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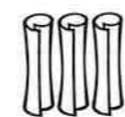
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Handbook of Sport and Japan

Edited by Helen Macnaughtan and Verity Postlethwaite



Japan
Documents

First published 2024

By Japan Documents, an imprint of MHM Limited, Tokyo, Japan

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ISBN: 978-4-909286-22-2 (Hardback)

MHM Limited gratefully acknowledges K.K. Nihon Bunken Shuppan, and its owner-president, Mr. Sumio Saito, as the originator of the imprint "Japan Documents" and declares here that it is used under license and with the kind permission of Mr. Saito.

Cover design, layout, and typography: TransPac Communications, Greg Glover
Printed in Japan by Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd.

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Acknowledgements

As is always the case with an edited collection, there are many people to thank for helping to bring this Handbook to publication.

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all the contributing authors in this volume for their dedication to sport research and their willingness to collaborate with our vision. Thanks to them we were able to deliver a diverse collection of chapters from both Japanese and non-Japanese scholars, which not only focus on sport in Japan but speak to our vision to analyze the role of sport within a broader sociological context and draw out important social, cultural, and political issues. Our wonderful authors enabled us to produce a volume that is intentionally interdisciplinary, reflective of the research on sport in Japan being undertaken by both established and emerging scholars, as well as reflective of the diverse and complex nature of sport itself.

Next, we give our sincere gratitude to the Toshiba International Foundation (TIFO), especially Mariko Kuwayama, for their generous funding support underlying this sporting project; for their funding support of the SOAS Japan Research Centre Sport Symposia Series (2017–2023) as well as dedicated research funding contributing to activities supporting the production of this Handbook. Their enthusiastic encouragement and support for the topic of sport and Japan, as well as their flexibility of response to disruptions we encountered because of the COVID-19 pandemic, is truly appreciated.

This Handbook publication has arisen out of the Sport Symposia Series, initiated in 2017 and hosted by the SOAS Japan Research Centre (JRC). We therefore must express our thanks to all those who collaborated and engaged with this series, including all our guest speakers during the series as well as key institutional supporters: Toshiba International Foundation, Embassy of Japan in the UK, Japan Foundation London, Japan Sport Council, Japan Sports Agency, British Paralympic Association, World Rugby Museum, Japan Sport Stories (podcast) and the SOAS Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy (CISD). We are also incredibly grateful to SOAS Japan Research Centre colleagues for their support of the Sport Symposia Series, not least Charles Taillandier-Ubsdell for his skilled and seamless event management, and we also thank Rie Yoshitake of Sake Samurai for enabling us to provide a perfect combination of sport and sake for all the events in our series. For more on the SOAS Japan Research Centre Sport Symposia Series, see: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/about/institutes-and-regional-centres/japan-research-centre/japan-research-centre-sport-symposia>.

This Handbook would not have reached completion without the work of our incredible colleague Emily Barrass Chapman, who somehow managed to effortlessly juggle the production and parenting of three young children while steering us with her eloquence of language in copyediting and talent for critical synthesis of academic arguments. We also thank Sawako Irie for her assistance with Japanese-English translation, and we are incredibly grateful to Dr. Christopher J. Hayes (Teesside University) for his insightful comments and discussion throughout the project.

Of course, this volume would not have been possible without the foresight of our publishers, MHM Limited (Japan Documents) and Amsterdam University Press. We are very grateful

to Mark Gresham and Malcolm Campbell for approaching us to produce this Handbook, and for their dedication and unwavering support thereafter to get us over the finish line.

Last, but not least, we thank our families, friends, and general support networks. It takes a professional and personal community to bring a volume like this together. From us both, we extend gratitude and love.

In memory of Bill Macnaughtan (1933–2021) who loved sport and would have enjoyed reading this book.

