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Progress and Potential

Sportswomen in the 1960s and 1970s

On 10 October 1964, Sakai Yoshinori, a university student who had been born in Hiroshima just an hour and a half after the dropping of the atomic bomb, was the final torchbearer and lighter of the Olympic flame at the Tokyo Games' opening ceremony. This symbolic gesture of revival and rebirth would set the stage for a momentous event that would have a resounding impact on Japanese society in general and on women's sport in Japan in particular. This chapter will begin with an exploration of some of the impacts of the Tokyo Olympic Games and will continue looking at the development of Japanese women's sport during the period of high economic growth in post-war Japan. The Olympic Games will play a prominent role in this narrative, as the Games became the main stage for the advancement of women's sport and the venue at which many competitive female athletes aspired to compete. Other events such as the Asian Games and World Championships continued to play important roles, but these regional or single-sport events increasingly came to be seen as events *en route* to or in between the *real* competition at the Olympic Games. Japanese women also took part in more and more non-Olympic sports such as boxing, mountaineering and ultra-marathon running as the twentieth century progressed, though these events tended to get less recognition in the media and thus would have less of an impact on society at large.

The year 1964 saw the first Olympic Games held outside of the Western world. Lauded for having hosted a grand and smoothly executed event, Tokyo is often credited for having opened the door for sporting mega-events to be held in non-Western nations. The Tokyo Olympics took place on the heels of major changes in the world of women's sport, including a growing number of events becoming available to women, better facilities and coaches, and a more accurate understanding of the impact of sport on the female physique. Of course, many more changes were soon to come in a rapid and dramatic fashion in the latter part of the twentieth century. In 1964, women were competing in about a third of the number of sports as men at the Olympics, but over the next several decades this imbalance would be significantly levelled out.¹ This chapter will explore the changes that occurred in the world of competitive sport in the 1960s and 1970s in an effort to highlight a trend towards greater gender equality that has continued into the contemporary era.

The 1964 Tokyo Olympics

Ichikawa Kon's famous documentary *Tokyo Olympiad* begins with a dusty scene showing the demolition of old buildings in Tokyo – wrecking balls slamming into concrete pillars and huge brick walls being reduced to piles of rubble. It then cuts to a shot of the empty grounds of Komazawa Olympic Stadium, the pristine lines of its cutting-edge architecture standing in stark contrast to the gritty destruction scene that it follows. As the title screen appears, the film cuts back to a bustling scene of downtown Tokyo, with crowds of people weaving through streetcars, busses and cars. Ichikawa's film is filled with such juxtapositions – loud cheers from the fans will cut right to a silent, slow-motion shot of a runner or a bustling dining room scene will cut straight to the silence before the starting gun of a swimming event. Bringing attention to these contrasts has the effect of presenting an amazingly animate event – one with highs and lows, one filled with emotion and one the likes of which had never before been witnessed in Japan.

Considered to be one of the two masterpieces of commemorative Olympic films (Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* being the other), *Tokyo Olympiad* also brings great clarity to the transformatory power of the Olympic Games on their host nations.² In the case of Tokyo, the Games are considered a defining event in the post-war transition from developing to developed nation. This transition was not only in the physical sense showed so vividly in Ichikawa's opening scenes but it was also in an ideological sense, as Japan sought to present a new image of itself to the world following the war and the US occupation. In her essay, 'The Past in the Present', historian Carol Gluck repeatedly references the Tokyo Olympics as being a pivotal moment in post-war Japanese historical memory. She writes that the event enabled Japan to show the rest of the world how much progress had been made since the war.³ In his discussion of mega-events and modernity, sociologist Maurice Roche points to the Tokyo Olympics as having had a major impact on Japan's infrastructure as well as on its overall 'sport heritage', meaning that the relationship between sport and society was forever changed following Tokyo's hosting of the Olympic Games.⁴

Tokyo had been selected to host the 1964 Olympics at a 1959 IOC session in Munich, beating out Detroit, Brussels and Vienna by a large margin.⁵ Several ruling bodies made key contributions in hosting the event, most notably the Ministry of Education (*Mombusho*), the Japanese Amateur Sports Association (*Nihon taiiku kyōkai*) and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (*Tōkyō tosei*). Public works projects were managed by the Bureau of Olympic Preparations (*Orinpikku soshiki iinkai*), which was formed in 1959, and the police and fire departments created new branches to deal with matters of law, order and emergencies in Tokyo before and during the Olympic Games.⁶

