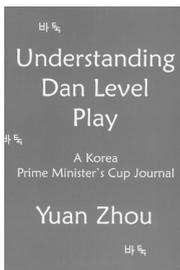


# BOOK REVIEW

## UNDERSTANDING DAN LEVEL PLAY

Neil Moffatt

moffatt.neil@gmail.com



*Author:* Yuan Zhou (8d)

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This book covers the seven games the author played in the 2009 Korea Prime Minister's Cup. As representative for the US, he finished 5<sup>th</sup>, a best yet for his country. Yuan Zhou is becoming a prolific author of Go books. I hoped that this offering could compare with the excellent 'How Not To Play Go', which was as insightful as it was brief. 'Understanding Dan Level Play' is a longer book, but I feel that it does not quite succeed as well.

Obviously the subject matter is much more complex, and he does help explain the thinking behind dan player decisions and strategies, but I feel that it lacks a dimension. There is not enough explanation of why moves that would appear more obvious to kyu players are rejected. I feel that focusing on fewer games with a broader emphasis would have been a better idea. As it stands, it is more a set of dan game commentaries than it is an exposé of dan methodologies. I would also like to have seen some

use of graphics to mark out the flow of play — which areas are being affected by various sequences of play, for example. So my overall feeling is that there was an economy of effort in this publication, but there is probably still enough to glean from the book to reward the single digit kyu player.

In game seven, for example, he clearly explains that it is strategically correct to invade the corner since the wall White will get on the outside is already limited in scope by the Black stone in the middle of the side. Many kyu players take corners without full regard for outside consequences. In game three, a joseki is started in the lower right corner, but left incomplete so that a large moyo move could be played. He explains the thinking behind this and why neither player directly deals with this incompleteness. This kind of whole board explanation is where the book works well.

However, many of the book's messages are buried, to a degree, in detailed discussions of precise move placements. Whilst this is, of course, a vital part of the comprehension of dan level play, the messages are too diffuse and lack overall coherence. If a player is looking for dan game commentaries, he will enjoy the book. For those looking for more generalised understanding, they will find it less useful.

*The review copy was kindly provided by Slate & Shell.*

<sup>1</sup>[www.slateandshell.com](http://www.slateandshell.com)