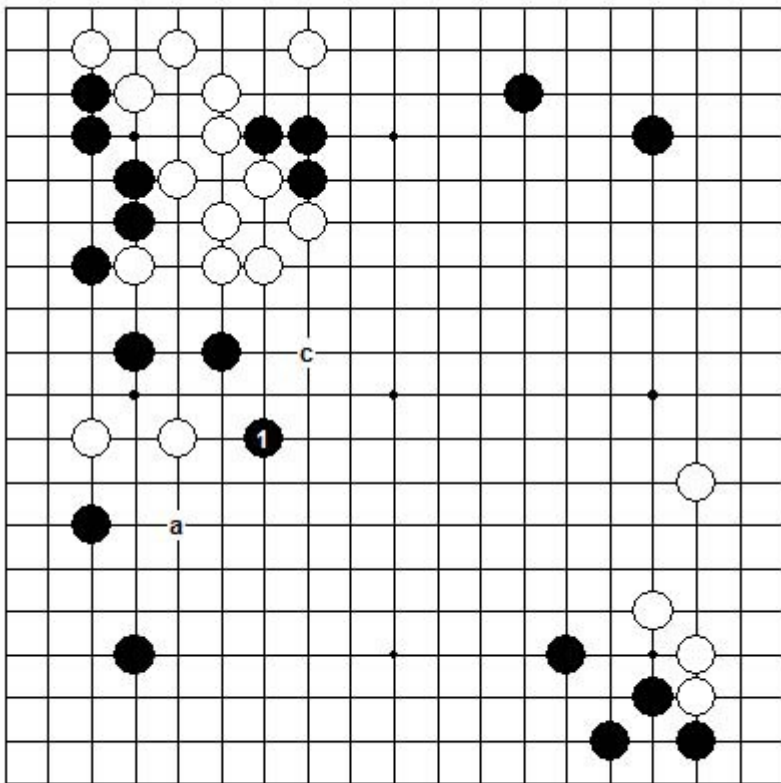


Problem 4
What Should White Play Here?

Problem 4 Your first task here is to recognize what's at issue, and then find the best way for White to succeed in fulfilling that objective.

Chapter 7 Problems – Solutions

Problem 1



Solution 1

Capping The Weak White Group Immediately Is Best

Solution 1 Capping the weak White one point center skip with B1 is the most forcing way to play here, but certainly not the only conceivable one!

One plausible alternative is to begin with the jump to B“a” to strengthen Black’s corner below while threatening to enclose the White stones. But that will almost certainly induce the response of W1, to which B“c” will then be an essentially forced reply, leaving White with Sente.

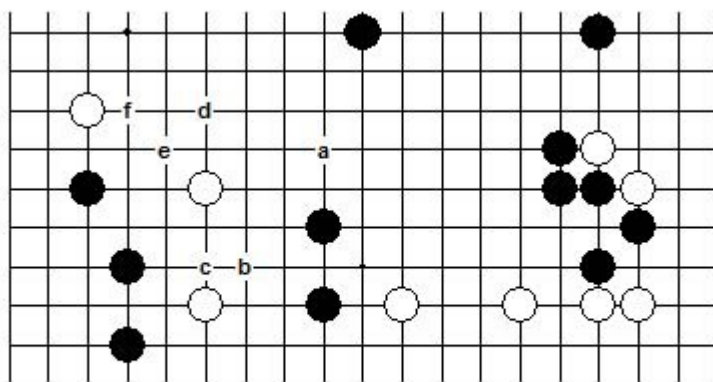
It's also not inconceivable to play elsewhere, especially the right side, but B1 gives Black control of at least the next few moves of the game, and therefore on balance will be the most satisfying to an aggressive player.

Problem 2

Solution 2 The key point for both sides here is clearly at “a”.

If B“a”, the two Black one point skip stones are led out into the open center, and are then quite secure because they should be easily able to connect above or to the right. Almost equally important, after B“a” Black threatens to continue with B“b” to induce W“c”, then follow at either “d”, “e” or even “f” to initiate a serious attack on the baseless White group.

So the defensive W“d” would most likely follow, leaving Black with Sente to use as he sees fit because White would then have no really serious local attack available.



