

A History of Go in Montreal

(Part II, 1988-2013)

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When Part I of this narrative on the history of go in Montreal came to an end in the fall of 1988, the Montreal Go Club was located on the second floor of *Le Spécialiste des Échecs*. A chess store that doubled as a chess club, this establishment was situated at 1365 *rue Sainte-Catherine est*. The members of the Montreal Go Co club began to hold their weekly meetings there ever since the club moved to this new location in September, 1984. (Actually, in 1984, *Le Spécialiste des Échecs* was located at 1111 *boul. de Maisonneuve est*. It moved to its new location, on the *rue Sainte-Catherine est*, in 1985).

The location of the club at *Le Spécialiste des Échecs* provided Montreal's go players with a third golden age of stability. However, by the summer of 1991, after seven years at the same location, the club decided that it was time to move. This move might have been prompted by the decision of the owner of *Le Spécialiste des Échecs* to increase the rent that she was charging the club (more on this later). In any event, the club found a new location on the campus of McGill University, in the common room of the Department of Mathematics, which was located on the 10th floor of the Burnside Hall building. (Officially, the building had a civic address: 805 *rue Sherbrooke ouest*.)

When the Montreal Go Club moved to McGill in 1991, the McGill Go Club, which had been founded by David Goodger in January, 1988, had already ended its operations. The club closed its doors sometime in 1990 when David, who had left McGill after completing his studies, was no longer president of the club. The McGill Go Club was very much dependent on David who, for all intents and purposes, was the McGill Go Club. During its heyday, the club held most of its meetings in the Student Union building (now called the William Shatner building) at 3480 *rue McTavish*, a street that is parallel to, and one street east of, the *rue Peel*.

The reader will recall from Part I of this history that, in addition to managing the McGill Go Club, David also looked after putting out the *Bulletin de l'AQJG* in the last year of its production (1988-1989). This very modest monthly newsletter, which usually consisted of about 4 pages, was started by me, the author of this history, in the fall of 1986, and it ended its in 1989.

The person who was instrumental in obtaining the club's new location at McGill was Thomas Fox, a long-time go player whose connection with the Department of Mathematics at McGill allowed him to co-sponsor the club's stay at its new location even though he was not a member of the department's teaching staff. Although the club's stay at McGill was supposed to be temporary—it was not meant to last more than a year—somehow the club managed to hang on at

McGill until 2008, a record-breaking period of 17 years. The move to McGill was the beginning of the club's fourth and longest golden age of stability. At no other time in the history of the Montreal Go Club did it experience a longer period of stability than the one it enjoyed when it was located at McGill.

The room in which the players met each week, on Tuesday evenings, was, in many respects, an excellent venue. First of all, because the campus of McGill University is situated in the heart of downtown Montreal, this meant that the new club was very close to the city's world-class subway system. Being near to a subway station is always a prime consideration when looking for a venue to locate a club.

But just as the factor of proximity to a subway system is an important consideration in determining the success of a club's venue, equally important are the other factors in the contribution they make to that success: the size of the room where the players met was large enough to accommodate all who came to the club, the atmosphere was quiet, the lighting was excellent, the chairs were comfortable, the tables were at the right height, and there was even a place where the club could store its go equipment, and because Burnside Hall was open 24 hours a day, this meant that the members of the club could always count on finishing their games without ever having to experience the dreaded feeling of being rushed by a personnel eager to close the club and go home. (When the club was situated at another educational establishment—the *CEGEP du Vieux Montréal* (1977 to 1982)—the players had to be out of the playing room by 10:30 PM. This meant that if a player finished a game at or about 9:30 PM, he had to seriously consider whether or not it was worth starting a new game.)

All things considered, the common room at McGill was an excellent venue for the Montreal Go Club. If one wanted to be picky and find fault with something, the only thing that comes to mind is that this new location lacked a place where the club could put up a bulletin board.

Another significant advantage attached to the new location was that it was rent free. At *Le Spécialiste des Échecs*, the go club was paying \$20 in rent each time it held a meeting, and, beginning in the fall of 1985, the club was paying this amount twice a week because it was meeting twice a week (Tuesday and Thursday evenings). However, when the club moved to McGill, it resumed its normal schedule of meetings, which was only once a week (Tuesday evenings).

Not having to pay rent anymore was viewed by many as a major relief. To the ordinary members of the club, the decision to move to McGill meant that they could save some money; and to the club administrators, the decision meant that they could dispense with the need to find the volunteers that would be needed to perform the thankless job of (1) collecting the weekly dues necessary to pay the rent and (2) maintaining the membership lists. Though it may not seem obvious, collecting dues to pay the rent is not an insignificant administrative hassle.

Soon after moving to McGill, the Montreal Go Club was honoured by a truly memorable event. In late August of 1992, the club was graced by the presence of a living legend. The Great Sakata

Eio, one of the great professional players in the world of go, came to Montreal on an official visit within the framework of an all-Canadian tour.