The Tokyo Olympics' impact on post-war Japan could be elaborated on at great length, and work has been done by several scholars on the political,

economic and social effects of the Games. In English, scholarship focusing solely on the Tokyo Olympics is fairly scant, but works written in Japanese are plentiful.⁷ As with most Olympic Games, several athletic heroes emerged from Tokyo 1964, including Abebe Bikila, the Ethiopian marathon runner who had won the same event running barefoot in Rome in 1960 and who recaptured the gold in Tokyo only five weeks after undergoing stomach surgery; Dawn Fraser, the 22-year-old Australian sprint swimmer who set her third consecutive Olympic record in the 100-metre freestyle race; and American discus thrower Al Oerter, who also won his third Olympic gold medal in spite of a slipped disk and a seriously injured rib during the event in Tokyo.⁸

A group of athletic standouts from the Tokyo Olympics who received significant publicity within Japan but less in the West was the Japanese women's volleyball team. These women were dubbed the 'witches of the Orient' (*tōyō no majo*) after their dramatic success at international volleyball tournaments and ultimately at the Tokyo Games. After discussing the women's volleyball team, we will look briefly at one athlete who did *not* come away from Tokyo with a medal, as her story sheds light on some of the mounting pressures that sportswomen began to face in Japan as they came to be seen as more as 'athletes' and less as 'female athletes'.

Tōyō no majo

The American edition of *Time* magazine ran the following story on 30 October 1964, one week after the Japanese women's volleyball victory in Tokyo:

[For the first time, volleyball was on the] Olympic program last week, and it's a good thing Japan did not send her women off to war. Led by Captain Masae Kasai, 31, who broke her engagement to train for the Olympics, punctuating every shot with banzai choruses of 'Hai! Hai!' the Japanese women's team beat Russia so badly in the finals that the Muscovite ladies shut themselves in the locker room for a good cry.

The Japanese girls learned their volleyball under Coach Hirobumi Daimatsu of the national-champion Nichibō Spinning Co. team. He cheerfully suggests that his training methods are 'savage'. Billeted in dormitories at the Nichibō plant, the girls do clerical work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., practise daily from 4:30 right through until midnight with only one 15-min. break. A typical practice exercise: the 'receive', a tumbling acrobatic maneuver in which the girls hurl themselves to the floor to retrieve the ball – until they are so exhausted that they cannot get up any more. At that point, Coach Daimatsu usually snarls: 'Why don't you quit?'

It is clear from this article that the connection between the Second World War and the Tokyo Olympics was at the forefront of people's minds as they watched this match. This connection was glaring to the Japanese public as well, as numerous Japanese articles and books focus on the link between the match and the war.

This link is apparent in two main ways: one is in the theme of ‘beating the Soviets’ (the Soviet Union was an especially detested nation in post-war Japan due to its detention of Japanese prisoners of war in Siberia) and the other is in the team’s merciless Coach Daimatsu Hirobumi. Coach Daimatsu had been involved in intense fighting in South-East Asia during the Second World War as a member of the Japanese army, and he often applied his military training and mental toughness to his volleyball players. For example, he would tell the women, ‘Sports today are either kill or be killed ... second place means nothing. Unless you are number one, your efforts are meaningless.’¹⁰ Even the very popularity of the sport of volleyball was directly related to the Second World War, as it had become very popular in Japan in the immediate post-war years due to the fact that it was inexpensive and could be enjoyed with just a ball and a small amount of space.¹¹

Because of all these levels of symbolism enveloping the Japan versus Soviet Union match-up in Tokyo, it is not surprising that the Japanese victory made a strong and lasting impression on post-war Japanese society. Igarashi has discussed ways that the match helped in the mending of the collective psyche of a defeated country, and his analysis is useful in understanding the Tokyo Olympics in the context of historical memory. The issue of gender does not play a role in his discussion, however. While it is important to keep in mind the national significance of the Japanese women’s victory in Tokyo, the following section will delve more deeply into the dynamics of gender that were at play as the ‘witches of the Orient’ rose to fame.

Daimatsu Kantoku: coach/player relationships

The Olympic team was comprised primarily of players from the Dai Nihon Bōseki (shortened to Nichibō) textile factory’s company team, of which Daimatsu was the coach.¹² Just as male supervisors supervised female production line workers in the textile factory, Daimatsu had the ultimate authority over the women’s volleyball team. Sport sociologist Arata Masafumi has written an article titled ‘The Witches of the Orient: Their “Female-ness” and Memories of the Factory’ in which he discusses the Olympic volleyball team in the specific context of female factory workers turned Olympic heroes.¹³ Relying heavily on newspaper and journal articles along with biographical works by Coach Daimatsu and the female players, Arata’s research sheds light on specific ways that gender played into this significant moment in post-war Japanese history.

