

Hajin Lee

Outside the Board

HAJIN LEE

OUTSIDE THE BOARD

DIARY OF A PROFESSIONAL GO PLAYER



OLD HICKORY PRESS

2016

Outside the Board.
by Hajin Lee

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Designed & typeset by Andrew Jackson.
Cover design by Dan Maas.

Thanks to Andy Okun & Judy Debel
for additional proofreading.

First printing, 2016.

Old Hickory Press, LLC
700 NE 45th St,
Seattle, WA. 98105
www.oldsickorypress.org

Trade Paperback ISBN
978-1-945025-00-6

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Introduction

When I studied Go for seven to ten hours a day, I had one clear life goal: To become a professional Go player. The competition to become a pro is tough - less than one tenth of all prodigies pass the threshold. Most prodigies devote their lives to improving their Go skills, and having any other dream is considered a distraction.

Even so, I had a secret dream that I didn't tell anyone. I wanted to become a writer. Reading books was my favorite hobby, and once in a while I wrote short stories or essays for fun. Though none of my writings from that time were good enough to be published, I always thought I would publish at least one book in my life.

In 2008, I started a blog to practice writing in English and to share my life stories with the western Go community. I named my blog *Star Baduk*, because my name in Korean has the literal meaning "summer star". In it, I wrote more than 100 entries over about five years. These years were a transitional period for my career, from an active professional player to a university student, then from student to an administrator of an international Go organization. Due to that, my entries covered a wide area of my life from my personal memories, professional tournaments, travels, school life, and so on. As my life reached a faster and busier pace, though, I gradually moved my writing to emails and social media, and eventually I shut down my blog completely.

One day I was organizing files in my computer and noticed my old blog entries. Rereading them, they were not sophisticated, like ones written by a professional writer, but I found them genuine. As I read about my childhood stories and life as a professional player again, I thought it might be illuminating for Go players, especially those who follow professional players' games, but don't get to see much of their lives outside the board.

This is how I came to see my old entries as book material. Still, the book wouldn't have been possible without support from several people. My special thanks to Andrew Jackson, Fabien Lheureux, Andrew Okun, and Dan Maas. They were not only there as my best

friends, but also edited my entries, gave me feedback, and helped me through the technical aspects of publishing. I would also like to thank my family for always being by my side.

I hope you enjoy the book and find inspiration to play more Go and appreciate more professional games!