The career of this extraordinary player, whose dominance in the world of go reached its zenith in the period from about the mid-1950s to about the late 1960s, was marked by the acquisition of an extraordinarily high number of tournament titles, 64 all together. For a long time, this record stood the test of time, and, like a beacon, it proclaimed the remarkable abilities of the Great Sakata. However, when Cho Chikun appeared on the Japanese go scene in the late 1960s and became, at the age of 11, the youngest player in modern go history to attain professional status, the precocious brilliance of this prodigy led many to believe that if anyone could outdo Sakata, it would be this young player from Korea, which he did, finally, by winning a career total of 71 titles by 2007.

In fairness to Sakata, however, the reader must bear in mind that Sakata began to play professionally at a time when there were far fewer tournament titles available for him to win; by contrast, when Cho Chikun began to play, there were far more. Hence, Cho Chikun was blessed by the good luck of playing at a time when he could play in more tournaments per unit time than Sakata could in his prime.

Sakata and his entourage stayed in Montreal from Saturday, August 22 until Tuesday, August 25. The Consulate General of Japan in Montreal was very helpful, as it has been in the past when other Japanese professionals visited this city, in smoothing out any problems that could affect the success of this visit. In fact, part of the money that was needed to finance the costs of Sakata's activities while in Montreal was provided by the Japanese Consulate, the remainder of the costs associated with this visit were taken up by the AQJG (*Association québécoise des joueurs de go*), in the same way it as it did on those previous occasions when professional players visited Montreal.

Sakata was accompanied by his wife, Tetsue, and two other professional go players: Nagahara Yoshiaki, 9-dan, the author of *Basic Techniques of Go*; and Suzuki Sen, 3-dan, from Seattle, Washington, who acted as Sakata's translator and trip organizer. On Monday, August 24, a fourth professional, Oheda Yusuke, 9-dan, joined the other professionals already here. Never before had so many professional players been present in this city at the same time: a grand total of 29 dans, as André Labelle, then-president of the AQJG, was fond of saying, both at the time and ever since.

The activities that were organized in honor of the visiting dignitaries unfolded at the Arcade Hotel, which was located at 50 *boul. René-Lévesque ouest*, which is next door to Montreal's Chinatown, and which is not too far away from the Champlain Hotel, where the visiting dignitaries stayed. By the way, the Hotel Arcade no longer exists, at least not at the location it occupied at the time of Sakata's visit.

On the evening of August 22, Sakata performed his first go-related activity when he commented the game that had been played earlier that same day between Lynne Baird, 1-kyu, from Ottawa, and Suzanne Malo, 1-dan, from Montreal. This game, which Suzanne won, was played to select the woman player to represent Canada at the World Women's Amateur Championship, which was scheduled to be held in October in Yokohama, Japan. After Sakata's completed his game commentary, both Nagahara and Suzuki engaged in one simultaneous each.

On Sunday, August 23, the three visiting professionals each played in a simultaneous, including Sakata himself, who played against the following three players: Sachio Kohara, 4-dan, from Montreal, at 4 stones; Marc Lecours, 3-dan, from Ottawa, at 5 stones; and myself, 2-dan, at 6 stones. Each participant was asked to contribute a playing fee of \$100. Though high, no one complained for the obvious reason that this fee gave each player who paid it the bragging rights to tell all and sundry that he had played a game against the Great Sakata. Not many players, let alone amateurs, can make such a claim and get away with it. After completing his games, Sakata commented the game he played against Kohara. A little later, Nagahara commented the game he had played against Dong Ming Liang, 5-dan from Montreal.

Monday was set aside for sightseeing, while Sakata preferred to do his sightseeing on his own, Khalid Benabdallah and Tigor Bogner, two of Montreal's veteran go players, acted as tourist guides to Nagahara and Suzuki. Khalid also acted as a guide on the following day to Nagahara and Oheda. For Khalid, this was an excellent opportunity for him to practice his rudimentary knowledge of Japanese.

On Tuesday, the author of this history, who acted as Sakata's chauffeur during his entire stay in Montreal, drove Sakata, his wife, and Suzuki to Montreal's Dorval airport to catch their flight to Vancouver. Later that evening, the remaining two professionals still in Montreal, went to the Montreal Go Club where they played in one more simultaneous each.

On Wednesday, Sachio Kohara volunteered to drive Nagahara and Oheda to visit Ottawa. Finally, on Thursday, Nagahara and Oheda left Montreal. Thus ended the visit of the Great Sakata to Montreal. Since this visit to Montreal by these professional players, the Montreal Go Club has not yet had the opportunity of hosting another Japanese professional player.

In retrospect, 1992 was a landmark year. Besides being the year in which Sakata visited Montreal, 1992 was also the year in which a notable development took place in the world of go. A development whose impact on the game would be immeasurable in its significance and worldwide in its scope. A development that would mark a profound chasm in the history of the game, a chasm so great that players would, henceforth, refer to a time before and a time after the introduction of this new development. What could this development possibly be? It was none other than the possibility of playing go on the Internet. This was a major breakthrough. No longer were players limited to playing only once per week and only in clubs. The buzz that was generated at the dawn of this new era in go playing was exhilarating.