For example, Arata discusses Coach Daimatsu’s 1963 book, *Ore ni tsuite koi! – watashi no shōbu konjō* (Follow me! – my fighting spirit in victory or defeat). In it, Daimatsu writes,

There is going to be a time in the future when my players are married with one or two kids, and then they will look back nostalgically on this youthful time.

Those who can look back on this time and have a lot of memories will be filled with happiness. Those who know not of mental strain and of the hardships of discipline, and those who sing songs of praise for the playful days of youth, are ill-trained for homemaking and wind up spending their days idling about. They also have no profound memories to look back upon and be flooded with happiness.¹⁴

Daimatsu suggests that the harsh training through which he put his athletes was not merely to train them for an Olympic victory but indeed to make them better and happier people. Perhaps he draws upon his own experience of having endured hardship in the military, which ultimately made him (in his eyes at least) a better person than if he had not been through such an experience. Interestingly, though, Daimatsu specifically notes that his female athletes would inevitably go on to be wives and mothers – they would just be happier, more focused wives and mothers than if they had not been athletes who trained hard in their youth.

Daimatsu was known for his brutal training regimens, and he made no apologies for pushing his players to their limits. The media picked up on Daimatsu's merciless treatment of his team members and used it as a means of building more hype about the team before, during and after the round-robin Olympic tournament (which lasted for thirteen days, from 11 to 23 October 1964). A photo spread in the *Asahi Shimbun* on 12 October (Day 2 of the tournament) shows a slightly sneering Coach Daimatsu and his team huddled at the sideline of the court, with the caption reading 'The Devil's Smile'.¹⁵ An interview with Coach Daimatsu that appeared in the *Bungeishunjū* journal a few weeks after the team's Olympic gold medal was titled 'Guts/Fighting Spirit/Leadership Qualities'.¹⁶ A 1984 article in the weekly magazine, *Asahi Journal*, was titled 'Postwar Women's History #56: The Witches of the Orient – Those Who Earnestly Withstood the Hard Training'.¹⁷

All of these articles focus heavily on the coach's strictness with his players but generally paint him in a positive light. For example, when asked if his players were expected to sacrifice having a family for the sake of volleyball, Daimatsu replies, 'I am not asking the players to sacrifice anything for me personally, nor am I asking them to sacrifice anything for society. These players want to be number one in Japan, and number one in the world. No matter how much they have to endure, in the end they will experience great satisfaction from having accomplished their goals'.¹⁸ This tone is generally adopted throughout all the articles on Daimatsu – that his harsh training was ultimately for the good of the women on the team.

A question that arises from Daimatsu's relentless treatment of his players is whether the coach/player relationship was because of or in spite of the gender relations in Japanese society at large at the time. Certainly it seems that the male coach bossing around the female players was an obvious extension of the male supervisors ordering around the female line workers at the textile factory (from which all but two of the Olympic team members came).¹⁹ Economic

historian Janet Hunter has written about the gendered division of labour in the textile industry in twentieth-century Japan. She looks specifically at the 'increasing divergence in men's and women's experience[s] of textile work' by focusing on the interwar period (1920–40) and the gendered systems that emerged thereafter.²⁰ She concludes that women began to populate textile factories in the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century based on an economic demand for more low-cost workers – a move that was fostered by previously established patterns of women in textile work from the Tokugawa period. There was a deeply ingrained perception that women were more docile and easier to manage than men and that they were far less likely to cause labour unrest or riots.²¹ Moreover, women were believed to have better, more nimble fingers for certain textile factory jobs than men because of their smaller size and the fact that they were often trained as young girls to carry out delicate tasks at home, such as sewing.²² So, for various profit-driven reasons, the gendered division of labour in twentieth-century Japan came to be young, unmarried women workers supervised by male management.

In the case of Daimatsu's volleyball team, the gender dynamics from the factory floor played directly into the dynamics on the volleyball court.²³ The phenomenon of male coaches rearing female athletes is not an uncommon one and indeed remains the norm in Japan as in the rest of the world. In a recent article about women's football in Japan, anthropologist Elise Edwards notes that a belief by coaches in the reality of biological differences between men and women has translated into immediate assumptions about female inferiority in sports and a consequent unequal treatment of female athletes in terms of training opportunities.²⁴ Edwards writes that 'stories of strong male coaches managing and guiding talented but unfocused and overly emotional female players support and justify gendered hierarchies in worlds far away from the fields and courts of sport', highlighting the link between coach/player relationships and Japanese society at large.²⁵ While I will explore some of the theoretical issues of the male coach/female athlete dynamic in more depth in Chapter 8 of this book, I would briefly like to consider some of the ways that this dynamic has manifested itself and become ingrained in contemporary Japanese society.