Helen & Verity, November 2023

Introduction

Sport and Japan

*Verity Postlethwaite, Emily Barrass Chapman,
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The “hero of the hour” claimed one media outlet, when back in 2013 the then-Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō traveled at the last minute from St Petersburg, Russia where he was attending the G20 summit to Buenos Aires, Argentina where the Tokyo bidding team were vying to win the rights to host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games (Butler 2013). The pitch to the International Olympic Committee by the Tokyo team was boosted by the presence of Prime Minister Abe and a speech by the Imperial Princess Hisako of Takamado in English and French. Princess Takamado told the International Olympic Committee members: “I am more than pleased that it has fallen to me to personally convey our heartfelt thanks for the IOC’s [International Olympic Committee] assistance after the tsunami. This is the first time a member of the Imperial family has addressed you, and I dare to hope that our paths may cross again” (quoted in Barber 2013). The deployment of Japan’s political and Imperial elites in persuading the International Olympic Committee to award Tokyo the right to host the Games is illustrative of how, in the past fifteen years, sport in Japan has been a conduit and an agent in rebuilding and rejuvenating domestic and international relations.

The *Handbook of Sport and Japan* is a collection of scholarship from diverse disciplines and geographies all of which respond to the challenge of centering sport in the study of Japan. As we started writing, all eyes were on Japan as it hosted the Tokyo 2020(1) Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in all their complexity and global scrutiny. The scholarship gathered here develops and brings together the vast published materials (in English and Japanese) on the familiar and well-debated topics connected to Japan and sport, such as the origins of particular sporting cultures in Japan. It also adds new voices to emerging fields of research, such as the representation of different identities in Japanese sports.

Since Tokyo was awarded the right to host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games the sporting landscape has changed in Japan due to numerous changes in political leadership, a new Emperor, and a global pandemic. The latter caused a one-year delay to the Games.¹ Behind the bid and execution of the Tokyo 2020(1) Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Japan Sports Agency—founded in 2015—exemplifies the ambitions within Japan’s state and society for the role sport can play in a modern nation. It aims to use sport to realize “a society in

which people are healthy both in body and mind, and lead a cultural lifestyle throughout their lives” (Japan Sports Agency, N.D.). The context and rationale for this aim were explained by Kimura Tetsuya, the then-Director-General at the Japan Sports Agency during the opening event for the SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) Japan Research Centre’s “Sport Symposia Series” in 2018. The talk encouraged the audience to consider how Japan’s approach to realizing the Agency’s ambitious aim was embedded across domestic and international partnerships. This series and Handbook are products of a larger project hosted at the Japan Research Centre, SOAS University of London and generously funded and supported by the Toshiba International Foundation. The content of this Handbook is a valuable example of this partnership and shared research as contributors build and share perspectives on how different aspects of sport, including participation, funding, infrastructure and enjoyment, interact in Japan.

When we talk of sport participation in Japan, the Sasakawa Sports Foundation National Sports-Life Survey provides a quantitative overview of the breadth of participation and consumption of sport by Japanese society. In 2022, the report for adult participation highlighted interesting trends around different aspects of sport and Japan, such as:

- Top physical activities for individuals were walking and strolling;
- Top sport and physical activities, team or club-based, were golf (men) and badminton (women);
- Top for live spectating at sport venues was professional baseball;
- Top sports watched television were professional baseball (men) and figure skating (women).

These scant headlines illustrate that sport in Japan is seen and measured by both informal and formal sporting experiences (including participation, volunteering and consuming) with health and fitness as highly valued attributes for the Japanese population. The rates of viewership at live venues and on television demonstrate the popularity of professional and elite sport in Japan, with much of the adult population engaged in some form of consumption of sport. The hosting of premier international sporting events, the investment by political agencies in grassroots and elite sporting infrastructure, and the continued growth of print and social media production and consumption by media outlets and the Japanese population all serve to demonstrate that sport is a significant component of Japanese society. Further to the illustrative framework presented thus far, this introductory chapter sets out to equip readers on how to approach this volume. The first half of this chapter brings key elements together to introduce core themes that run throughout the collection, while the second half outlines each chapter in turn.