However, even though it was now technically possible to play go on the Internet, the ability to do so was not available to everyone, at least not yet. The problem was one of accessibility and demand. To play go on the Internet, players needed to be able to access the Internet, and for this they needed the services of an Internet service provider.

In 1992, however, access to the Internet was largely restricted to universities, research facilities and institutes, and the military. There was no popular demand for access to the Internet in those early days because there was nothing on the Internet that people wanted to access. Then, slowly, in tandem with the ever-increasing popularity of personal computers, and the on-going introduction of various hardware and software innovations that were needed for accessing the Internet and for navigating on it (e.g., modems, browsers, GUI interface, HTML, mice, World Wide Web, and so on), there came into being a growing network of Web sites full of interesting content, sufficiently interesting as to make ordinary people want to gain access to it.

Like other cities in North American, Montreal, in 1992, was still waiting for the establishment of its own set of internet service providers. True, there were a few companies that provided access to the Internet, but the access they offered was very limited, and it was nothing like the 24/7 access that users take for granted today. In those days, the lucky few who could play go on the Internet without any time restrictions were those players who were, or had been, students at one of Montreal's universities, the only establishments that offered free Internet accounts without access limitations.

(On a personal note, I bought my first computer in September, 1993, because a go-playing friend of mine had a program (a DOS-based program) called Telego that allowed players with modems to hook up and play each other. A little later that fall, I started to play go on IGS (Internet Go Server) because another go-playing friend of mine knew of an Internet account that was not being used at the *Université de Montréal*. This access to the Internet, which, by the way, was completely free, lasted from October 1993 until February 1996. Then in February of 1996, the IT staff at the *Université de Montréal* undertook a clean-up of the university's Internet accounts which resulted in the closing of several accounts that belonged to students who were no longer registered as students at the university, this included the account that I was using. Fortunately, by 1996, one could easily find in the Montreal area Internet service providers that could now offer a 24/7 access to the Internet to their customers. This is when I connected to the Internet through Vidéotron).

By the way, readers may be interested to know that the original server that was used to play go in 1992 was called IGS (Internet Go Server). This server still exists today, but it now operates under a different name—Pandamet. Furthermore, readers may also be interested to know that in 1992 the IGS server was not located in Korea, as it is today, but, instead, at the University of Pennsylvania. The address to gain access to IGS server at the University of Pennsylvania was hellspark.wharton.upenn.edu 6969.

After Sakata's visit, things went back to the way they were before his arrival, and the normal preoccupation of Montreal's go players came back into focus. As always, Montreal's go players were constantly on the lookout for new opportunities to play go outside of the normal meetings at the club. The general preference was for a place where players could play go on the weekend, preferably on Sunday afternoons.

One place that was willing to accommodate Montreal's go players on Sunday afternoons was the *Café Passez Go*, located at 5245 *boul. St-Laurent*, just north of *avenue Fairmount*. The owner/manager of this cafe, in his effort to encourage the growth of his business, allowed, even encouraged, his customers to play games at his establishment. This explains the name of the cafe, which is a reference to the *Pass Go* square in the board game of Monopoly.

There was only one restriction that the owner/manager of this establishment imposed: players could not play go at his café during the summer months. Montreal's go players played at this new location from October 3, 1993 to May 29, 1994, then from October 30, 1994 to May 7, 1995, and then finally from October 15, 1995 to November 19, 1995.

The attendance for 1995 was not extended into 1996 because the café closed its doors. This was completely unexpected. At first, the owner wanted to make renovations, and, consequently, he asked the players to stay away until a specific date in January at which time the players could return to the café. However, when the players did return in the new year, at the suggested date, they discovered that the café was closed. Sadly, the club lost about five go sets when the renovators gutted the interior of the café before they started the renovations.

A few years later, another location was found where Montreal's go players could come together on Sunday afternoons to play go: the *Café Ludik*, at 552 *rue Sainte-Catherine est*. The success of this new location lasted from September 26, 1999 to June 10, 2001, almost two years. In the end, though, this location simply lost its appeal. This meeting place finally came to an end because of a general lack of interest among the players.

When comparing the attendance levels at the two cafés—the *Café Passez Go* and the *Café Ludik*—the number of players who attended the *Café Passez Go* was generally higher than the number of those who attended the *Café Ludik*.

Part of the reason that might help to explain the failure of the *Café Ludik* to succeed as a place to play go could be attributed to the growing popularity of playing go on the Internet. This new development in the information revolution was both a godsend and a curse. It was a godsend because it provided an opportunity to play go where none existed before to two significant, go-starved groups in a population: (1) those who lived in rural or semi-rural areas, where there were no clubs, and (2) those who lived in suburban areas, for whom attendance at a local go club, if there was one, was not always convenient (either because of family- or work-related obligations).

