



????? 20?? vs ???

Yumi Hotta (??), Yumi Hotta

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globulon says

I have to say, I think this has been my favorite volume so far. I like that they are finally talking about real tournaments. I miss Sai but not a whole lot and kind of like that Hikaru is on his own now. I also thought the story with the Kansai Kiin player was cool and dramatic.

Ben Nash says

This story is comfort food for me. I can't quite put my finger on what keeps me rereading/rewatching this and the anime, but my interest in Go certainly helps. I also like that it's a generally positive story about getting good at something.

Matthew says

The suspense is killing me! I knew I should have checked out those other three volumes!

Krista says

???

Melissa says

??? and ??? graduating -- touching chapter. It's like a rite of passage into the "adult world" that they've thrust themselves into by their craziness for Go. Then, ? makes things interesting. Ah! And what a way to end the volume! Must start next volume.

Serge Pierro says

I found this to be quite an interesting volume within the series. The artist/writer team were able to really capture the excitement of a real Go tournament. I would have loved to have seen this volume adapted into the Anime series - especially the Tengen sequences!

LG (A Library Girl's Familiar Diversions) says

[He plays wild/risky Go, beginning with the middle (tengen) in one of his games. Hikaru plays against Morishita (his teacher in his stu

David says

So we're now in the final arc of the series, which much like the earlier multi-volume pro-test arc, is the series of qualifiers leading up to the Japan-Korea-China Junior Tournament. Although I'll be amazed if Akira and Hikaru aren't both members of the Japan team, this volume does manage to make each game tense, just like some of the better volumes earlier in the series.

The "threat" is rather gimmicky. Since we already know the established players in Hikaru's league, Hotta introduces the Kansai Go League and yet another brash new player to represent Hikaru's major "boss fight." He's a fifteen-year-old named Kiyoharu Yashiro. He has bleached white hair and he makes "stunt" moves like playing tengen (the center star point) as his first move.

On the one hand, this isn't terribly original storytelling -- Hotta is just doing the Pokemon/Dragonball thing, where in order to challenge the main character you keep bringing in new opponents who have some new trick up their sleeve. It's particularly hard to do this with go, since how many "tricks" can you realistically depict in a go game? But I liked it even if the outcome is almost a foregone conclusion.

This late in the series, there are more go terms being bandied about, so while you still don't need to be a good player to follow the story, it definitely helps to have learned the basics by now.

The other final match is between Ochi and Waya. Ochi has always been an annoying little punk, and I greatly enjoyed seeing him called a "four-eyed little mushroom."

Meanwhile, we see more evidence that Ogata 9-dan is turning into an egotistical jackass.

So, a bit of character development and some exciting go. I don't think Hotta can keep pulling these "Most Exciting Go Ever!" moments out of a hat, but there are only four volumes left.

Incidentally, this volume is where Hikaru graduates from middle school, but he's not going to high school since he's already making a living as a go professional. And so perhaps we have seen the last of Akari. Too bad that Hotta seems not to intend to make any kind of subplot involving Hikaru's non-go personal life.

Ben Truong says

This tankobon delves into the First and Second Preliminary Rounds for the Hokuto Cup Team Selection Tournament. Being a Junior Tournament, there aren't many candidates to participate in the first place, but what I like about these preliminaries is to subtly introduce the other branches of the Japanese Go Institute (Kansai and Central) and the other Go Institute in Japan – the Kansai Institute.

Kiyoharu Yashiro is introduced in this tankobon and is featured on the cover. He just turned pro and hasn't played any official games yet, but Hikaru Shindo found out that he likes to play unconventional and interesting hands on the goban, which Shindo so desperately want to play against. Likewise, Yashiro became interested in Shindo by watching his preliminary match.

As fate would have had it, Yashiro and Shindo did face each other in the Finals for one of the two open spots. As Shindo hoped Yashiro *did* play an interesting, albeit unconventional hand, just not the one he was hoping for. In response, Shindo responded with a hand just as interesting and unconventional and not to be outdone, Yashiro responded in such – it became a messy, brutal, but interesting game, which was left unresolved as a cliff-hanger.

Two matches of note were the parallel matches of Shindo vs. Morishita Shigeo, the leader of his study group and Akira Toya vs. Seiji Ogata, the highest ranking profession in his study group. They both lost their game, but they soon realized that playing a game without the pressure of a tournament is a totally different monster than just a pick-up game.

All in all, I really like the direction that this tankobon has taken us. It opened up the Go World further by introducing the Kansai Institute and other small branches of the Japanese Go Institute. It also introduces new characters and we get to see Hon Suyon again.

Ben Nealis says

A continuation of of the final arc. A sign of great storytelling. But it did feel a bit drawn out, almost that it could be 2 volumes.

Julie (Manga Maniac Cafe) says

4 stars

Hilary says

Basically just going through the motions at this point...

Thomas Maluck says

Ogata-sensei is now one of my favorite manga villains and the remainder of the series had better only enhance my impression of him. (He's not evil or anything, but he is a decidedly sharp and charismatic obstacle to Hikaru/Akira's progress)

Sophie says

The addition of another Really Strong Player was a little sudden, but it was understandable in that I really wouldn't have wanted Oshi to play in the international tournament and Isumi wasn't available. As for Waya, he just wouldn't have fit with Touya Akira and Hikaru. Anyway, this was still fun and exciting.

Timothy says

Huh? A new character? Hmm.... a bit more story would be nice.
