

9. INFORMES EN LOS MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN



Santiago Alvarez studies a go board in Ishioka, Ibaraki Prefecture.

Almost ready to 'go' to Cuba

By HIROKI ITO
The Asahi Shimbun

It's not unusual for foreigners to come to Japan for training, but a young Cuban here to master the game of go has raised a few eyebrows.

Santiago Alvarez, 22, is a student at the Torashiko Goda, 69, who runs an agricultural school in Ishioka, Ibaraki Prefecture. The walls of the Cuban's six-mat room are lined with books, videos and other go-related study materials. "I wake up around 6 or 7 a.m. Other than time spent on meals and farm work, I immerse myself in go until late at night," he says.

Alvarez lives in the home of Torashiko Goda, 69, who runs an agricultural school in Ishioka, Ibaraki Prefecture. The walls of the Cuban's six-mat room are lined with books, videos and other go-related study materials. "I wake up around 6 or 7 a.m. Other than time spent on meals and farm work, I immerse myself in go until late at night," he says.

Alvarez is a student majoring in sports culture at a university in Sancti Spiritus in central Cuba. Three years ago a mathematics teacher taught him how to play go. "It is more complex and profound than chess," Alvarez says. "Even if you understand the rules, it's hard to perfect your game."

He was chosen to fly to Japan last spring by the local go league. "I wondered why I was chosen when there are others who are better than me. But I decided to go for the benefit of the development of go in Cuba," he says.

His Japan trip was made possible through the nonprofit organization Sociedad de Intercambio Internacional de Go, a Japanese group promoting international exchange via go. The 70-member group has maintained contacts with Latin American countries since 2004. Cuba was the first nation the group visited, and representatives have been back almost every year. On their first visit

in 2004, Goda, who is a member, asked the Cuban sports minister to send a student to Japan. With go gaining popularity on the Internet after the 2003 World Cup, the Japanese Go Association (JGA) is now open in Hama-

tsu. "I hope to increase that number a lot when I return. It would be nice if every Cuban could play go."

While many Asian youngsters have apprenticed with professional Japanese go players, Alvarez is the first foreign student sponsored by the NPO, called bringing Alvarez here to promote the game overseas "unprecedented."

Yoshida hopes the Cuban is the first of many. "If we are able to make financial arrangements, we hope to sponsor more foreign students."

Alvarez arrived in Japan last November. "It was so cold. I had no idea what would happen. But people have been kind, and I haven't felt homesick."

Alvarez plays go with Goda and other locals almost every day. He says he has played about 1,500 games so far, including matches at tournaments in various cities.

His skill level, which was around the amateur rank 1kyu, has improved to 3-dan with instruction from professional players.

The go ambassador will return to Cuba soon. "Go is like a force of nature that has changed my life," he says. "Although there are more than a thousand go players in Cuba, I hope to increase that number a lot when I return. It would be nice if every Cuban could play go."