A key demand this volume placed on its authors was to write across disciplines and reflect on individual positionalities to produce high-quality individual chapters and then a coherent collection. A strength of the contributions is that authors vary in their geographic location and connection to Japan, in their demographics, career stage and disciplinary training. As such, readers of this Handbook can expect different writing styles, perspectives and orientations on Japanese studies, sport studies and attempts to consider the relationships between the two fields. It is also worth noting that this project was commissioned in mid-2020 when the authors (and the world) were amid reacting to the global pandemic lockdowns and COVID-19. Contributors, therefore, were called upon to consider, at pace, the impacts of the pandemic on the chapter topics and in some cases the extraordinary circumstances, such as the postponement of the Tokyo 2020(1) Games.

This Handbook will serve readers interested in a specific sport, sporting moment or sportsperson through engagement with individual chapters. However, the Handbook can also be approached thematically, and it is the purpose of this section to map these themes for those readers and highlight some important themes which connect the chapters. A central approach of this Handbook is to ask what conclusions can be made when sport is placed in the foreground of turning points in modern Japanese history, such as the recent (and ongoing) COVID-19 pandemic, the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster, Japan’s involvement in World War II, the Allied Occupation (1945–1952) and Japan’s prewar industrialization. Chapters in this Handbook, therefore, cover a wide historical range from the 1860s to the present day.

The effort to understand the relationship between sport and Japan is not a new endeavor, and the scholarship in this text stands on the foundations built by decades of academic work and varying support from different educational and other funding agencies. For those interested in sports or events outside the scope of this Handbook, we would direct you to the work of other researchers who have studied significant Japanese (and South Asian) sport: for *budō* and martial arts (e.g., Bennett, forthcoming in this series) sumo (e.g., Guttman and Thompson 2001; Kenji Tierney 2013), marathon running and *ekiden* (e.g., Havens 2015) or the Asian Games (e.g., Hong and He 2020). This Handbook does not provide a complete inventory of every sport that is played in Japan. We have not, for example, included any of the *budō* martial arts that could be considered “indigenous” to Japan. We have instead focused on sports that have been “imported” into Japan, primarily from Western nations of origin, but within the limitations of our scope, there are some notable omissions, for example, athletics and tennis.

The landscape of academic research on sport and Japan is thus a fertile ground to explore varying aspects of Japanese society and is often influenced by key historical moments for Japan as a nation. It is fitting that much sport scholarship features in edited volumes of team effort and the academic gaze on sport and Japan, published in English, saw a spike in the early to mid-2000s as edited collections about Japan focused on sport in a globalizing world (Maguire and Nakayama 2006), the co-hosting of the FIFA Men’s World Cup in 2002 (Horne and Manzenreiter 2002), and a history of Japanese sports (Guttman and Thompson 2001). These contributors brought varying perspectives to the tensions and emergence of different sport across Japan. In the 2010s, there were further edited collections and published works in English, including collections edited by William Kelly and Susan Brownell (2011), Andreas Niehaus and Christian Tagsold (2013) and more recently by J.A. Mangan, Peter Horton, Tianwei Ren and Gwang Ok (2018). These collections expand the gaze on sport and Japan through transnational and international explorations of how sport influences and is influenced by varying economic, political, cultural, and social factors. A growing theme in this literature is to better understand how sport in East Asia can be viewed as an important component of regional political and cultural relations amongst established and emerging powers, such as Japan, South Korea and China. This focus is no surprise to scholars of international sporting events as South Korea hosted the 2018 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, Japan hosted the 2020(1) Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, and then China hosted the 2022 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. The East Asian trio of host countries motivated a significant amount of attention to sport in this area of the world.