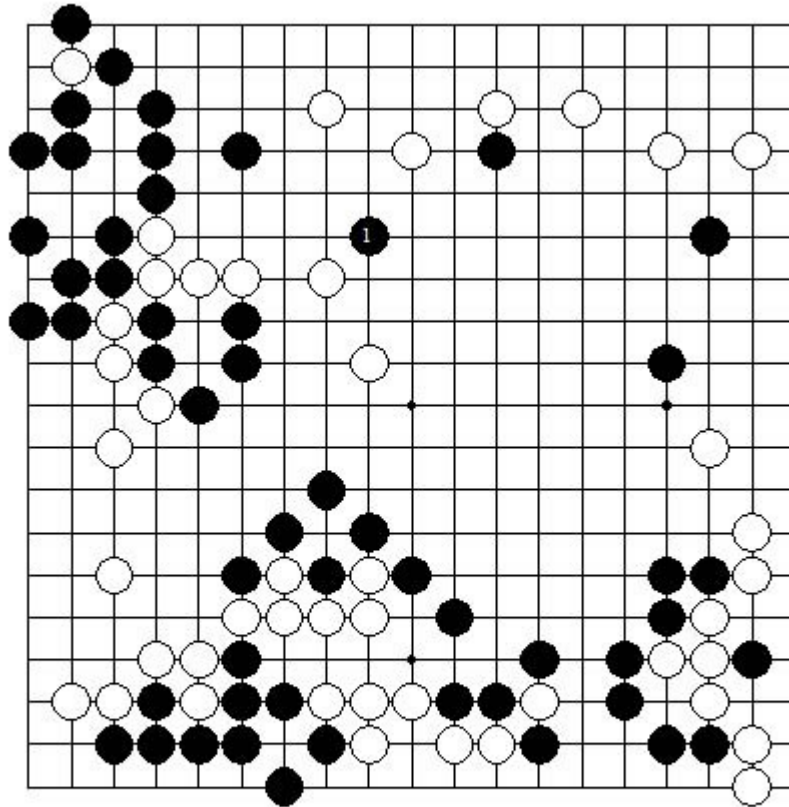
Solution 2
“a” Is The Key Point For Both Sides

But if Black should mistakenly play elsewhere, the cap of W“a” would completely reverse the local dynamic by leaving the two Black stones almost enclosed within White Sector Lines, and in serious difficulties!

So if Black wishes to keep things simple, as he should when taking 5 stones, there really is no sensible alternative available to B“a”!

But, surprisingly, that’s not what Black actually played, and by allowing the dangerous and unnecessary fight that followed W “a”, unquestionably hastened his demise in this game.

Problem 3

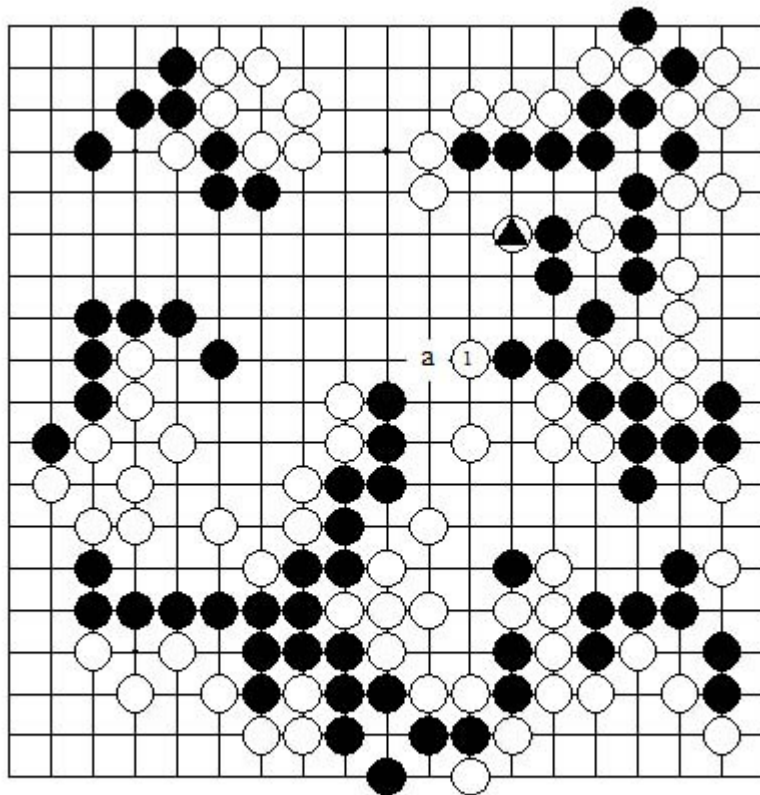


Solution 3
The Splitting Move Of B1 Makes it Difficult For White's Weak Group
To Connect To His Strong Stones At The Top

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Solution 3 For our present purposes, count your answer as correct if you recognized that an attack intended to keep White's weak stones in the left center from connecting to his strong upper side stones was called for, and you suggested a move near the actual game's B1 as shown.

Problem 4



Solution 4
White's Objective Is To Prevent Black's Connection,
And W1 Is The Best Way To Do That

Solution 4 White's objective here must be to prevent Black from easily saving his weak group to the left by connecting his forces. W"a" would also do that successfully, but W1 is superior because it also looks forward to saving the marked stone, and thus making it difficult for the upper Black group to make its needed second eye!