

Japan's love of shogi reignited thanks to 14-year-old record-breaker

- 1) A schoolboy has set a record for consecutive victories in professional shogi – a Japanese version of chess – winning plaudits from the prime minister and sparking a surge of interest in the board game. (plaudit 称賛)
- 2) Sota Fujii, 14, recorded his 29th straight win late on Monday, taking more than 11 hours to beat his opponent in the first round of the prestigious Ryo championship in Tokyo.
- 3) The previous record, 28 consecutive wins, was set in 1987 by Hiroshi Kayama, 57.
- 4) The unassuming teenager, dressed in a dark blue suit and tie, has attracted huge media coverage, eclipsing reports on the troubled airbag maker Takata. Up to 7.4 million people watched online as Fujii edged towards victory on Monday. (unassuming でしゃばらない、控えめな eclipse 影を投げかける、覆い隠す edge towards ~に向かって少しずつ、ゆっくり進む)
- 5) “Winning 29 times in a row was beyond my imagination, so I feel happy, but at the same time I’m also very surprised,” Fujii, Japan’s youngest professional shogi player, told a crowd of reporters in Tokyo.
- 6) The prime minister, Shinzo Abe, congratulated Fujii, saying: “A young force made new history today. I think it was a victory that gave hope and dreams to the people of Japan.”
- 7) Some newspapers issued free special editions to mark Fujii’s achievement at the pinnacle of a game that last ignited the public’s interest in the mid-1990s, when Yoshiharu Habu won all seven professional tournaments in a single year. (pinnacle (成功・権力・名声等の)絶頂、極み)
- 8) Fujii’s success is a timely boost for the shogi world, which was rocked late last year after one of the game’s best players, Hiroyuki Miura, was wrongly accused of cheating.
- 9) Shogi, which is said to have originated from the ancient Indian game of chaturanga, is played on a nine-by-nine board, with each player beginning with 20 pieces. Its rules allow players to use captured pieces as their own, with the game ending when one player captures their opponent’s king.
- 10) Interest in Fujii’s exploits has increased since he started his winning streak after making his professional debut last December. (exploit 偉業、手柄 winning streak 連勝)
- 11) His swift rise to the top of the game has sparked a surge in sales of shogi books and inspired other children to take up the board game.
- 12) Fujii, who will pocket just over ¥43m (£302,000) in prize money if he goes on to win the championship, started playing shogi at the age of five after his grandmother gave him a children’s version of the game, according to Kyodo news. (pocket 金などを自分のものにする)
- 13) He started attending shogi classes after regularly thrashing his grandfather.
- 14) Officials at the Japan Shogi Association have voiced concern over the media scrum surrounding Fujii, who must juggle his shogi career with schoolwork. (scrum 大騒ぎ、もみあい juggle (二つ以上の仕事等を)首尾よく果たす)
- 15) The association assigned a chaperone and arranged for him to travel to and from matches by taxi. “This step has been introduced until the situation calms down a bit,” it said, according to the Mainichi Shimbun. (chaperone 付き添い、お目付け役)【2017-06-27 | The Guardian】

★Ice breaker for active discussion

1. What can you say about Sota Fujii's 29 consecutive wins?
2. Have you ever played Shogi? How about other board games?
3. In other news reports, Sota Fujii is considering concentrating on Shogi after he graduates from junior high school. What is your opinion about such a decision?
4. Can you name other prodigies? What kind of lives do you think lie ahead of them?
5. Make sentences using the following words: unassuming, eclipse, pinnacle, exploit and juggle.