

次の英文を読み、180字から220字の日本語で要約しなさい。

## Rugby in Japan

Rugby was not a widely known game in Japan until the 2019 RWC (Rugby World Cup) captured the nation's attention. The 2019 RWC was the first Cup to be held in Asia and rugby fever quickly swept over Japan. Baseball, soccer, and sumo normally dominate media coverage. Many people who are familiar with American football were now confused by the rules of another hand-carried ballgame. Television viewers could see that rugby features *tackles*, *rucks*, and *mauls* like American football, but also the *free-kicks* and *throw-ins* of soccer. *Forward-passes* and *knock-on infringements* along with rugby's unique organized *scrums* added to the general confusion. Also, reaching the opposing team's goal line and scoring in rugby is called a *try*, not a *goal* or *touchdown*.

Despite the noticeable lack of awareness about the sport prior to the 2019 RWC, surprisingly, Japan actually has a long rugby history stretching back to 1866 when the first team was established in Yokohama. Institutions such as Meiji, Waseda, and Keio Universities made significant contributions to the popularization of rugby and the first All-Japan University Rugby Championship was contested in 1964. The sport saw further **limelight** with the TV drama series *School Wars* in 1984 and its movie **spin-off**, as well as the series *No Side Game* airing in the lead-up to the 2019 RWC.

Samurai Blue, Japan's soccer team, has long been a household name, but not that many people knew of the Brave Blossoms, Japan's rugby team, until the 2019 RWC brought them into the domestic spotlight. In the opening match they comfortably beat Russia, stirring the excitement of the nation and achieving unprecedented TV ratings. They went on to defeat Ireland, Samoa, and Scotland, eventually losing to South Africa in the quarter-finals. This was the Brave Blossom's highest finish to date and their world ranking is currently 8th.

Another aspect of rugby which captured the imagination of the Japanese public was the pre-match 'haka' dance performed by New Zealand's team, the All Blacks. The haka is a stirring and fear-inspiring ceremonial dance of the Maori, the **indigenous** people of New Zealand.

Rugby's Olympic debut was in Rio in 2016 with a special version of the game called 'rugby sevens' featuring seven players on each team and shorter match times. Rugby fever in Japan may have reached its peak, but the Japan Rugby Football Union plans to **capitalize on** this renewed interest and get more youngsters involved in the sport. 'Tag rugby', a safer version of the game, was introduced to elementary schools across Japan to help promote the 2019 RWC.

With the Tokyo Olympics just around the corner, we will have to wait and see what becomes of rugby's new-found popularity in Japan. Will we see an emergence of new competitive rugby teams from Japan and Asia? Will rugby ever rival the popularity of soccer? Only time will tell.

**Notes:**

infringement (noun)	the breaking of a rule or law
limelight (noun)	receiving public attention
spin-off (noun)	a product associated with a TV program, film, etc.
indigenous (adjective)	native
capitalize on (verb)	to gain advantage from something