Further to edited collections, there is a vibrant selection of monographs across different disciplinary boundaries examining varying aspects of Japan and sport. A popular crossover is sport and education, with scholarship on the history of sport producing numerous pieces on

the philosophy and history of physical education and the sporting spirit in Japan (e.g., Ikeda, 2010; Hata and Sekine, 2010; Aramaki, 2017; Kohe et al., 2021). Another area of scholarship receiving attention is that of Japan's zeal for hosting events and the use of sport as a political tool domestically and internationally. Works looking at sporting diplomacy in a historical and contemporary context (such as Abel 2012; Guthrie-Shimzu 2013) bring to life the formal and informal ways Japan has used the hosting of sport events to benefit different aims and communities. Again, the hosting of the most recent event in Tokyo spurred a cross-disciplinary enthusiasm to discuss Japan and sport. Jeff Kingston (2020) edited two special issues in the *Asia-Pacific Journal* focusing on the past and present issues faced by Japan and their continued engagement with the Olympic Movement. The pieces included in these special issues ranged from environmental issues and national identity to the Paralympics and disability.

The influence and particularity of moments in time in Japanese history and the chronological progression of turning points inform a number of the chapters in this Handbook, in particular, how Western sporting cultures enter and diffuse with Japanese societal and sporting cultures. Throughout the Handbook, we show that sport is a player in the foreground of key eras in Japanese history rather than a welcome distraction from times of turmoil, for example. Sport has also been an integral component of Japanese state ambitions, and both played and plays a vital role in the creation of a "modern" and outward-looking Japan. As our chapters detail, sport is both a reactive and proactive vehicle and has been used to shape institutions and aspects of Japanese society, including education, corporations, demographic transition, popular culture and social change.

Ultimately, the acceptance and development of imported sport in Japan have not been a product of simple cultural translocation, but rather (Aramaki, 2017; Kohe et al., 2021), have been negotiated over time by specific protagonists and institutions who found ways and means to position sport within an existing set of philosophical and cultural values. Ultimately, in its ideals and practices, sport did not particularly follow or adhere to its native ethos, but was developed across the country by clubs, trainers, teams and individuals to reflect aspects of Japanese values, socio-cultural mores, and historical traditions.

The chapters in this Handbook successfully show how sport can be used as a lens to understand broader Japanese political, societal and economic moments; this analytical capacity suggests that sport is a measure of health, wealth and vision that is both readable and academically valuable. What this Handbook points out more than anything else is that sport is not an "add-on"—it grows alongside everything else. Sport offers us a lens through which to look at a nation. Sport is also an exchange and helps us understand varying aspects of Japanese society, such as the role of education, development and the growth of different industries.

A prominent theme that has organically arisen from the various chapters is the important relationship between sport and media. While this relationship is not, of course, unique to Japan, the Japanese mass media (newspapers, radio, television) have been critical channels of communication and pushing the development of sport. Mass media is big business and has not just reported on sport, but also impacted on the development of sport as early tournaments were financed by newspaper companies and media companies. Alongside other business institutions in Japan they have financed and sponsored teams, leagues and competitions. Media in Japan also includes popular culture—the media of manga, animation and drama—and sport has been core to the creation and popularity of various sport genres in these channels. One of the difficulties of this volume has been how to frame and present both the international and domestic influence on sporting practices in Japan: how do we analyze sport and sporting

practices that originated elsewhere, came to Japan and then became popular? The idea of the "Japanization" of sport is far too simplistic, so we posit that the various channels of media depicted across the chapters offer us a center for sport around which everything can orbit.

Our chapters serve to highlight that there is a capacity for sport (not just in Japan) to serve two contradictory purposes. On the one hand, sport can amplify the most conventional and dominant ideologies of society, for example, masculinity and the dominance of men, and the power of big business (media and corporate institutions). On the other hand, sport has the power to bring visibility to core elements of Japanese society—gender, sexuality, and disability—and provide a platform and a voice. Sport is central to modern Japan in its bi-vocal, contradictory functions to both project the dominant but also to (sometimes unintentionally) give public voice and prominence to those who live in the shadows of the dominant interest. This is a powerful theme that we hope shines through from the juxtaposition of these chapters, some covering mainstream and highly popular sports and others discussing more niche or emerging sport. Chapters throughout this Handbook highlight and illustrate what taking part in sport feels and looks like, and how it interacts with economics, demographics, gender, ethnicity, identity and internalization. The sports and events explored here are varied in format as well as popularity and the extent to which they are emerging or established for Japanese participants and spectators.