A popular medium for spreading an image of male superiority or dominance in the realm of sport in Japan is that of books written by or about male coaches who train female Olympic stars. For example, in 1996 sports writer Okuda Masuya published a book called *Coach – The Men Who Nurtured the Female Olympic Marathon Runners*,²⁶ and in 2004 marathon coach Koide Yoshio published a book titled *Don't Give Up*.²⁷ Coach Daimatsu himself also became a somewhat prolific writer after his team began its winning streak in international competitions in the late 1950s. Between 1963 and 1971, Daimatsu wrote nine books with such titles as *You Can Succeed!* (1964), *My Beliefs* (1966) and *Who Are You Living For?* (1971).²⁸ In all the aforementioned books, the male authors discuss everything from their views on professional versus amateur

sport (Koide) to their opinions on the public fascination with male coaches (Okuda).²⁹ In recent years as more and more women in Japan have come to be world-class athletes, the number of books by women, about women's sport has increased, but to my knowledge there exists only one book specifically by and about female coaches, as the coaching world is still heavily dominated by men.³⁰

Coach Daimatsu's 'witches of the Orient' were arguably the most famous Japanese athletes to emerge from the Tokyo Olympics,³¹ and the team continued its international dominance until the late 1970s.³² Daimatsu was also one of the most famous coaches in the country, as evidenced by both his mass publicity as well as his election to the upper house of the Japanese parliament, where he served from 1968 to 1974.³³ Daimatsu served in the parliament as part of the first wave of individuals who parlayed their fame in sport into successful political careers. As the twentieth century progressed, more and more women would transition from sport to politics, and the trend continues to this day. One pioneering female athlete in the political arena was gymnast Ono Kiyoko, who also rose to fame at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

Ono Kiyoko was coached by her husband Takashi, who competed at the same time he coached his wife. Ono Takashi began his Olympic career in 1952, where he earned a bronze medal in the men's vault event in Helsinki and went on to compete at three more Summer Games (Melbourne, Rome and Tokyo), earning a total of five gold, four silver and four bronze medals.³⁴ Kiyoko competed in Rome (where the team came in fourth place) and in Tokyo, where the Japanese women won the bronze.

Not only were the couple medal-winning spouses but they also were the parents of young children. In 1964, the couple had a three-year-old girl and a one-year-old boy, and they would go on to have three more children in the coming years. Dubbed an 'athlete mommy' (*mama san senshu*), Kiyoko and her husband received significant media attention for both their athletic achievements and for their ability to balance a family with their athletic careers. The timing of Ono Kiyoko's rise to fame corresponded with the rise of television in people's homes, which meant that the positive media coverage on this 'athlete mommy' would impact a larger number of young women than ever possible before. Ono Kiyoko can be credited with having opened the door for both married women and mothers in Japan who wanted to continue taking part in competitive sport.³⁵ Although sport had been steadily gaining acceptance for young women in Japan from the time of Maehata Hideko in the 1930s, there remained a strong notion that it existed in the realm of school girls and unmarried women.

Ono Kiyoko's ability to simultaneously be a wife, raise two children and earn an Olympic medal showed the Japanese public that an athletic career beyond one's teenage years was acceptable and even praiseworthy. Like it had done for volleyball Coach Daimatsu, the significant positive media attention

that Ono Kiyoko received through her athletic career eventually translated into voter popularity at the polls. Ono served as a member of the upper house of parliament for over twenty years, from 1986 to 2007.

From the time women began competing in competitive sport in Japan, their male coaches have received a significant share of the media limelight, but over the years there has been a shift towards increased recognition for the athletes themselves. Whether this has been because of an erosion of latent sexism or because certain women have simply proven to have the charisma necessary to hold the media spotlight, the trend towards less focus on male coaches has continued to the present day. When it came to athletes with charisma in the 1960s, one woman stood out to Japanese fans. In spite of the fact that 80-metre hurdler Yoda Ikuko did not come away from the Tokyo Olympics with a medal, her quirky manner and impressive record of competition made her a hometown favourite among Japanese fans.

Yoda Ikuko: The heavy weight of no medal

Yoda Ikuko hailed from Nagano prefecture, where she began running track as a high school student. Following high school graduation, she began working at the Ricker Sewing Machine factory, where she became a member of their company track team. Because of her success with both her high school and her company teams, Yoda began to train with a famous coach, Yoshioka Takayoshi, who had competed in the 100-metre sprint in 1932 at the Los Angeles Olympics.³⁶ With Yoshioka's guidance, Yoda competed on the international circuit and qualified for the Olympic Games in Tokyo at the age of twenty-seven.