At the same time that the Internet was seen by many as a godsend, it was also seen by others as a curse, especially to those players who were part of that go-satiated segment of a population: those who lived in urban areas. It was a curse because it tended to affect, in a negative way, the number of players who attended clubs and who participated in tournaments, both of which, naturally enough, are located in urban areas. (Admittedly the word *curse* is a bit strong, it may even be too strong considering that the nefarious impact attributed to the Internet, though serious, was certainly not catastrophic.) This decline in attendance mentioned earlier was not excessive, nor was it dramatic, but it was noticeable.

In regards to tournaments, the apparent drop in attendance seems to have had more of an impact on two-day tournaments than on one-day tournaments.

Starting in the late 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, the vibrancy of the AQJG was undergoing a period of general stagnation, if not of actual decline. The sad part of this developing situation is that it eventually reached a point at which two services, which the AQJG had long offered its members, had to be abandoned. One of these services was the lending library, which, as the name suggests, was a service in which the AQJG loaned go books to its members. The other service, also involving books, was the selling of go books and go equipment. This service came into being shortly after AQJG's foundation in 1978, and it was particularly active from 1980 to 1988 (from 1985 to 1988, the responsibility for this service fell into my hands, the author of this article).

The selling of go books and equipment was not only an important service that the AQJG provided to its members, but it was also an important source of revenue. The AQJG obtained its supply of go material from Pat Thompson, a go player who lived in the greater Toronto area. Pat had the Canadian distribution rights for selling the books published by Ishi Press as well as the go equipment that this publishing house also sold. Not long after the creation of the AQJG, Pat reached an agreement with it in which the AQJG could obtain all the Ishi Press material it wanted in return for a 40% discount on the sale of this material to it. In return, the AQJG agreed not to sell any books or equipment it bought from Pat at a price lower than his own list price.

Actually, the AQJG sold the supply of go books and equipment that it bought from Pat at two prices: one price was set for those customers who were members of the AQJG, and another price, slightly higher, was set for non-members. Naturally, the purpose of this two-price system was to encourage membership in the AQJG. Very often, once a member bought two books, and certainly if he bought three, he was already paying out the equivalent value for his membership. In those days, membership in the AQJG was \$5.

Another important factor that contributed enormously to the decline in the provision of these two services was the absence of storage space where the books that belonged to the lending library, and the material that made up the inventory of material for sale by the AQJG could be stored. When the club was situated at *Le Spécialiste des Échecs*, it had all the storage space it needed,

but when the club moved to McGill in 1991, the AQJG lost this space, and there was nothing available at McGill that could replace it.

Finally, another part of the problem, which might also have been helped along by the development of the Internet, was the diminishing number of volunteers available to the AQJG. Fortunately, however, the two annual tournaments organized by the Montreal Go Club and the AQJG—the *Tournoi d'hiver*, sometimes called the Winter Tournament in English (held in February), and the Quebec Open (held in May)—remained active, and largely unaffected by events.

In 1996, with the establishment in Montreal of companies capable of providing access to the Internet, the AQJG established its presence on what was then popularly called the information highway. This initiative was led by André Leclerc, the long-time director of the FQJR (*Fédération québécoise des jeux récréatifs* (readers will recall from Part I of this history of go in Montreal that the FQJR is an umbrella organization to which many leisure-related organizations in Quebec belong, including the AQJG). The address of the Web site of the AQJG is <http://www.fqjr.qc.ca/go/>.

For several years after he created the AQJG's Web site, André continued to look after it by updating it from time to time, or by inserting whatever contribution a member of the executive of the AQJG requested. André's services in this regard lasted until about 2007 or 2008 at which time Michel Beaulieu, a go player interested in managing a Web site, took over this responsibility. Then, in the spring of 2010, the author of this narrative took on the responsibility of managing the AQJG's Web site until the spring of 2012 at which point the responsibility was passed into the capable hands of Lydia Gallant, a new member of the executive of the AQJG.

André Leclerc got involved in creating the AQJG's Web site because the board of directors of the FQJR, which had mandated André to put the FQJR on the Web, also mandated him to do the same for each leisure-related organization that was a member of the FQJR at the time.

Another event of great moment, which served to enrich the cultural life of go in Montreal, occurred in the late 1990's, actually, in 1998, when one of Montreal's long-time go players, François Lorrain, a retired professor of mathematics at Jean-Brébeuf college, published a remarkable book entitled *Le Go le grand jeu de l'Orient* (Librairie Biosfaire).

The author of this book, which is about 150 pages in length, provides an interesting introduction to the game. Note that the word *interesting* is used rather than, say, another word, like *excellent*, this is because of the interesting way in which François goes about introducing the game. He does this, not by delving into those matters which are normally considered to be the staple of what an introduction is—an explanation of the rules of the game, and a brief overview of some elementary notions on strategy and tactics. No, instead, he introduces the game by pursuing matters which normally lie outside the pale of the traditional view of what is meant by the word *introduction*. He explores go through the prism of such topics as go etiquette, the comparison of go and chess, and the parallels that can be drawn between the strategies found in go and those prac-

ticed by the Chinese elites in China's military and political circles—these are examples of the kinds of topics waiting to be explored by the interested reader.