For coherency in accessing the collection, the Handbook is divided into two parts. In Part I, the chapters are focused on particular sports and each of the contributions offers a view on the origins, impacts and representations woven into a particular sporting experience. In Chapter 1, through a focus on schoolboy and men's professional baseball, William W. Kelly presents a thorough and considered assessment of baseball in Japan. The development of the infrastructure and traditions in baseball combine aspects of Western and Japanese patterns, such as the role of the media and the male-dominance in the sport. Kelly adds nuance to this by offering rich examples of people and systems connected to baseball in Japan, noting regional rivalry, and the involvement of corporations and media outlets to preserve particular values.

Next, Mike Galbraith and Helen Macnaughtan in Chapter 2 critically consider rugby in Japan across over a century of sporting history. This survey of rugby is crafted to consider chronologically how the sport is influenced by domestic and Japanese figures, the role of educational institutions and corporations in the development of the sport's infrastructure, and then the contemporary use of rugby in Japan's international positioning and its links to soft power. The authors use a number of different examples and sources to illustrate the key historical moments of the development of rugby in Japan and end by reflecting on the nation's hosting of the 2019 Rugby World Cup.

In Chapter 3, Angus Lockyer reflects on the presence of golf in Japanese society, tracing economic and ecological factors that helped and hindered the evolution of the game. The recreational and elite characteristics of golf are highlighted by Lockyer, through a consideration of both the business and leisure contexts of Japanese golf. This chapter offers a balanced account of the positive and negative ways golf has and is consumed across Japanese society with a rich level of detail and personal insight.

Turning attention to basketball in Chapter 4, Aaron L. Miller takes the reader through the history of basketball in Japanese culture. Evidence in this chapter is based on years of work and research in Japan and the Japanese basketball scene. Through rich detail and evidence, Miller demonstrates that there is a mixture of Western, commercial and divergent interests

at play in Japanese basketball, with ongoing tension around what the aim of the sport is for the nation and how to measure the success of basketball in and beyond Japan.

In Chapter 5, Iwona Merklejn and Helen Macnaughtan outline the historical and contemporary developments of volleyball in Japan, through its links with Japanese industry and early success at elite international sporting events. The authors illustrate the development of volleyball via a rich account of the 1964 Olympic women's volleyball team who sparked both a popular media as well as societal interest in the sport, highlighting gender and industrial themes connected to its development.

In Chapter 6, Yunuen Ysela Mandujano-Salazar takes a look at Japanese football and gender through the media framing of the two national teams of Japan during the rise of the sport in the 1990s and 2000s. Focusing on the senior men's and women's Japanese national football teams, Mandujano-Salazar uses the development of football, media coverage and coined names for the women's and men's national teams, to offer ways of considering the gendered dimensions of Japanese footballers.

Keiko Aiba offers a thorough and illustrative insight into the world of Japanese pro wrestling in Chapter 7, taking the reader through its seventy-year checkered history. There is a focus on the role of women in pro wrestling and how their experiences involve entertainment, sporting rules, cultural norms and a desire to master the art of wrestling. Aiba uses detailed descriptions of the technical and personal connections to pro-wrestling to explore what and how bodies practice what is both a sport and an art.

Through extensive research, Eri Mizuno captures the key tenets of the development of surfing in Japanese and global surfing culture in Chapter 8. The inclusion of surfing at the Tokyo 2020(1) Olympic and Paralympic Games made the sport a focus of popular attention, yet as Mizuno traces, this has not always been the case. For female surfers in the 1960s and 70s there are varying accounts of acceptance and participation in surfing communities. Using a "girl-localism" lens Mizuno presents a number of these accounts and how this has changed since that time.