Yoda was the first Japanese woman to compete on the track in the Olympic Games since Hitomi Kinue's 800-metre race in 1928. As the hometown favourite, all eyes were on her before the start of the 80-metre hurdles final. This included director Ichikawa Kon's film crew, who focused in on the sprinter's unique pre-race rituals. Yoda would bring a broom to every race, sweeping her lane meticulously from the starting block up until the first hurdle. She put on a white headband and did several headstands. Then, she put white mentholated cream on both temples (called Salomethyl, similar to Tiger Balm or Icy Hot) and rubbed them vigorously.³⁷

Unfortunately, Yoda's race wound up very similar to that of her coach in 1932 – she led the race until the third hurdle, when her competitors pulled ahead and left Yoda to finish in fifth place.³⁸ Her coach asserted in a *Bungeishunjū* article one month after the Olympics that Yoda was in peak physical condition on the day of her race and that the only reason he could think of for her not winning a medal was a lack of sleep.

In spite of the paper-thin difference separating Yoda's finishing time from those of the three medal winners, she had an incredibly difficult time handling

the fact that she had trained so hard and did not come away with a medal. She was frequently described as a perfectionist (*kanzenshugisha*, *kanpekishugisha*) who could not bear when things did not go exactly as she planned.³⁹ At a press conference immediately following the conclusion of the Tokyo Olympics, Yoda caused quite a stir when she reported that 'I do not want to go through the pain of racing a second time. I will be retiring now. I do not even want to look at a track again'.⁴⁰ Shortly thereafter, she married a professor at the Tokyo University of Education (now Tsukuba University) and fully devoted herself to being a good housewife and later a caring mother to her children. According to her husband, she was as much a perfectionist when it came to running the household as she had been during her running career.⁴¹

Tragically, Yoda Ikuko never seemed to recover mentally from the devastation she felt after falling to her competitors at the Olympic Games. After being hospitalized several times in 1983 for knee injuries and heart problems, she showed signs of extreme depression, perhaps because her health problems inhibited her from having complete control over her life. On 14 October 1983, at the age of forty-five, Yoda took her own life by hanging herself in her home.⁴²

Tabloids picked up on the news of Yoda's suicide and immediately made comparisons to another athlete who had taken his life after 'failing' at the Tokyo Olympics – marathon runner Tsuburaya Kōkichi. Tsuburaya had positioned himself well to come in second place in the marathon, and as he entered the Olympic stadium for the final lap of the marathon in 1964, he had brought the throngs of Japanese fans to their feet as they cheered him on. However, on the final curve of the track, British runner Basil Heatley passed Tsuburaya and wound up beating the Japanese runner by only three seconds. While he still came away from the Olympics with a bronze medal, Tsuburaya was unable to get past the disappointment and shame of being passed in the last stretch of the race in front of so many adoring Japanese fans. He had discussed his intentions of trying for the gold medal at the next Olympics in Mexico City, but before those Games came around, on 9 January 1968 he committed suicide by cutting the carotid artery on the left side of his neck.⁴³

It is hardly surprising that the media highlighted the connection between Yoda and Tsuburaya's suicides, as both were Japanese runners who apparently felt they had let down their country at the Tokyo Olympics. Much could, and has been, said about trends of suicide in Japanese society and the parallels brought to light by the tragic endings of Yoda and Tsuburaya. For the sake of the present study, however, I simply want to point out how these two athletes' suicides underscore the importance and lasting impact of sport and the Olympic Games on Japanese society. While their two examples are extreme, they clearly demonstrate that the Olympics are more than just 'games', as they can (and often do) have life-changing impacts on both those who take part in them and those who watch them. The Tokyo Olympics had a particularly deep impact on Japan, from the micro- (i.e. individual's lives) to the macro-level (i.e. Japan's

economy, infrastructure and geopolitical significance). As we will see in the coming sections, it also had a considerable impact on women's sport in Japan. The changes that would occur in women's sports in subsequent decades of the twentieth century were due in large part to the global current towards increased inclusion of women in sport, along with improved and expanded media outlets through which young women could learn about sport. That being said, 1964 was a pivotal moment in which the rapidly expanding possibilities for female athletes were brought to light in a more dramatic fashion than ever before.

