

## MESSAGE FROM H.E. YASUMASA NAGAMINE, AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN



I would like to express my great appreciation for the 16th year of the Oku Memorial Trophy rugby event. It is heart-warming to see that the intense passion for rugby held by Ambassador Katsuhiko Oku, who worked so enthusiastically to deepen Japan-UK ties through sport but was tragically killed in the line of duty in Iraq in 2003, has touched and inspired his friends, colleagues, and younger rugby players from both countries. In fact, I knew him as a colleague in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the 1980s, and even worked and spent some leisure time with him when we were seconded at the same time to the Embassy of Japan in the UK 18 years ago. Katsu Oku was well-known for his warmth and kindness, and for the pleasure he took in making people happy. I have no doubt that my dear friend would be very grateful for this annual event, a precious opportunity to commemorate and celebrate his life, and I deeply appreciate the efforts of the organisers in making it happen.

No doubt the Rugby World Cup 2019 is still fresh in the minds of all of us. And the important thing is not just the excitement generated by the games themselves but the fact that people from all over the world, not least those from the birthplace of rugby, came to Japan, mingled with the locals and with one another, and established bonds of friendship that will long endure. Now, buoyed by that experience, we turn our attention to the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020. In fact, the Japan-UK Season of Culture that bridges these two major sporting extravaganzas is currently under way. I am confident that this exciting initiative will trigger vibrant grassroots exchange in many fields all around the country.

Let me once again voice my gratitude to the organisers of the Oku Memorial Trophy, the participating teams and all those who have come from far and wide to be present on this special occasion. I trust everyone enjoys the day.

長嶺 安政

Yasumasa Nagamine  
Ambassador of Japan in the UK

### OKU TROPHY PAST RESULTS

20/09/2004	Waseda University 25 Oxford University 9 <b>Chichibunomiya Stadium, Tokyo</b>	07/12/2013	Vincent's/Hertford 57 London Japanese 0 Kew Occasionals 48 Vincent's/Hertford 22 Kew Occasionals 31 London Japanese 7 <b>Iffley Road, Oxford</b>
26/11/2005	Kew Occasionals 31 London Japanese 28 <b>Richmond Athletic Ground</b>	13/12/2014	Vincent's/Hertford 24 London Japanese 10 Kew Occasionals 47 Vincent's/Hertford 10 Kew Occasionals 42 London Japanese 10 <b>Iffley Road, Oxford</b>
25/11/2006	New York Japanese 7 London Japanese 0 Kew Occasionals 30 New York Japanese 5 Kew Occasionals 25 London Japanese 7 <b>Richmond Athletic Ground</b>	13/09/2015	Oxford University 26 Waseda University 7 Kew Occasionals 63 London Japanese 7 <b>Iffley Road, Oxford</b>
24/11/2007	Kew Occasionals 31 London Japanese 19 <b>Richmond Athletic Ground</b>	15/05/2016	Waseda University ROB 31 Kew Occasionals 32 <b>Kami-igusa, Tokyo</b>
10/12/2008	Kew Occasionals/OURFC 1988 XV 48 London Japanese 26 <b>Richmond Athletic Ground</b>	03/12/2016	Kew Occasionals 48 London Japanese 21 <b>Richmond Athletic Ground</b>
28/11/2009	Kew Occasionals 44 London Japanese 31 <b>Richmond Athletic Ground</b>	02/12/2017	Hertford College 24 London Japanese 12 Kew Occasionals 21 Hertford College 7 Kew Occasionals 29 London Japanese 7 <b>Richmond Athletic Ground</b>
04/12/2010	Hertford College 31 London Japanese 15 Vincent's Club 21 Kew Occasionals 7 London Japanese 15 Kew Occasionals 5 Vincent's Club 5 Hertford College 0 <b>Iffley Road, Oxford</b>	11/03/2018	Oxford University 27 Waseda University 19 <b>Iffley Road, Oxford</b>
03/12/2011	Hertford College 19 London Japanese 5 Kew Occasionals 50 Vincent's Club 5 Vincent's Club 39 London Japanese 10 Kew Occasionals 50 Hertford College 7 <b>Iffley Road, Oxford</b>	17/11/2018	London Japanese Veterans 23 Commons & Lords 19 Kew Occasionals 33 London Japanese 10 <b>Richmond Athletic Ground</b>
08/12/2012	Kew Occasionals 35 London Japanese 12 Vincent's/Hertford 29 London Japanese 24 Kew Occasionals 31 Vincent's/Hertford 7 <b>Iffley Road, Oxford</b>	18/09/2019	Waseda University 0 Oxford University 3 <b>Kami-igusa, Tokyo</b>
		07/12/2019	Kew Occasionals vs London Japanese <b>Richmond Athletic Ground</b>



# OKU MEMORIAL TROPHY

# 奥 記念杯



KEW OCCASIONALS  
VS  
LONDON JAPANESE



## SATURDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2019



日英両国の絆が、  
ラグビーを通じて強めてくれた  
奥 克彦君のご遺志とともに、  
未来に継承されることを祈ります。

May Japan and United Kingdom,  
with the bonds through the Game of Rugby  
and the will of Mr. Katsuhiko Oku,  
forge a finely-woven relationship toward the future.