Where the book truly shines, though, are in those areas where the author's expertise, the product of many years of thoughtful analysis, is given the opportunity to reveal itself in full bloom. These areas are the ones in which François outlines the intricacies that are found in each of the various methods that are available in go for counting points. Here, François demonstrates, with unmistakable self-evidence, which aspect of go, among the many that one can choose from, succeeded in captivating his interest over the years.

Finally, another feature of the book worth praising is the high quality of the artwork that is found throughout the book. Though presented in black and white, the work is full of delightful illustrations, which enriches the reading experience of the reader.

For those readers who might find it difficult to restrain their excitement about go after reading this book, and who may want to experience the pleasure of playing the game immediately, François had the clever idea of having two go-bans of different dimensions (5×5 and 9×9) printed in the inside cover of the book's dustjacket along with a sufficient number of black and white stones. The eager reader only needs to cut out the cardboard-like stones and he can begin to play go right away.

In addition to being the author of *Le Go le grand jeu de l'Orient*, François is also the author of a series of articles, 13 in all, which appeared in *Récréation Québec*, the official publication of the FQJR, in 2001 and 2002. These articles, all of them short (maximum of 2 pages), cover a wide range of interesting topics—some serious, others fanciful—but all of them go-related, for example: *Why is go played on a 19×19 go-ban?* or, *What if the gods could play go*, or still, *How many possible games of go are there?* (These articles are available in French only as of the writing of this history.)

(Incidentally, François' book, *Le Go le grand jeu de l'Orient*, is the first book that was published in Canada on a go-related matter. Published in 1998, François' book came out one year before the book by Sung-Hwa Hong—*First Kyu: a Novel*—was put out by Good Move Press, the publishing arm of Samarkand. Sung-Hwa Hong, a dentist, who lived in Vancouver, was well-known to the members of the Korean community in the Vancouver area. He was a strong go player, a member of the CGA executive, and a regular at the annual Canadian Open. Sadly, he died prematurely in 2001.)

At about the same time as the book by François was being printed, another Montrealer, namely myself, was involved in the production of another book on go: *Strategic Fundamentals in Go*, (published in 1999 by Yutopian Enterprises, 167 pages). My role in the production of this book was not as its author but rather as the person responsible for the layout, design of the book, along with the creation of the diagrams, and the editing of the translation that was provided.

The point that the authors of this book, Guo Tisheng and Lu Wen, want to make is that when making a move in go, a player must try to harmonize the impact that that move will have within a broad strategic framework that will involve conflicting principles. The principles that the authors present in this work are the following: sente vs. gote, big vs. small points, attack vs. defense, life vs. death, big vs. small territories, saving vs. sacrificing stones, light vs. heavy shapes, slack moves vs. urgent points, standard moves vs. flexible variations, and persistence vs. playing safe.

Each one of these principles embodies strengths and weaknesses, pros and cons. For example, in looking at the first principle—sente vs. gote—the reader will come to see that the conflict here is that sente allows a player to maintain the initiative, but it gives his opponent an opportunity to counterattack, while gote, on the other hand, forsakes the initiative, but it builds a solid foundation for future attacks. The same general idea is applied to the other principles.

Like François, I also wrote a number of go-related articles, though not as many as François. Of the 9 or so articles by my pen, two of them have the potential of making a meaningful contribution to go, albeit on a modest scale: *How to Organize and Direct a Swiss-McMahon Tournament* and *How to Use the Chinese Method of Counting in the Game of Go*.

The first article mentioned above—on the Swiss-McMahon system—is based on the experience I acquired over many years in directing tournaments in which the Swiss-McMahon system of pairings was used (all together, I directed 18, two-day tournaments using this system—16 of which were Quebec Opens, the 2 were Canadian Opens). This article has a number of appendixes, all of them containing useful information, including one appendix in particular which contains all the forms that a tournament director would need if he wanted to direct a tournament.

The principal reason that motivated me to write this article, besides the obvious one of wanting to share my experiences in directing tournaments, was my concern that certain component elements in the workings of tournaments, in general, and of the Swiss-McMahon system, in particular, are not handled properly by many tournament directors, whether these directors be humans or machines. Paramount among these elements is the one that is centered on the process for breaking ties.