The growth of women's sport after 1964

While the late 1960s and early 1970s saw political scandal that would rock the very foundation of the sporting world and the Olympic Games, they were fairly unspectacular in terms of Japanese women's participation. As is the case for almost all Olympic host nations, the number of national (Japanese) athletes that participated in the Tokyo Games was significantly greater than the number who took part in the Games immediately preceding and following it.⁴⁴ While there were few major breakthroughs when it came to progress being made in Japanese women's participation in sport, there was a slow and steady advance being made by these women in the international arena. Moreover, the IOC continued to open more and more sports for women, which would lead to higher numbers of female participants in the coming decades.⁴⁵

The 1968 Mexico City Olympics, to which Japan sent 183 athletes (thirty of whom were women), were plagued by a number of problems, most notably racial tensions.⁴⁶ Also, many athletes competing in endurance sports complained that the relatively high altitude of Mexico City (7,400 feet above sea level) would make it difficult or even dangerous to compete.⁴⁷ Debates over amateurism and commercialization were brought to light in 1968, as the Olympics were becoming bigger revenue-building events and companies offering large sums of money for product endorsements were increasingly approaching Olympic athletes. The Mexico City Olympics took place in the middle of the Cold War, and issues surrounding communism loomed large as well. IOC members from non-communist nations were insisting that countries like the Soviet Union and East Germany be barred from participating in the Games.⁴⁸

Debates surrounding communism in the late 1960s were linked to those surrounding gender. In the majority of countries around the world, there was still a fear of masculinization linked with women's sport, but in Eastern bloc nations the women were training in the same way with the same intensity as their male counterparts. This raised questions about performance-enhancing drugs and to sex-verification testing, as the exceptional performances by some of the women from these countries led officials to doubt their physiological make-up as women.

The year 1968 saw the first official sex-verification tests at the Olympic Games, which involved a degrading test in which women had to display their genitalia to doctors in order to obtain eligibility for the Olympics.⁴⁹ This was soon replaced by the buccal smear for sex chromatin, in which a sample of cells taken from inside the lining of the athlete's cheek was tested for chromosomal abnormalities. While the methods varied over the years, many female athletes felt that this kind of testing was extremely invasive and unfair, as certain chromosomal abnormalities can cause a blurring of the line between 'female' and 'male' (e.g. XX gonadal dysgenesis, in which women have very low levels of oestrogen and non-functioning ovaries but appear physiologically female).

As Haley Olsen-Acre asserts in her 2007 *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law* article, 'while the International Olympic Committee defends its [sex-testing policies] under a rhetoric of fair play and equality, the current anti-doping rules police not only drug use, but also sex and gender, through centering their prohibitions around hormones and misinformed conceptions of the "natural", and therefore ostensibly fair, body'.⁵⁰ That is to say, the various tests for both drugs and gender that the IOC have employed since 1968 are limited in their definitions of what a natural and therefore 'fair' competitive body ought to be.⁵¹ Even though ongoing debates throughout the 1980s and 1990s ultimately led to the IOC's abolition of mandatory sex testing in the year 2000, there remain loopholes through which the committee *can* still test individual athletes who they believe do not fit into a sex/gender ideal.⁵²

While these various debates were converging at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, they ultimately had little impact on the Japanese athletes who went over to represent their nation. The only sports in which the thirty female delegates competed were swimming, volleyball and gymnastics. The 'witches of the Orient' failed to beat the Soviet team this time around but still wound up taking home the silver medal.⁵³ The female gymnasts came in fourth place overall, and a few swimmers were able to place fifth or sixth in their final heats. Relative to the impressive and exciting performances by Japanese sportswomen at the previous Olympics in Tokyo, Mexico City provided little fodder for the Japanese media, though the event itself did garner front-page headlines nearly every day.⁵⁴

While there may not have been many national newsworthy stories generated by the Japanese women in Mexico City, there were of course many significant experiences that took place for the individuals who experienced the Games. One female Japanese delegate, gymnast Hanyū Kazunaga, has recounted her experiences with coming into contact with athletes from other nations while taking part in the Olympics in Mexico City.

Everything was new to me – I had never met people from other countries, and I remember something that happened to me at the athletes' gathering spot just before the opening ceremonies. I had asked a friend if she would take a photo of me, and just as she was about to, a big, black man suddenly appeared to my side

and smiled. He was joking around and probably just wanted to be in the photo with me. But I was so startled that I suddenly turned and ran away from him. Thinking back on it, I realize that this was probably a really rude thing to do.⁵⁵

This encounter highlights the fact that many Japanese citizens in the 1960s had not only never left Japan but often times had never come into contact with foreigners. This situation was quickly changing, however, as more and more Japanese citizens had the means to travel abroad and as international tourism to Japan continued to improve. As the 1960s drew to a close in Japan, the pending Winter Olympics in Sapporo in 1972 gave a further boost to the nation's travel and leisure industries.

