Sport In Japan - *Nihon no Supootsu*

In Australia we enjoy playing sport socially with friends and family and we also enjoy watching sport at a competitive level. In Japan the Japanese people also enjoy participating in a variety of sports and often have a favourite sports person or team whom they follow with interest. Many of the sports played and enjoyed in Japan are traditional sports. Apart from the traditional sports there are also many sports which are common in most countries which the Japanese also enjoy. Let’s learn about some of the traditional Japanese sports.

Sumoo – すもう

Sumo is considered to be a type of wrestling and sumo is the national sport of Japan and has a two thousand year history. In each bout or fight there are two wrestlers and the loser is the one who is pushed out of the ring or touches the floor with any part of the body apart from the feet. Sumo wrestlers can weigh up to 200kg. There are six main tournaments a year and there are now some Hawaiian, Mongolian and other foreign sumo wrestlers who compete in all the top competitions.

Kendo – けんどう

It is derived from the samurai word fighting technique. Long bamboo sticks substitute swords and participants are dressed in protective armour. The aim is to hit the opponent on 3 parts of the body – the head, the arm, or the chest area. Fighters shout the name of the area they are about to hit. It is taught at high school to instil self-discipline.

Karate – からて

The word ‘karate’ means empty hand (no weapons). It is a combative technique that was developed to protect oneself from personal attack. Karate experts can break pieces of wood with their bare hands. Karate is more aggressive than Judo.

Juudoo – じゅうどう

The word Judo means, ‘gentle way’. It is a form of self-defence without violence that uses the opponents’ strength to deflect an attack. Judo originated in Japan and has been part of the Olympics since the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

Baseball – やきゅう

It was introduced to Japan by the USA in 1870. It is extremely popular and approximately 20 million fans attend the games each year. Japanese baseball teams are very good and now some Japanese players play in the top teams in the USA.

Golf– Gorufu

It is extremely popular, especially with businessmen. It is now the most popular participation sport in Japan. There are over 1600 courses, but they can become overcrowded. Therefore, fees to play golf are very high. Many cannot afford to play on a golf course but simply practice at a driving range, rarely getting to a real course.

Other Sports

There are other sports gaining popularity in Japan. Japan co-hosted the Football (soccer) world cup in 2002 and the domestic J-League soccer competition has become strong and Japan is now one of the leading soccer nations in Asia. Japan performed well at the recent FIFA World Cup making it past the group stage. Japan, also competed in the Rugby world cup held in Australia in 2003 and performed better than many people expected.

Winter Sports

Japan has some of the best ski resorts and skiing areas in the world. It is therefore not surprising that Japan hosted the winter Olympics in 1972 in the northern city of Sapporo. Winter sports are popular in Japan and many Japanese compete very well in the winter games.

English *Roomaji* Hiragana

1.Sport *Supootsu* –

2.Kendo *Kendoo* けんどう

3.Mountain climbing *Yamanobori* やまのぼり

4.Judo *Juudoo* じゅうどう

5.Fishing *Tsuri* つり

6.Sumo wrestling *Sumoo* すもう

7.Baseball *Yakyuu* やきゅう

8.Karate *Karate* からて

9.Horse riding *Jooba* じょうば

10.Rugby(union) *Ragubi* –

11.Volleyball *Bareebooru* –

12.Golf *Gorufu* –

13.Soccer *Sakkaa* –

14.Skiing *Sukii* –

15.Surfing *Saafin* –

16.Tennis *Tenisu* –

17.Easy *Yasashii* やさしい

18.Difficult *Muzukashii* むずかしい

19.Fun/enjoyable *Tanoshii* たのしい

20.Interesting *Omoshiroi* おもしろい

21.Boring *Tsumaranai* つまらない

*\* Note only sports with a Japanese word are written in Hiragana.*