

# Non-standard gap

**Késako?**

Here's a game, entitled « non-standard gap », which lets you figure out if the person you're speaking to has a non-standard mind, or - and surely it's the same thing - if they're secretly a set theorist.

This is a two-player game where Alice and Bob play in turns. At the  $(n+1)$ -th round, Alice sets forth<sup>1</sup> an ordinal  $\alpha_n > 0$ , then Bob proposes an ordinal  $\beta_n$ , with the following constraints:

$$\alpha_0 > \alpha_1 > \dots > \alpha_n > \dots \geq \beta_n \geq \dots \geq \beta_1 \geq \beta_0. \quad (1)$$

Alice loses the game in the  $n$ -th round if Bob submits her a winning strategy, with proof that in less than a determined number  $f(n) > 0$  of rounds after this  $n$ -th one, Alice won't be able to extend her sequence while observing the constraints<sup>2</sup>. Bob loses the game if he gives up or dies of thirst.

**Example.** Alice plays the number  $\omega^\omega$ ;

Bob plays  $\omega^2$ ;

Alice plays  $\omega^{10000}$ ;

Bob plays  $\omega^{9999} + 1$ ;

Alice plays  $\omega^{9999} + \omega^{9998}$ ;

Bob plays  $\omega^{9999} + \omega^{9997} + \omega^{9996}$ ;

Alice plays  $\omega^{9999} + \omega^{9997} \cdot 2 + \omega^{9996} \cdot 3 + \omega^{9995} \cdot 4 + \dots + \omega^{1221} \cdot 8778$ .

Bob then proposes the following winning strategy:

If Alice has just played the number

$$\alpha_n = \sum_{k \leq 9999} \omega^k a_n(k)$$

where  $a_n \in \mathbb{N}^{10000}$ , then Bob will play

$$\beta_n := \sum_{k \leq 9999} \omega^k b_n(k),$$

where  $b_n$  is the predecessor of  $a_n$  in  $\llbracket 0, \max \{a_n(k) : k \leq 9999\} \rrbracket^{10000}$  for the appropriate lexicographical ordering. Bob claims, with proof, that Alice will lose in at most 1222 additional rounds.

**Question 1.** Does Bob have a winning strategy? The ordinal  $\alpha_0$  being fixed, does Bob have a winning strategy? If not, then which is this ordinal  $\alpha_0$  that is smallest, for which Bob has no winning strategy?

**Question 2.** Does Alice have a winning strategy?

**Remark.** I never lost<sup>3</sup> a game of non-standard gap.

---

1. defines

2. that is, we'll have  $\alpha_{n+k} = \beta_{n+k-1} + 1$  for a certain  $k \in \{1, \dots, f(n)\}$

3. played