As previously mentioned, Japanese women had long excelled more in summer sport than in winter sport for a variety of reasons. However, the combination of an accelerated economy, the increased exposure of new and varied sports through home televisions and the sport 'boom' that occurred following the 1964 Games meant an overall increase in the number of participants as well as a diversification of the sports being practised in Japan. Moreover, when it was announced in April of 1966 that Sapporo would be hosting the 1972 Winter Games, there was again an impetus for more Japanese citizens to take notice of winter sport. The Tokyo Games were still fresh on their minds, and the opportunity to host another mega-event within their borders led to a big buzz surrounding the Sapporo Games.

Officials in Hokkaido hoped that the 1972 Games would provide an economic boost and increased tourism in the same way that the 1964 Games had done in Tokyo. Takeda Tsuneyoshi, then president of the Japanese Olympic Committee, announced that the Games would take place in February to coincide with Sapporo's annual snow festival. US\$25 million worth of new facilities were constructed for the event, and another US\$500 million was spent constructing new roads, a new state house and a subway system.⁵⁶ The Games went smoothly and without major incident – while no Japanese sportswoman came away with a medal, the Japanese men swept the 70-metre hill ski jump event, winning the gold, silver and bronze medals in the event – this was the first time in sixteen years that medals were to be won by Japanese men in the Winter Olympics.⁵⁷

While the number of athletes participating in the Olympics from the host nation is always higher than delegations sent abroad, there was a particular jump in 1972 in the number of Japanese women competing at the Winter Olympics. For the four Winter Games in which Japanese women had participated, there were never more than nine women on the Japanese team.⁵⁸ However, in Sapporo this number jumped to twenty women, more than double the previous delegation sent to Grenoble in 1968.⁵⁹ This is especially notable when compared to their male teammates, as there was only about a twenty per cent increase in the number of men who participated in Sapporo (seventy men) when compared to the Grenoble delegation (fifty-three men).⁶⁰

This marked increase in Japanese women's participation reflects the rapidly opening doors for women in the global sporting arena in the 1970s. In the United States in 1972, the landmark Title IX legislation was passed, which banned sex discrimination in any educational programme or activity receiving federal aid. While the legislation directly applied only to institutions within the United States, it undoubtedly had a global impact. This is due in part to the fact that important decision-makers, such as American members of the IOC, were being influenced by the changing attitudes that were taking place towards women in the years surrounding the passing of Title IX. While changes in women's sport were only beginning to be felt at this time, the coming decades would see vastly increased opportunities for female athletes because of changes that were set in motion in the early seventies.

Munich and Montréal

In much the same ways that the Tokyo and Sapporo Olympics showed the world how far Japan had come in its post-war rebuilding efforts, the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich were meant to do the same for West Germany. The nation saw the event as an opportunity to show how its economy had rebounded and how stable the new government was after the war. The German president at the time, Gustav Heinemann, said that he welcomed the Olympics in Munich as 'a milestone on the road to a new way of life with the aim of realizing peaceful coexistence among peoples'.⁶¹

Unfortunately, this peaceful coexistence was far from realized at the Munich Games, with one of the most notorious acts of political terrorism occurring on the eleventh day of the Games.⁶² While terrorism ultimately overshadowed much of what would happen before and after September fifth in Munich, there were many notable athletic achievements that took place, especially for the Japanese delegation. They returned to Japan with twenty-nine medals, which was the same number they had garnered on their home turf in Tokyo.⁶³ Japanese men continued their winning streak in the gymnastics competition, taking home their fourth gold medal in the overall team competition along with several more gold, silver and bronze medals for individual performances.⁶⁴ Several jūdō and freestyle wrestlers won gold and silver medals, and for the first time the men's volleyball team outshone the women's team. The men's team beat out East Germany and the Soviet Union to take the gold medal, while the women were again beaten by the Soviet Union and came away with the silver medal.

One heavily publicized gold medal win was that of nineteen-year-old swimmer Aoki Mayumi, who not only won the gold medal in the women's 100-metre butterfly event but also set a new world record while doing so. An article covered half the front page of *The Japan Times* two days after her victory, with the headline under the large photo of Aoki reading, 'Miss Aoki

Cracks World Record in 100-M. Butterfly'.⁶⁵ Aoki was the first female swimmer from Japan to win a medal since Maehata Hideko's memorable victory in Germany thirty-six years prior. Aoki beat out East German Roswitha Beier and Hungarian Andra Gyarmati for the medal, and another Japanese swimmer, Asano Noriko, finished less than a second (albeit seven places) behind Aoki. A 2002 'Where Are They Now' article about Aoki in the monthly magazine, *Ushio*, recalls how emotional Aoki was when she won, stating, 'After her race finished, Aoki returned to the poolside and cried as she was embraced by her Japanese teammates. Then, as she saw the *hi no maru* flag being hoisted when she stood on the medal podium, Aoki's face glistened with tears. It was a moment that was felt throughout Japan.'⁶⁶

