

An interview with Kei Shinada. (by Tomoko Takeda)

Those of you who participated in the Go Congress a decade ago may remember a small Japanese girl called Kei Shinada. Those of you who shared Go clubs with her no doubt want to know what happened after she went back to Japan. So here's the whole story.

At the age of 8, Kei learned Go by watching a TV program called "Ladies' Go", which aired on Japanese public TV. The program was hosted by Izumi Kobayashi (6P), Yukari Umezawa (3P), and Mayu Hosaka(2P). She became absorbed in Go immediately, and announced to her astounded parents that she would become a professional of Go. Her mother telephoned *Nihon ki-in* (Japanese Go Center) and learned about a children's Go school which the Kobayashi family was supervising. This was the beginning.

After studying Go for 6 months under Ms. Kobayashi, Kei accompanied her parents to Belgium. She was about 10 kyu then in 1999. "I remember going to pubs and Universities to play Go. I thought it was cool to be able to play with people from other countries", reminiscences Kei.

In 2001, Kei returned to Japan alone to study Go for 6 months. She lived with her grandparents, and studied industriously under Ms. Kobayashi. She returned to Belgium, where 6 months later, her father's work term ended and the family returned to Japan. She was about 3-dan then. Again, she studied under Ms. Kobayashi and various study groups. 1 year after her return to Japan, when Kei was about 5-dan, she became an *insei*, to train to be a pro. She was a 1<sup>st</sup> year student in junior high school. The life of an *insei* is not easy, since they have to balance Go and their schoolwork. (In Japan, elementary school and junior high school is mandatory education.) On Saturdays and Sundays, there are *insei te-ai* (matches), and on other days, most participate in study groups which professionals host. Most kids are exhausted after they finish playing on Sunday, so that it is actually hard to find the time to go to school. Kei was one of the "good girls", and went to school more often than most, but even she had Mondays and Wednesdays off.

*Insei te-ai* start from 9:30 in the morning. There are 4 groups in *insei*, from A to D in order of strength. For each group, 2 players with the highest rank go up 1 group, and 2 players with the lowest rank go down 1 group. This happens every month, and Kei's worst nightmare was when she dropped 2 groups in 2 months, from B to D.

Kei was in group C for most of her time. The number of games played for the *insei te-ai* change according to the group. For groups A and B (60minutes + 60 seconds counting) 2 games/day, group C must play 3 games/day (40minutes + 60 seconds counting) group D has 4 games/day (30minutes + 30 seconds counting).

Kei quit *insei* in June, 2005. She realized that the road to becoming a professional was not open for her. Kei says, "Although *insei* life was fun, I don't recommend it. I never want to do it again. Go is something you enjoy, and not something you seriously get involved in. It's just a game."

Although she will remain an amateur, Kei's Go life is by no means over. She took 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the national amateur women's championship this year, beating champions from the past. Kei is 16 now, and is studying for her university entrance examinations. A few more years may pass until readers get to see her again in Europe, but never fear, she'll be here.

In the 50<sup>th</sup> European Go Congress which took place in Frascati, Italy this year, Kei

participated for the first week and the weekend tournament. For the main tournament, her score was 4-1, losing her first game to Lee Ki-Bong (Korea). In the weekend tournament, she lost again to Lee, but won every other game, taking 2<sup>nd</sup> place with her score of 4-1.

Asked about her impression of the tournament, Kei answers, "I was happy to win against Ms. Zhao, but I wanted to win (at least once) against Mr. Lee." Kei stayed in Italy for 2 weeks and also did some sightseeing, but says her best moment during her stay was when she won against Ms. Zhao.

Exclusive for this magazine, Kei's game with Pei Zhao (Germany) is written down below. The annotations are by Kim Hyo-Jung, a 2-dan professional from Korea who was invited to the tournament. Enjoy!