

August 2010

A STRATEGY FOR YOUTH GO

Objectives

The BGA adopts the following objectives, to be achieved by 2020:

- By the age of 15, all students should know what Go is (i.e. it is as much part of the English lexicon as is “chess”)
- There should be a Go club (possibly part of a “Mind Sports” club) in 30% of all schools¹.

and the BGA will put in place Policies to meet the above Objectives.

Knowledge about Go

Over the past 25 years, knowledge about Go has increased significantly across the country, but there are still a large number of people who would say “never heard of it”. Introducing Go in schools should ensure not only that the students hear about it, but also their parents – so there is a multiplier effect, ensuring that introducing it to one student can actually mean that three or four people will come to hear about it.

Peter Wendes, through his programme of events, has been instrumental in increasing the number of people who know about Go. However, follow-up to his events has generally been weak or non-existent.

We must recognise that, of the people who come to know about Go, only a small percentage will ever go on to become serious players.

Schools Clubs

Go has been introduced into a number of schools: sometimes it has taken root, sometimes withered. The factors that seem to encourage successful introduction are as follows:-

- Keen and interested member of staff

¹ In an ideal world this figure would be 100%, but this is almost certainly completely unattainable within the next 20 years: I see no point in having unrealistic objectives. There are around 2300 schools in the UK

- Critical mass of students interested in the game
- Socio-economic background of the students
- Student success at Go (?)
- External assistance (?)
- Interaction with other Mind Sports (??).

It is extremely difficult to keep a Go Club in existence without staff support. Occasionally it might be possible if there is a keen and knowledgeable older student, but even in such cases the club is unlikely to survive that student leaving the school (there is a similar effect seen in many University Go Clubs).

The BGA can offer external assistance to School Clubs. This can take the form of:-

- External visits, mentoring, etc
- Financial Assistance

Most school clubs meet at lunchtimes nowadays so any external visitor needs to have a flexible lifestyle – this generally will mean that they are retired or working part-time. Apart from meeting child protection requirements, external visitors will need to be good communicators – and this is a skill which is not widespread through the Go community. In 2004 the BGA appealed for volunteers to assist with schools – the response was basically from “the usual suspects”, i.e. people already active in the Association, and personally know to Council.

Some Go Clubs are part of a “Mind Sports” club – and where appropriate the BGA will collaborate with other Mind Sports in encouraging Mind Sports in schools.

The BGA has significant financial resources, especially with recent sponsorship from Winton’s. The following are possible ways in which financial assistance can be provided to Schools clubs:-

- Provision of equipment
- Covering expenses of external visitors
- Transport to events

This list deliberately excludes running events themselves (e.g. Youth Tournaments, Go Challenge).

It is not clear which of these possible expenditure routes would be effective (e.g. the BGA could send every school 5 Go sets, but this would be unlikely to result in a significant number of schools playing Go).

Monitoring

The BGA grades school clubs in the following categories:

- Level 1 – interested contact
- Level 2 – school club meeting
- Level 3 – school holding UK Go Challenge heat

- Level 4 – school players in Youth Championships, Go Challenge finals
- Level 5 – school players in Youth Grand Prix / ordinary tournaments

And in fact the idea of setting up the UK Go Challenge and reviving the Youth Grand Prix were partly to set up this structure.

The following measures are to be recorded, the first two being annual totals and the last four would be snapshots:

- New contacts – number of new contacts in year
- New clubs – number of new school clubs starting in year
- Level 2 clubs – club meeting regularly
- Level 3 clubs – entered the UKGC this year
- Level 4 clubs – 3 or more pupils entering youth tournaments
- Level 5 clubs – 3 or more pupils entering YGP / ordinary tournaments

with an objective to increase each by 20% in the year.

What should the BGA do?

Currently the BGA has more financial than human resources, and these proposals are predicated on that assumption.

Improving Contacts

- The BGA should support Peter Wendes in his programme of introducing Go to schools (and other youth groups). However, before each event occurs, a follow up plan is to be produced: this is to ensure that any seeds which germinate can be nurtured and looked after. This will require local resources (both human and financial).
- Ask BGA clubs/members to see if there are teachers/parents/others interested in setting up school clubs (or junior clubs e.g. on the Cambridge Chess&Go Club model)
- Assign mentor or contact person to all new contacts for follow up (need to clarify mentor's role), & provide info sheet/pack on services provided by BGA
- Discuss with BGA Books / Pentangle² if it is possible to follow up any new school contacts they get and/or to advertise within their sets
- Have Go stalls at relevant events where there are likely to be teachers/parents/juniors (e.g. large junior chess events)
- Advertise the UKGC via the UKCC mailing list (usually done so far)
- Look at possibilities for articles in publications read by teachers (Peter Wendes and France Ellul have had success with this before)
- Ensure good supply of suitable promotional booklets and cardboard sets (was done in the past)
- Make sure contact details of interested people (especially teachers) from exhibitions etc are collected and followed up if possible
- Follow up previous contacts (e.g. Stowe, Whitehaven) to see if still interested

² The new name for Payday Games

- Ask teachers already involved with Go for suggestions of how to get more teachers interested

Fostering activities

- Each school Go Club should have an “external mentor” (or mentors) who will commit to making at least three visits per term.
- Look into the possibility of providing training in helping out at a junior/school club and teaching Go to juniors (could possibly also cover running a club for juniors, running a stall at an event with lots of juniors etc)
- Provide server that schools can use (done)
- Provide good packs/documentation for UKGC heats (done)
- Provide puzzle sets and certificates that schools can use (done)
- Produce one-side-of-A4 document on why Go should be of interest to schools e.g. mention any links to national curriculum, Duke of Edinburgh’s etc
- If possible produce paper youth newsletter and/or e-newsletter

Finance

- Liaise with Pentangle on equipment at special prices for schools (this is already available I believe, but are schools aware and do they get price lists?)
- Where necessary subsidise equipment for schools and school visits
- Provide help with travel costs to tournaments if needed (already exists)

Improvement

- Organising junior events e.g. BYGC, UKGC, YGP (done)
- Revive scheme to provide some pro lessons (there is still remaining money)
- Encourage stronger juniors to join Shodan Challenge (with suitable mentor)

BGA Membership

- Provide some kind of welcome pack for new junior members
- Have more junior-related articles in the BGJ or a junior section
- Look at making tournaments cheaper for juniors who are individual members

Meetings, Communications and Training.

We will encourage teachers to run Go Clubs, and the BGA is investigating to see if a one-day conference for teachers (both existing and potential) is feasible.

The BGA will help Schools communicate with each other, for example by providing a dedicated Go server.

The BGA will provide training to teachers and/or external visitors where requested.

*Toby Manning
18 Nov 2009*

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