When breaking ties, many tournament directors fail to take into account the following two subtleties as they go about gathering the information they need to make the required calculations: (1) the final McMahon scores of the opponents of the tied players must be adjusted by adding $\frac{1}{2}$ point for each round these opponents missed and for each game they lost by default, and by subtracting $\frac{1}{2}$ point for each bye these opponents received (of course, a player should not receive more than one bye in the same tournament) and for each game they won by default; and (2) the figure that is obtained when the tournament director adds up the final McMahon scores of the opponents of a tied-player (i.e., the SOS figure) must be normalized if the tied player did not have a full set of opponents—the term *full set of opponents* means that the number of opponents

involved in the calculation of the SOS must be equal to the number of rounds in the tournament (e.g., in a 6-round tournament, each tied player must have played against 6 opponents, if he played against fewer than 6 opponents, then the value of the SOS must be normalized).

Unfortunately, many tournament directors are not cognizant of the two subtleties just described and, consequently, they misapply the tie-break calculations when they attempt to break ties. The article cited above—*How to Organize and Direct a Swiss-McMahon Tournament*—provides a more detailed explanation than the one presented here, along with a pertinent example, of the importance of making these types of adjustments.

All of these articles, those written by François as well as those written by me, can be found at the AQJG's Web site. In addition, my articles can also be found at the Web site of the Canadian Go Association (CGA).

In the period from 2005 to 2008, two new go clubs were established, one in each of the two major universities in Montreal. In the fall of 2005, Michaël Bérubé made an attempt to start a go club at the *Université de Montréal*. The existence of this club was always precarious and it may even have known some short periods of non-existence, but as of the writing of this paper, the club is active and is under the care of Jean-Sébastien Lechasseur. In 2008 or 2009, another attempt was made to start a go club at McGill University. This club, which is not active during the summer months, is located in the Trottier building, at 3630 *rue* University, and the club's contact person is Tom Wu.

Finally, since it seems to be the law that all good things must come to an end, so it was with the Montreal Go Club's long-time association with McGill University. After 17 years of uninterrupted presence at McGill, the club was asked to leave in February, 2008. The common room, where the club held its meetings on Tuesday evenings, was slated to undergo major renovations, and the Department of Mathematics may have decided, finally, to enforce its long-held policy of requiring faculty sponsorship when granting permission to any outside entity to occupy any space that comes under the Department's control. In any event, February 12 was the date on which the Montreal Go Club met for the last time at this location.

Fortunately, thanks to the intervention of Jian Zhang, who acted as middleman, the Montreal Go Club found a new location in record time. This new place was the *Café Yoy Sushi Bar*, located at 4526 *rue* St-Denis, just north of Mont-Royal *avenue* near the Mont-Royal subway station. This café is an eating establishment that specializes in preparing and serving sushi dishes.

The owner of this establishment gave his permission for the club to meet on Sunday afternoons, from 2 PM to 6 PM (this was later changed, at the owner's request, from 1 PM to 5 PM). Though official, in practice, these hours are not enforced. The first meeting of the club at its new location took place on May 4, 2008. Thankfully, the owner allows the club to meet at his establishment rent free. In return, the players make it a point to consume something that comes from the restaurant's kitchen and to encourage newcomers to do the same, even if it's just a cup of coffee.

A source of endless fascination, given that the *Café Yoy*, is, after all, simply a restaurant, is the degree of peacefulness that seems to reign in the atmosphere of the café. The principal reason that explains the unusually high degree of peaceful bliss is that the restaurant is almost always bereft of patrons. The extent of this bereftness is so overwhelmingly obvious that sometimes it forms the basis of the conversation among players who, in wonderment, marvel at the restaurant's ability to stay in business despite its apparent lack of activity. Some players, who visited the café at other times during the week, report that it doesn't seem to be any busier at those other times either.

In regard to the restaurant's suitability as a venue for playing go, the restaurant does very well; but it never succeeds in reaching, let alone surpassing, the level of quality that was found at McGill. For example, in regards to lighting, although the quality of the lighting found at the café is quite good, it doesn't reach the level of quality that was found at McGill; and in regards to noise, although the level of noise at the café is quite low, it doesn't reach the low level that was found at McGill.

However, the one area in which McGill clearly outclasses the café is in regard to the suitability of the tables that are used for playing go. The tables at the restaurant have two annoying characteristics: (1) they are rather small, which means that a bowl of stones will occasionally fall off the table and hit the floor with all the attending consequences that the reader can imagine; and (2), they wobble, or, at least, some of them do, which means that it is not uncommon to see players placing folded napkins, or some other wedge-like agent, under one or more of a table's legs in an effort to stabilize it. However, despite these shortcomings, which are annoying but not intolerable, the members of the club are generally pleased with the location. They are especially thankful that a place was found at the restaurant where the club's go sets could be stored.

After the Montreal Go Club moved to its new location at the *Café Yoy*, I, the author of this short history, finally got around to making a decision about a project that I have long been thinking about and that I have long been eager to undertake. This project involved collecting all the handwritten tournament grids of the past Quebec Opens and the *Tournois d'hiver* and of transforming them into an electronic format (i.e., a PDF format). Undertaking such a project, however, would involve a long term commitment because of the considerable amount of work and time that such a project would entail. Consequently, whenever I thought about this project in the past, I knew that I wasn't ready to take it on at that particular moment.