表 石 剛

12.15PM KICK-OFF  
RICHMOND ATHLETIC GROUND

MATCH SPONSORS



LONDON JAPANESE RFC OFFICIALS:

Captain: Austin Rose; Joint Vice-Captains: Taku Inoue, Ed Poon; President: John Lee;  
Hon Secretary: Alex Pelling; Hon Treasurer: Anthony Chiu Smit.

KEW OCCASIONALS RFC OFFICIALS:

Joint Captains: Ross Swanson and Josh Leslie; President: Chris Stone; Chairman: Tom Clark;  
Hon Secretary & Treasurer: Chris Bucknall.

REFEREES: Paul Farrelly and Reg Clark

## RUGBY WORLD CUP 2019 — KATSU OKU - 'RUGBY THREADS'

Everyone involved over the years in the Oku Memorial Trophy games will join me in congratulating Japan on a magnificent Rugby World Cup. The stellar performances of the England and Japan teams were only part of the huge success of what was an emotional roller coaster of a tournament. In particular it was gratifying that Ambassador Katsuhiko Oku's significant role in bringing the event to Japan was fully recognised – former Prime Minister Mori, who presented one of the trophies we play for today, in a TV interview just before the opening ceremony pointed out that Katsu was the first person to even suggest the possibility that Japan might make a bid – in addition to his massive efforts over subsequent years to position the JRFU for this challenge. For many reasons Katsu was never far from our thoughts throughout the whole event.

In the second World University Rugby Invitation tournament, hosted by Waseda in the week before the RWC, Oxford University once more played the hosts for the Oku Memorial Trophy. The scoreline of 3-0 should not disguise the intensely competitive nature of this 20 minute each way match played in very wet conditions. We were delighted that it was attended by Katsu's second daughter Chieko and her two daughters, and the post-match celebrations reflected once more the closeness of the ties between the two clubs, which Katsu did so much to develop. Having inaugurated the event in 2015, Oxford were delighted at the great job Waseda did in taking up the baton, which has now been grasped by Bordeaux University for 2023.

On the first weekend of the Rugby World Cup, London Japanese gathered in Tokyo to play a social game with All Mitsubishi RFC, organised by former Oku Trophy regular Hideyuki Ozawa and many old friendships were renewed. Another 'Lonjapa' old boy who joined the festivities later was Johnny Toppon, who travelled from Zambia, and who on arrival inaugurated what for me was one of the most emotional initiatives that I witnessed during RWC2019. In his own words:

"Almost exactly one year before when I was in the departure lounge at Heathrow heading to Zambia I had an idea that I wanted to try and create something to highlight some of the special characters who were involved indirectly and directly in forging links between UK and Japan rugby and paving the way for the successful world cup bid.

The idea for the project title came from the Japanese concept of 運命の赤い糸 (*unmei no akai ito*) the red thread of fate, that ties certain people together in life with an unbreakable bond. London Japanese, the Kew Occasionals, Oxford University, Kobe Steel, Richmond, the Oku Memorial Trophy and Shibuya International Rugby Club played a large role connecting the people I chose, which included not only Katsu Oku himself, but also two Japanese rugby legends, and Steelers - the late Seiji Hirao and 'Maru' Hayashi, both of whom played for London Japanese in addition to Richmond and Oxford respectively during their time in the UK.

In November 2018, I planted a field of organic cotton specifically for the project, and had visits from Japanese volunteers from JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). I harvested the cotton by hand in June and had it ginned (separating the seeds from the lint) and spun into yarn. This yarn was then dyed and woven by hand into a striped red and white fabric in the style of a vintage Japanese rugby jersey on a traditional hand loom to my design and tailored by hand by local village ladies. I then designed special embroidered badges for each of the people above highlighting the clubs and teams that you all played for during their time in the UK and Japan.

These badges were hand cut by me and sewn onto each of the 6 jerseys. Katsu Oku was the real inspiration for me behind doing this project because I often felt bad that since I moved to Zambia in 2012 I would miss the Oku Memorial Trophy games in London as I always seemed to be in Zambia at that time of year as its the start of the rainy season and therefore farming season. I know that Katsu travelled to over 100 countries and wasn't scared to get his hands dirty and to really try and get an understanding of the struggles of people in the developing world. I thought it would be fitting to do something to celebrate him and you all while empowering unemployed villagers who are highly skilled but struggling."



Shirt presentations by Reg Clark to Dan Carter and John Toppon to Shin Sakamoto, and the shirts in Zambia.

It was a privilege for me in the week leading up to the RWC Final to be able to pass one of Johnny's individually named 'Rugby Threads' jerseys firstly to the Oku family, and secondly to the Hirao family via the Kobe Steel club in the person of none other than their current fly half Dan Carter. The Steelers subsequently themselves made a special presentation of the jersey to Hirao's son. Johnny himself was also able to present in person a copy of every single other jersey of the 6 he made – including to Maru Hayashi and another Oku one to Katsu's old school teammate Shin Sakamoto, who in turn presented it to their alma mater Itami High School's rugby club in Takarazuka. 運命の赤い糸 - *unmei no akai ito* - the red thread of fate, that binds us together in an unbreakable bond'. I can think of no better description of what we have been trying to forge in the name of Ambassador Katsuhiko Oku in staging these modest rugby matches over the years. Congratulations on your wonderful RWC2019 'Rugby Threads' initiative, Johnny. We will continue to play in that spirit today.

*Reg Clark*

Reg Clark.

## OKU MEMORIAL TROPHY GAMES, NOVEMBER 17TH 2018