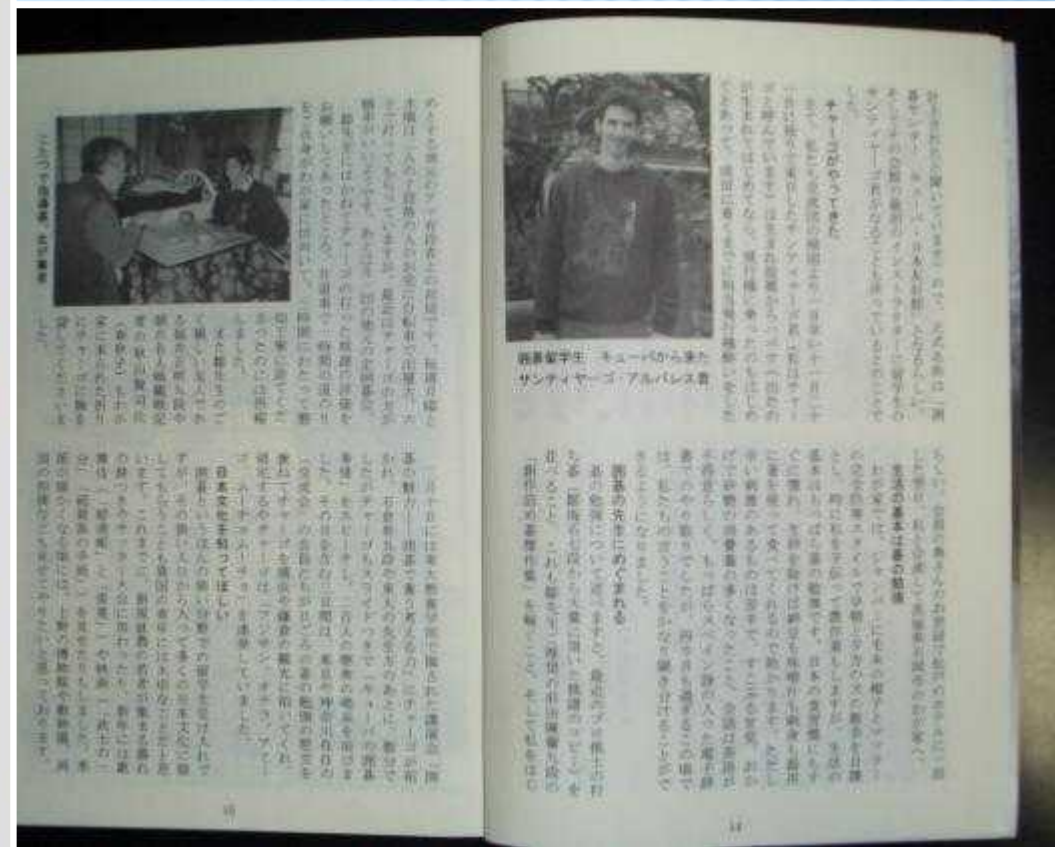
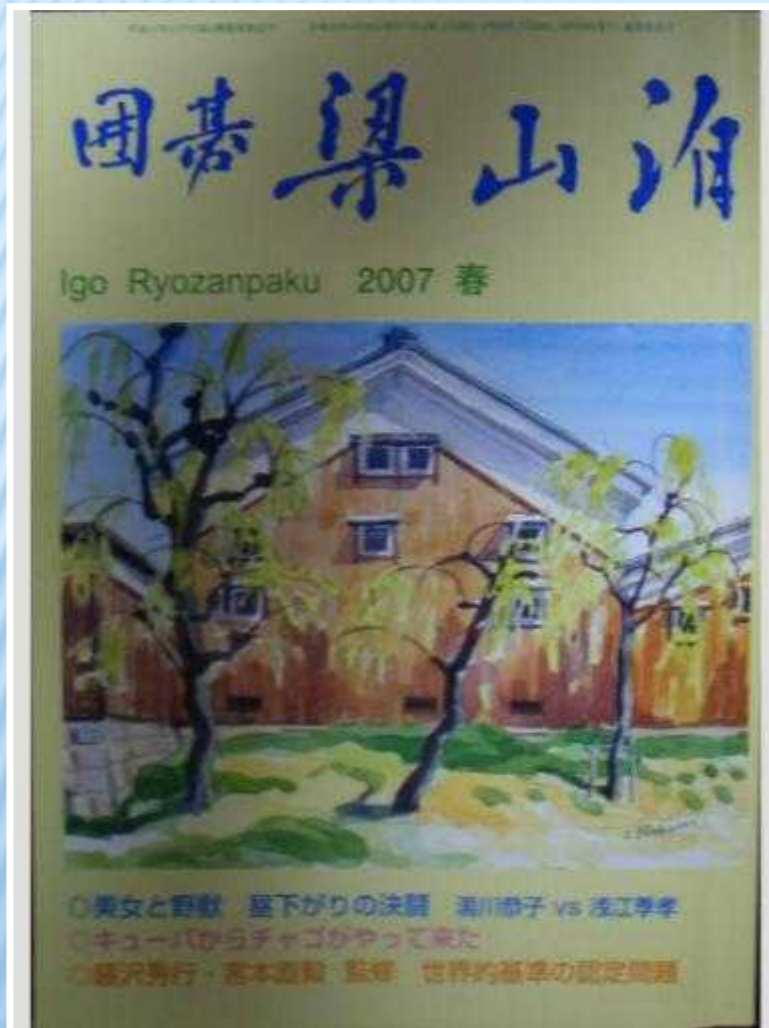
HERALD TRIBUNE

NACIONAL PERIÓDICO ASAHI

CHAGO HA GANADO ESTA PARTIDA

[illegible]

9. INFORMES EN LOS MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN



RIOZANPAKU, REVISTA DE GO