However, by 2008, finding myself with a lot more time on my hands, owing to my recent retirement, I finally decided that it was time to go ahead with this project. Consequently, in 2008, I completed all the grids belonging to the *Tournoi d'hiver*, and in 2009, I completed all the grids that belonged to the Quebec Open. However, to make sure the reader is not misled, the project did not take the full two years to complete—i.e., the full 24 months found in 2008 and 2009 together—but rather, it required the equivalent of about 4 solid months in each year.

The precise nature of this project is one that I can describe as being very straightforward, and it involved a simple, three-step process. For each tournament grid, I needed to perform the following three tasks: (1) take the information found in the original, hand-written tournament grid and transcribe it into a Word document (which was designed to resemble the layout of a tournament grid); (2) double-check each pairing in the tournament to make sure that no error was going to make its way into the new electronic grid (which can happen easily to anyone, even to the most experienced and conscientious tournament director); and (3) reformat each Word file into a PDF format.

Step 2 in the process outlined above, the step in which I take on the task of double-checking each pairing to make sure that the information I transcribed into the Word grid was error free, was the part of the project that I dreaded the most. This is a very tedious and a very time-consuming task, but it's a task that had to be done because I needed to make sure about two things: (1) whether I made any mistakes during the transcription process; and (2) whether the original tournament directors, those who entered the information in the hand-written grids for the first time, had themselves made any mistakes. In both cases, the double-checking paid off. Though few in number, some errors did indeed find their way into the Word document before they were detected and corrected—some of these errors were made by me, and some were made by the original tournament directors.

Fortunately, during the years in which I was active as tournament director, I had already completed the work described above for about a third of all the existing grids, which means that the task I was facing when I started this project in 2008 was not as onerous as it might have appeared to be at first glance.

Once the PDF files were created, they were then posted on the AQJG's Web site, and a copy of these files was sent to the FQJR for safekeeping. Now, each time a new tournament is held, I, or some other volunteer, will only need to open a new Word template (into which is transcribed the information from the original tournament grid) and begin the three-step process described above, which will end in producing the official record of the tournament in a PDF format.

The only reason why I was able to undertake this project was because the AQJG had been successful in preserving all the original tournament grids for all the Quebec Opens and all the *Tournois d'hiver* (except for the grid of the very first *Tournoi d'hiver*). And why was the AQJG so fortunate in this regard? The answer is quite simple, because the AQJG was, and still is, a member of the FQJR. One of the many services that the FQJR provides to its members is an archival service. The purpose of this service is to allow member associations, like the AQJG, to safeguard their important documents by allowing them to deposit them in a central repository located at the head office of the FQJR. After each tournament, either the president of the AQJG or the tournament director himself, would mail the grid to the FQJR, where, in turn, it was then filed away with the other grids.

During the two years in which I laboured, on and off, to create the PDF files connected with this project, I also created two master-list files, each one containing the names of the players who participated in each tournament.

The main reason for creating these master-list files was to provide myself with a tool that would help me maintain consistency in the spelling of the name of each player who participated in either one, or both, of these tournaments (the Quebec Open and the *Tournoi d'hiver*). Another reason was my desire to satisfy my curiosity regarding the total number of separate individuals who participated in each tournament over time. As of the end of 2013, with a total of 35 tournaments, 496 distinct individuals have played in the Quebec Opens; and also at the end of 2013, with a total of 34 tournaments, 563 distinct individuals have played in the *Tournoi d'hiver*.

Finally, in 2012, after many years at the helm of the AQJG, the long-time executives of this organization—André Labelle and myself—decided that it was time to leave the executive of this association and to make room for players from a younger generation, and to allow these new organizers to bring their talents, energy, and skills to bear on the issues of the day. Thus, on Sunday afternoon, May 27, between the 5th and 6th round of the 34th Quebec Open, elections were held for the selection of a new board of executives, headed by the new President of the AQJG, Jean-Sébastien Lechasseur.

Jean-Sébastien, 5-dan, a player from Quebec City, who is pursuing graduate studies in Mathematics at the *Université de Montréal* is an active organizer in several regards. He looks after the club at the *Université de Montréal*, and he is currently helping to establish and organize the *Ligue Univesitaire*. This new tournament, which is still a work in progress, held its first tournament games in 2012, and is now engaged in the second year of activity. Eventually, the *League* will be composed of clubs from all of Quebec's universities.

In addition, Jean-Sébastien is also active in cooperating with the Kaya Go Server (Kaya.gs on the Internet) to help it establish itself. This server, at the time of the writing of this history, has a beta version online. One of the features that will help distinguish this new go server from the others will be its ability to show tournament games in progress, as they happen, LIVE, and to show, at the same time, the video feed (via webcam) of the players playing the game being displayed. Since 2010, Jean-Sébastien looked after diffusing the top games that were played at the AQJG's annual tournaments—the Quebec Opens and the *Tournoi d'hiver*—on the Kaya server.