A *Bungeishunj* article from March 1984 gives a detailed biographical account of Aoki and her rise to the top and places her in the ranks of other female pioneers in the Japanese sporting world. The author writes that '[t]here have only been four female champions from Japan in all Olympic history. 200-metre breaststroke swimmer Maehata Hideko from the 1936 Berlin Olympics, the volleyball team from the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, and the third was Aoki Mayumi. Then came the volleyball team at the 1976 Games in Montral'.⁶⁷ Indeed, at the time of the article's writing there had only been four gold medal performances by Japanese women, but this was to change shortly thereafter, as the number of women athletes and their subsequent successes would surge in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Montral Summer Games in 1976, much like the Winter Games in Sapporo in 1972, saw a jump in the number of Japanese women competing. Just as the number of women had doubled in Sapporo, the number of women who took part in Montral jumped from thirty-eight (in Munich) to sixty-one, while Japanese male athletes had only eight more athletes in Montral than in Munich (from 144 to 152). Unlike at their Winter counterpart, however, the number of female participants from Japan would not see a precipitous drop at the following Games, as the number of women continued to increase throughout the 1980s and 1990s, until it actually overtook the number of male athletes at the Athens Games in 2004.⁶⁸ In Montral this can be largely attributed to the addition of two team sports for women: handball and basketball. Teams were sent in both sports, and the Japanese women came in fifth place in both.⁶⁹

Of course, when it came to women's team sports, the team that received the most attention in Montral was the gold medal-winning volleyball team. As mentioned in the 1984 *Bungeishunj* article above, this marked only the fourth time in history that Japanese women won gold, and the win was reminiscent to many of their victory in 1964. Just like in Tokyo, the 'witches of the Orient' beat out their long-standing rival, the Soviet Union, although in Montral the Japanese team was so dominant that there was little question throughout the tournament that they would be the champions (whereas in Tokyo, the final match with the Soviet Union was extremely close). The Japanese team was so

strong, in fact, that only one time in the whole tournament did one of their opponents (South Korea) reach double digits in a single set.⁷⁰

Twenty-four-year-old Okamoto Mariko (now Nakano Mariko) was the captain of the team in Montréal, and she had been a member of the silver-winning team in Munich as well. In an essay about her experiences in Montréal, she focuses on how devoted and driven the women on the team were to winning a gold medal in 1976. She writes, 'Even through the painful and difficult strength training, we continued because we were so driven by our goal of making it to the final round. When we won our first match against Hungary, we thought that the uniforms we wore must have somehow been auspicious, so we wore the same uniforms until the end of the tournament.'⁷¹ She discusses the trials and tribulations that she personally faced in order to make it to the Olympic Games, including the seemingly common theme among female athletes of having grown up weak and sickly, with sport being her saviour by giving her strength and confidence she never thought she could have. In writing about the moment the Japanese flag was raised in Montréal, Nakano says that the experience awakened within her a sense of euphoria that she had never known possible until that day.⁷²

As with many other Olympic medallists, the sense of accomplishment and exhilaration that came with winning the gold stayed with Nakano her entire life and had a significant impact on her future endeavours. She went around the country giving lectures and wrote two books about her experiences at the Olympic Games. She used her relative celebrity status to begin philanthropic organizations aimed at helping orphaned and handicapped children.⁷³ Moreover, when she was diagnosed with cancer in 1995, she claims to have drawn upon the fighting spirit and mental fortitude gained through her athletic training in order to get her through the ordeal. Remembering both the supportive cheers of fans yelling, 'Mariko, Fight! Mariko, Fight!' and the years of enduring gruelling practices led Nakano to have a bravery that she believes may not have otherwise been possible.⁷⁴

Nakano's story is not unique – countless female Olympians from Hitomi Kinue's time onwards made careers out of publishing books, public speaking engagements and various philanthropic activities.⁷⁵ These activities, which rely on both the women's pre-existing popularity and further spread of their celebrity, have played a major part in the growth of women's competitive sport in Japan. The intersection of globalization and sport had also become apparent in Japan by the late 1970s, as travel abroad, television and movies led sport to have an impact on more and more Japanese women. Just as Hitomi had travelled to Europe in the 1920s and reported back that sport was not limited to schoolyard activities in other parts of the world, women were travelling abroad in much greater numbers by the 1970s and seeing the depth of talent among female athletes in other parts of the world. The IOC would also make some changes in the 1980s that would greatly affect the number and variety of sports in which Japanese women could compete at the elite level.

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