

**FEATURE: Aichi middle schooler becomes "shogi" pro at youngest age**

- 1) Sota Fujii is set to become the youngest professional player of shogi, Japanese chess, next month at the age of 14 years and 2 months, breaking a record that has been unbroken for more than 60 years.
- 2) The junior high school sophomore from Seto, Aichi Prefecture, central Japan, will rewrite the record held by Hifumi Kato, 76, who went pro in 1954. Kato, who now holds the highest rank of ninth dan, was 14 years and 7 months old.
- 3) Fujii is the fifth person who has turned pro while going to middle school. The other four are Kato, Koji Tanigawa, 54, also a ninth dan; Yoshiharu Habu, 45, holder of three major titles; and Akira Watanabe, 32, holder of two titles.
- 4) "They are all great and I will do my best so I can be as good as they are," Fujii said.
- 5) In grade-promoting league matches for third-dan amateur players that took place from April through September, Fujii came top with 13 wins and five losses among the total of 29 participants.
- 6) "Shoreikai," a training institute for amateurs, organizes the tournament twice a year and only two top players qualify to rise to the fourth-dan professional rank. Fujii is the sixth player who has been promoted to fourth dan at the first attempt.
- 7) "I'm so happy because I was able to give my best performance in the tournament," Fujii said. "I will brush up my skills so I can pursue a title."
- 8) Fujii was 5 when he started playing shogi. His grandmother bought him a shogi board game and he was enthralled with it.
- 9) "I've been playing shogi every day and it has already become part of me," he said.
- 10) Fujii was apprenticed to Masataka Sugimoto, 47, a seventh-dan player based in the Aichi prefectural capital of Nagoya, and entered Shoreikai in 2012 when he was a fourth grader, aspiring to turn pro.
- 11) He got promoted steadily and obtained third dan, the institute's highest grade, last October at the youngest age of 13 years and 2 months.
- 12) Fujii also won the "tsume shogi" problem solving championships in 2015 and 2016. In these championship games, professionals also participate, but Fujii defeated all of them.
- 13) "I've been solving tsume problems ever since I started playing shogi," he said. "That's probably why I'm good at the closing stage."
- 14) Tsume problems are considered effective in enhancing shogi skills, especially in the closing stages of the game.【September 21, 2016/Kyodo】



- 2) sophomore 2年生
- 3) middle school 中等学校 (米国では小学高学年から中学校)
- 5) participant 参加者
- 6) institute 協会、研究所
- qualify 資格を得る
- attempt 試み
- 7) brush up ①勉強をやり直す②技術等に磨きをかける
- pursue 追及する
- 8) enthrall 心を奪う、魅了する
- 10) apprenticed 見習いの
- aspiring 野心に燃える、意欲的な
- 11) steadily 着々と
- obtain 得る
- 14) effective 効果的である
- enhance 高める

**★Ice breaker for active discussion**

1. Do you play Shogi? Have you ever played any board games?
2. What do you think about the feat that only a 14-year-old boy has achieved?
3. What are the factors of his success? How about other kid geniuses?
4. What are the differences between amateurs and professionals?
5. When you were a junior high school student, what did you do?
6. Make sentences using the following vocabularies: attempt, qualify, pursue, apprentice, aspire, enhance.