The new organizers who are helping to develop go in Quebec seem to come mostly from outside the Montreal area. A few of them are from the Quebec-city area: players such as Joseph Levasseur, Alexandre Dutil, and Pascal Tremblay. These players are particularly active in organizing the annual *Tournoi des maîtres*, an online tournament that was established in 2007. Using a round-robin format, this tournament is designed to produce a winner—the Challenger—who earns the right to play a best-of-three match against the reigning *Maître du Québec*. If successful, the challenger becomes the new *Maître du Québec*, a title he gets to keep until he is dethroned by

a new challenger. The games that are played in the *Tournoi des maîtres* are mostly held on the KGS Go Server, in the *Salle Québécoise* Room.

In Gatineau, formerly called Hull, which is the major urban center in eastern Quebec, in the region known as the Outaouais, just across the Ottawa river from Ottawa, the Canadian capital, there is one organizer—Marc St-Onge—who seems to be particularly active in this region. He recently organized and directed the Canadian Open of 2012 in Gatineau.

The initiatives that have been undertaken by these young go players from the Quebec City region and from the Outaouais region are an indication of the general growth, albeit a slow one, in the development of go in the regions of this province during this entire period, spanning 25 years. Though halting at times, the development of go is well established, or, at the very least, well on its way to becoming well-established, in Quebec City, Gatineau (formerly Hull), Sherbrooke, Rimouski, and Saguenay (formerly Chicoutimi).

In the past 25 years, a certain degree of progress has been made in furthering the aspirations of Quebec's go players in their quest to strengthen the foundations of go in the city of Montreal, in particular, and in the province of Quebec, in general.

In looking back over these two and a half decades, there is reason to rejoice in the accomplishments described below (despite the evidence that seems to suggest that the ability to play go on the Internet may have had the effect of slowing down this progress):

- The Montreal Go Club continues to exist, and, what's more, new clubs have been established. However, the overall strength of these clubs is always a little on the precarious side. This is true even for the long-standing doyen of all the go clubs in Quebec: the Montreal Go Club. After close to 50 years of continuous existence, the weekly attendance record for this club is rather disappointing—about 8 to 12 players (sometimes more than 12 and sometimes less than 8). The club has known better days in terms of attendance. When the club was located at *Le Spécialiste des Échecs* (1984 to 1991), attendance was noticeably much higher, so much so that the club opened a second evening for its members, and this at a time when the members of the club were paying rent.

Despite the growth in the absolute number of Montrealers who know how to play the game, there does not seem to be any growth in the number of players who show up at the club or at the tournaments. In the 30-odd years during which I have frequented the Montreal Go Club, the attendance record has tended to follow a predictable pattern: there is a small but reliable core of players who show up regularly, year after year (in the case of the Montreal Go Club,

this core consists of André Labelle, Khalid Benabdallah, Tibor Bognar, and myself); then there is a revolving door of players who show up as beginners, learn the rudiments of the game, become stronger, then, after 2 or 3 years of regular attendance, they leave, many of them never to be seen again. I suppose that the picture I just described is one that applies to many go clubs throughout North America and Europe, and it may even be applicable to clubs in the Orient itself. Still, the persistent steadfastness of this pattern is disheartening.

- A few places were found where players could play go on Sundays (*Café Passez Go*, *Café Ludik*); however, they were not successful over the long term.
- Two new clubs have been established in the Montreal area at the *Université de Montréal* and McGill University.
- Clubs have been established in several of Quebec's regions. The list can be seen at the AQJG Web site. However, little is known about the level of their lastingness over the long term.
- The two annual tournaments—The Quebec Open and the *Tournoi d'hiver*—continue to exist.
- New tournament formats have been created (*Tournoi des maîtres* and the *League Universitaire*). Time will tell if they pass the test of time.
- A Web site for the AQJG was established in 1996, and it has remained successfully in operation ever since its establishment.
- The room *Salle Québécoise* was created on KGS and is being maintained. At one time there was a McGill Room, but it has since been removed.
- The diffusion of tournament games through the association of the AQJG with the Kaya Social Go Server is promising.

Unfortunately, though few in number, there have been a few failures in the past 25 years. The services listed below no longer exist (these services disappeared in small part because of a lack of volunteers; but in much larger part because of the lack of space to store these services, and, in the case of the selling of books and equipment, because of the inactivity of the AQJG's supplier):

- The lending library.
- The selling of go books and sets.

In any event, a new generation of go players has arisen and these players will no doubt rise to the challenge and will find in themselves the energy to accomplish what needs to be done.

Post Script:

In October, 2013, I learned from Gina, the wife of Abe Ravinsky, that her husband had passed away on January 4, 2012. I immediately wrote a short article to commemorate the contribution made by Abe, as a pioneer of go, in the development of go in Montreal. This article was distributed widely in Canada via the December issue of Canadian Go Newsletter (see *In Memoriam: Abe Ravinsky*).

Steven J. C. Mays, Montreal, February 10, 2014.