In Chapter 9, the final chapter of the first section of the Handbook, Masafumi Monden provides a detailed and thorough survey of female and male figure skating, offering rich insights into a number of athletes' careers through a gender lens. Throughout this chapter, Monden offers the reader insights into why figure skating athletes are popular, but not necessarily the sport as a pastime for the broader Japanese public.

In Part II of the Handbook, contributors take a more thematic approach to consider the relationship between elements of society and broader sporting experiences. We begin with Chapter 10 by Robin Kietlinski, who explores the origins of Japanese women's participation in competitive sport in the 20th century. In telling this story—which orbits around educational impulses over the changing role of women and girls—Kietlinski shows us that the winning female body is not a new or a progressive part of Japan's sporting landscape, but instead, an integral and globally influenced component of the successful sporting nation we see today.

In Chapter 11, Michelle Ho continues this discussion of the sporting body to explore where gender and sexually variant athletes (*seitekishōsūsha*) within Japanese sport and culture can be found in the archive, in scholarship and on the track, field and floor. This chapter is an important act of visibility and space-making that works by bringing together Japanese sports studies and queer and trans sports research to ask important questions about where sport fits in the wider debates and context of sexual minority communities in Japan.

Christian Tagsold turns attention to Japan's zeal for hosting the Olympic Games in Chapter 12, revisiting early periods of Japanese involvement in hosting. Including vast detail on the cancelled events in the 1940s, he then moves into the context of hosting the Summer Olympic Games in 1964 and 2020(1). Tagsold highlights the symbolic and realized aspirations of Tokyo and Japan to achieve non-sporting aims, such as showcasing technological accomplishments.

To follow on from this focus on the Olympic Games, Dennis Frost contributes Chapter 13 on the history of the Paralympics. He tells the story of how the Paralympics and sports for people with disabilities were introduced to Japan and how they have changed over time. This chapter also engages with the wider pulse of this Handbook by looking at the reciprocal relationship between sport and society to ask how the Paralympics have influenced both Japanese society and the broader Paralympic Movement.

The strong people-to-people connection between Japan and international sport federations is visited in closer detail by Helen Symons and Taro Obayashi in Chapter 14, as they trace the influence of sports administrator Kanō Jigorō and how Japan became the first Asian member of the International Olympic Committee. Symons and Obayashi explore Kanō's biography and the historical context of his achievements, while also illuminating his ongoing influence on Japan's approach to contributing to the global sporting system, in particular through education.

In the penultimate Chapter 15, Ai Aramaki and Geoffery Z. Kohe delve into comparing the Olympic Torch Relay for the Tokyo 1964 and 2020(1) Olympic Games. Utilizing bid documents, media representations and collective memory formation, Aramaki and Kohe use the two events to understand politicization at the national and international levels of the hosting of an Olympic Games and how it can be used to construct a particular "reconstruction" narrative for Japan.

The final entry in the Handbook is Chapter 16 from Takayuki Yamashita, Verity Postlethwaite and Győző Molnár, which surveys winter sporting cultures and Japan, with a particular focus on different representations in the domestic and international spheres. This chapter offers a number of insights into the economic, cultural, and sporting influences on the development of winter activities and the hosting of winter international sport events, encouraging the reader to consider further avenues of research.

The significance of sport in Japan is debated eloquently throughout this Handbook and the different contributions offer a range of perspectives on how sport can be used as a way of looking at a nation. Sport is at once powerful, but at the same time barely controllable, generating unexpected results, and contradictions and engendering both visibility and invisibility. In this respect, we hope that this volume will be of interest to not only scholars of sport and Japan, but also to others—scholars of history, media, culture, gender and disability. Readers of this Handbook are encouraged to use the evidence presented and discussion points raised to pursue further research on Japan and sport, because sport is a journey, not a finishing line.

Notes

¹ Throughout this Handbook the Games will be referred to as the Tokyo 2020(1) Olympic and Paralympic Games to represent this delay.

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Part 1

Historical Developments of Various Key and Emerging Sports in Japan