

I think it will be fun, and fully expect some of these students to stop by after to school some day to play me. One of them already suggested that he wants to "take me on". My goal is to generate enough interest for a club next year. If I can interest just ten students in the game out of a student population of 800 I will feel like I have been successful.

Wish me luck folks.

Terri

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ONE GIANT LEAP FOR GO, OR ASTRONAUTS FIND LIFE IN SPACE

BY MIKE PENG, MARK HALL, HOUSTON GO CLUB

"If there is intelligent life in space possibly they play chess; most certainly, they play Go." -Edward Lasker

On the 18th of January, while most of the country slept, a small bit of history was made. High above the Earth, an unusual pair of go games was played by Dan Barry and Koichi Wakata, astronauts and go enthusiasts on board the space shuttle Endeavour. They replayed a famous go game and then played a game of their own, each on boards specially designed for weightlessness.

"GO to space, a journey of 4,000 years" and "Be Good and Be Right" were the slogans inscribed respectively in English and Chinese on the two go boards and carried on board the Space Shuttle Endeavour. This flight of the Endeavour circled the earth from January 11, 1996 through January 20, 1996. On these boards, Barry and Wakata, two of the six Endeavour's astronauts, made history by playing the first board game ever in space. These activities were also the climax of the space go contests that were sponsored by the American Go Association (AGA), funded by the American Go Foundation (AGF), and organized by the Houston Go Club (HGC).

Dan, an HGC member, had been in training as a Space Shuttle astronaut since 1992. We had met Dan in March of 1994, when he first joined the HGC. "I would like to play go in space during my Space Shuttle flight", he had said. At that time his flight had been scheduled for November, 1995. He had added, "I am going to need a special go set to play in the weightless conditions". We had promised him that we would make one for him.

Then we thought, "let's organize a space go set design contest and select the winning set for his flight." With that in mind, we contacted Phil Straus, AGA president, for suggestions and help. Phil loved the idea and recommended an essay contest and a drawing contest for elementary and high school students in addition to the design contest. He proposed the titles: "Space, Go and Communications" for the essay contest and "How to Play Go in Space" for the drawing contest.

We conveyed the contest proposal to Dan - his reaction? "Great! But we have to be careful because NASA does not allow people to use space programs to endorse things or organizations." After consulting with NASA lawyers in Washington DC, Dan brought us the good news, "NASA has approved the contests, but with some restrictions". We would not be able to award cash to those entries which will be flown in space and we must state clearly on each flyer: "These contests are not sponsored by NASA. NASA has no responsibilities for the contests in any way. Any entry that is flown in space becomes the permanent property of the US government and will not be returned to either the AGA or the designer, builder, or winner of the contest". We decided to award a plaque to the winners of the design contest and award cash to winners in the other two contests. This allowed Dan to fly the winning go sets.

Dan helped put together the requirements for the space go set. It was quite a challenge: design or build a complete set to fit in a 8.5"x11"x1" space and weigh less than 1.5 pounds. A computerized solution was not an option. As Barry remarked in a recent interview with Houston's David Perkola, "Any software that goes in flight has to be verified and certified, made sure that it won't interfere with some of the other programs that are running". Failure was not an option, either.

For the next several months, notices were posted in the AGA Newsletters and the American Go Journal as well as on rec.games.go on the Internet.

The winning go set design by Wai-Cheung Willson Chow of Alhambra, CA was made of paper and foam board with paper pockets to store the paper 'stones'. The board unfolds into a full size go board with transparent pockets to hold the paper pieces. Mr. Chow is a recent immigrant from Hong Kong and is currently preparing to obtain a dentist's license in California. His design was based on his elementary school experiences of making a Chinese chess board to play in the windy school ground in Hong Kong. He and his classmate, Chie-Wai Yau, couldn't afford a commercial chess board and jointly built a paper board. He even adopted the school motto of "Be Good and Be Right" for his entry.

The second place design by Ronald Doctors of Santa Barbara, CA was a magnetic set fabricated from a magnetic sheet on a wood backing, with thumb tack pieces housed in wooden drawers. The point of each thumb tack serves as a "handle" for ease of placement and removal. The set can successfully resist a force of 1.0 G - in other words, it can be used upside down on Earth!

Third place was taken by Jeff Shaevel, the AGA's newly elected Central Vice President and the President of the Austin Go Club, with a design consisting of paper board and rotating paper disc pieces. Jeff declined his award, enabling us to provide each of the participants in the drawing contest and the essay contest with a memento.

As a back-up, the HGC also provided Dan and Koichi with a wooden folding board. This board was constructed out of a quarter inch thick maple and used the adhesive label game recording system from the British Go Association. Thanks go to Paul Margetts and his friend Yvonne Mao for hand-delivering the sticky labels. The foam board was the arena in which Barry and Wakata reenacted the 1936 retirement game of Shusai, as printed in the book *The Master of Go*. "We duct-taped it to the wall," says Barry, "and then Koichi played above the board on the ceiling." (Try doing that here on Earth!) "We actually didn't play through the whole game," Barry added, "because in the interest of time we wanted to get a second game going that was our own game." That second game was played on the maple board. They didn't finish playing that one, either. Barry and Wakata employed a tactic that placed them in the company of Sir Edmund Hillary and Neil Armstrong, as Barry explained: "It would have taken up all of our scheduled time to finish the whole game, and also...[we didn't want there to be] someone who's won a game and someone who's lost a game in space."

In the essay contest, the winner was 15 year old David Ho of Houston, Texas, a 10th grader in the Memorial High School in Houston. He received a \$150.00 check from the AGF. The second place check for \$100.00 went to David's 16 year old brother Bryan, an 11th grader in the same school. We are very proud of both David and Bryan, Houston's own home-grown players, for their outstanding achievement of advancing from 20 plus kyu to shodan in just two years.

Sixteen boys and girls ranging from 7 through 12 submitted entries for the drawing contest. The winning entry, by Joanna Erbach of Winnipeg, Canada, appears on the front cover of the latest issue of the *American Go Journal*. Joanna, 12, is a 6th grader in the Victor H. L. Wyatt School. The main idea for the drawing was hers but she credits her Dad with suggesting that she "draw something that contrasted Japanese formality and American informality". The AGF awarded Joanna \$100.00.

The second place winner was 11 year old Darius Wu of Plano, Texas, a sixth grader at Renner Middle School. Darius received a \$75.00 award from the AGF.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the participants who submitted the entries. Thanks also go to Roger and Bonnie White and the AGF, which funded the contests and the AGA which encouraged this excellent educational project. We are indebted to the following members of the Houston Go Club who helped build the maple go set and judge the contests. They are Robert Cordingley, Mark Hall, Charles Harveson, Andy Kochis, George Patrick and Mike Peng. We also want to thank Paul Margetts, Yvonne Mao and the British Go Association for providing the sticky labels for the maple board. Of course, how can we forget to say "Thank You" to Dan Barry and Koichi Wakata. Without them, this program would have not been possible.

Is there a future for go in space, perhaps on a space station? Barry indicated that there just might be: "If you are going to live some place for a year, it can't be all work, and I think that go is a game that appeals to...the type of people that would fly on a space station." Barry might even play on a future shuttle mission, if there is another such mission in his stars, "I would have no problem at all bringing that foam board back." Both Barry and Wakata received honorary promotions from the Nihon Kiin, Wakata to 1D and Barry to 2D. "It's gonna take me a long time to earn that rank," says Barry.