

## News from under the Southern Cross – Edition 33

### A Major Sporting Power

21 September

There's one impression I had about Australia before coming here that hasn't changed since I've lived here. That's Australia's reputation for being a major sporting power. In this edition of my newsletter, I'd like to discuss this point.



Canberra Stadium, the stage for various sporting events)

#### 1. Success in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games

There's probably no need for me to explain here about the performances of Aussie athletes in Tokyo. They're outlined in my "[News from under the Southern Cross \(Edition 25\)](#)". The entire world knows the brilliant results Australian athletes achieved in both individual and team sports.

While acknowledging the highly developed physical capabilities of individual Aussie athletes, I am paying attention here to the unique mentality, well-maintained training environment, and the support and encouragement from fellow Aussies. In my view, all of these enable Australia to be a major sporting power.

## 2. Mentality

Amid the many memorable scenes from Tokyo 2020, there are several in particular that are unforgettable.

One took place as part of the men's decathlon. During the 1500m race, an older Australian athlete taking part in the same event as a younger team-mate, who was still in contention for a medal, decided to forego his own result and ran alongside his team-mate, shouting encouragement to him. This act led to Australia winning its first-ever medal in an Olympic decathlon.

Now switch to the women's surfing. An Australian athlete who stood a good chance of winning a medal went down to her Japanese rival. Yet as soon as she lost her hope for a medal, she extended a hand of congratulations to her rival while floating on top of a wave.

Now to the women's skateboarding. There was a Japanese athlete who attempted a bold technique in order to recover from a poor start to take the gold medal but missed out. So the Australian and other athletes taking part got together and raised her up on their shoulders to give high praise for her courageous spirit.

Scenes such as these are often summarized in one word, 'sportsmanship'. At the same time, I was greatly moved by the underlying mental strength and resilience of the Australian athletes, mutual respect towards their rivals and thoughtfulness they casually show to each other. They take the feelings of their opponents on-board while performing well. And they congratulate the victors and abandon any self-centeredness when they lose. This epitomises the value of sport in developing human beings.

## 3. Sporting Environment

Surprisingly enough, few people know that the National Training Center in Tokyo was established after the Australian Institute of Sport as a model. It's the best feature of a leading sporting nation.

You can enjoy sports on an everyday basis using facilities around the place in the environment. Canberra's cycling and walking tracks are a typical example of this. Paved paths for walking and cycling run around the 30km shoreline of Lake Burley Griffin located in the centre of the city.



A cycling map of Lake Burley Griffin (Source: visitcanberra.com.au)



Bicycle repair stations

Even I, who have enjoyed cycling along the banks of the Tama River in Tokyo, have found such a cycling-rich environment as this to be an object of envy. In fact, the ambassadors of various countries residing in Canberra have formed a cycling club known as “Bikers”. We “hang out” during the morning on weekends. While it mostly consists of European and South American ambassadors, Japan and India are regular participants from Asia.



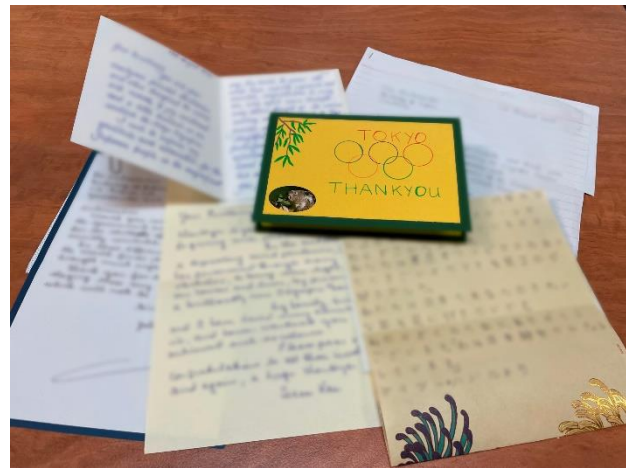
While my fellow ambassadors are huffing and puffing away, slowly ascending the incline of hills, I pass them by on my E-bike as if it was no big deal to me. As the representative of Japan, a nation of technology, I take ‘great pleasure’ in this (of course, one can’t really call someone who relies on the power of lithium batteries a true sportsman...).

#### 4. Support and encouragement from fellow Aussies

There's something that has made me very happy. The Embassy has received many congratulatory and thank you letters, emails, and even a bouquet of flowers, from many Australians wanting to celebrate the holding of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. While moved by the warm-hearted consideration for Japan, I was also struck by the passion and depth of affection that Aussies have towards sport.



A bouquet of flowers



Hand-written letters (including in Japanese)

According to news reports, many athletes have received financial support from a certain billionaire mining magnate, who is otherwise known as 'the king of iron ore' in Western Australia.

Looking at these, I felt that the emergence of a major sporting power is made possible only when a large amount of people who give athletes encouragement and support are a firmly established part of society.

#### 5. Let's go outdoors!

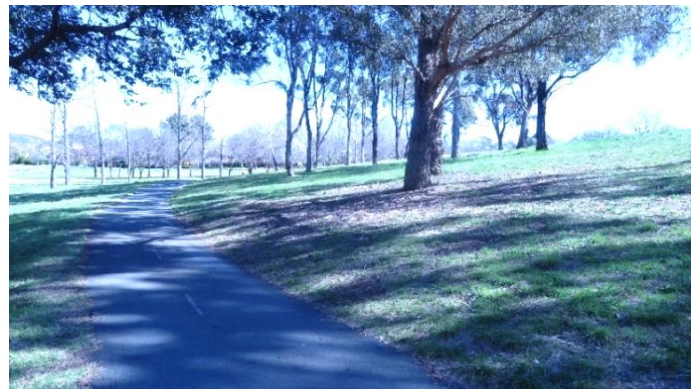
In Australia, with its almost daily broad, blue skies, you naturally want to go outside and start moving around. Now I'm going for a spin on my bike. Of course, to avoid being called a "reckless old biker" I will stick to the road rules and 'gracefully and correctly' glide along. