

GLOUCESTER RUGBY
HERITAGE

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WELCOME BACK TO THE BRAVE BLOSSOMS

Tonight, Japan are visiting Kingsholm for the second time and will be back to compete here in the 2015 World Cup.

Their first visit was in September 1976 when they played Gloucestershire, the champion county, in the first match of their second British tour.

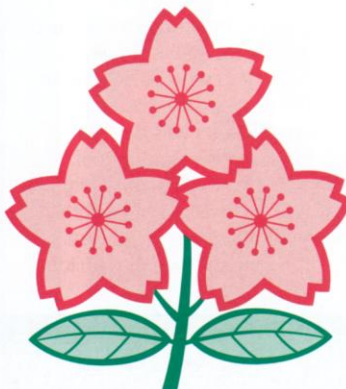
It was an important point in Japanese rugby history as, over the previous ten years, the Japanese Rugby Union with over 2,200 clubs had been making significant progress towards becoming a major force in world rugby.

1968

In September 1968 a very strong England party captained by Budge Rogers had toured Japan for the first time. Two unofficial internationals were played, billed as An England XV v All Japan.

At Osaka the teams were drawing 19-19, with All-Japan having taken the lead three times, until England scored two unconverted tries in the last four minutes to win 27-19.

In Tokyo, in front of a 25,000 crowd, England won 6-3, only desperate tackling from Peter



Rossborough and Jan Webster keeping the home side out in the dying minutes.

The same year All-Japan visited New Zealand for a tenmatch tour. They surprised everyone by winning half their matches, but more especially by beating the Junior All Blacks 23-19 at Wellington, in the nearest approach they had to an international.

The winger Yoshihiro Sakata scored four tries in the match and the following season returned to New Zealand to play for Canterbury. He was named one of the Five Rugby Players

of 1969 and in 2012 became the first Japanese player to be inducted into the IRB Hall of Fame. Japanese rugby had arrived on the world scene.

1973

The first Japanese tour of England, Wales and France took place in September and October 1973.

Japan played two matches in England, five in Wales and four in France, including representative matches against England Under 23, a Wales XV and a French XV.

A young Phil Blakeway of Gloucester made his England Under 23 debut, as England won 19-10.

The Times said, "Blakeway, whose physique might have reminded his opponents of one of their own Sumo wrestlers, had Shimoazono in all sorts of discomfort."

The conditions in the Welsh valleys were somewhat alien to the tourists and the tour has been immortalised in song by the Welsh comedian Max Boyce.

One verse of his song runs "The papers say we don't lack class... We're just not used to five foot grass!"

22 September 1976 Gloucestershire 62 Japan 10

The grass at the start of the season at Kingsholm was invariably long in the 70s and was described as "lush" by the Times when the Japanese took the field against Gloucestershire on 22 September 1976.

Gloucestershire were weakened by injuries but could still field eight present and future internationals including British Lions Mike Burton and Steve Boyle. Japan fielded ten of the side which had played against Wales in Japan the previous year.

Burton got the home side off to a storming start when he burst through

which brought the house down. Yoshida made a glorious break in the centre and there was no catching the flying Aruga after that.

There was still time though for Williams to create another hole in midfield and for Burton to send in hooker Mills to make the half time score 34-6.

Japan staged a courageous recovery in the third quarter, swarming into the rucks and playing with great elan. A tapped penalty and a perfectly judged kick from Mori led to a try from Fujiwara that set the crowd alight.

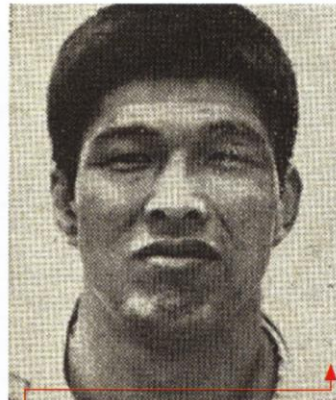
Gloucestershire looked sluggish

at this stage, but the picture was to change dramatically. In the final fifteen minutes the alien conditions only three days after arriving at Heathrow and the power of the Gloucester forwards in the loose took their toll and the floodgates opened.

As Japan inevitably tired, the Gloucestershire pack, who were running like threequarters by the end, took

charge, bringing a brace of tries for Mogg and Jardine and one for Williams, making the final score 62-10.

Japan were not badly beaten in the scrums and they won 18 of 19 lineouts on their own throw, taking



Toshio Terai

5 from their opponents, thanks to an outstanding performance by lock Toshio Terai.

However, they were no match for the mauling strength and skill of the Gloucestershire forwards, led by Burton. If the Japanese backs, always creative, had played behind the county forwards, it might have been a different matter

AND TODAY...

The progress of Japanese rugby since the 70s has been uneven. No Japanese player has made the same impression abroad that Yoshihiro Sakata made in New Zealand 45 years ago.

However the Japanese Top League which was formed in 2003 and has been bolstered by stars from New Zealand and Australia shows the way forward.

Success in the 2011 Pacific Nations Tournament and a win against a Wales side depleted by Lions calls this summer have confirmed that Japanese rugby is on the up.

Japan is to host the 2019 World Cup and by then, the Cherry Blossoms, now restyled the Brave Blossoms, could be a force to be reckoned with.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE <i>White</i>		JAPAN <i>Cherry and White</i>	
15. D. P. Sorrell (Bristol)	Full Back	15. Nobuyuki Ueyama	
14. A. J. G. Morley (Bristol) †	Right Wing	14. Masaru Fujiwara	
13. B. J. Vine (Gloucester)	Right Centre	13. Shigetaka Mori	
12. R. Jardine (Gloucester)	Left Centre	12. Masao Yoshida	
11. R. R. Mogg (Gloucester)	Left Wing	11. Ken Aruga	
10. C. G. Williams (Gloucester) †	Outside Half	10. Yuji Matsuo	
9. P. Kingston (Gloucester) †	Scrum Half	9. Akio Ueda	
1. G. A. F. Sargent (Gloucester)	Prop	1. Tsukasa Takata (Capt.)	
2. S. G. F. Mills (Gloucester)	Hooker	2. Manabu Sasada	
3. M. A. Burton (Gloucester) †	Prop	3. Masayuki Miyauchi	
4. S. B. Boyle (Gloucester)	Lock	4. Toshio Terai	
5. R. A. Powell (Llanelli)	Lock	5. Naoshi Kumagai	
6. J. A. Watkins (Capt.) (Gloucester) †	Blind Side	6. Keiichi Toyoyama	
8. A. J. Troughton (Bristol)	No. 8	8. Ichiro Kobayashi	
7. P. Polledri (Bristol)	Open Side	7. Hideo Akama	
Replacements:		Replacements:	
F. C. Reed (Gloucester)		Toshiaki Yauji	
A. Sheppard (Bristol)		Tsuyoshi Hatakeyama	
E. A. Pothney (Gloucester)	† International	Yoshiaki Izawa	
R. M. Harding (Bristol)		Ryozo Imazato	
R. J. Clives (Gloucester)		Shigekazu Hoshino	
R. Etheridge (Gloucester)		Nobufumi Tanaka	
Referee: D. L. HEAD (London Society)			
Touch Judges: W. J. Fowler (Gloucester Society); R. F. Brown (Bristol Society)			

from lineout possession won by Troughton and his fellow Gloucester prop Sargent went with him to score.

Sorrell came up from full back to make space for a brilliant side-stepping run by Mogg that took him to the line from 45 yards. Troughton and Sorrell set up rucks for try number three, Jardine bursting through to the posts.

Another Burton stampede, aided by Sargent, produced number four for Troughton. Then Vine went over for a fifth try, and Sorrell having kicked all five goals, Gloucestershire were 30 points up.

Now came the first Japanese score,



Masaru Fujiwara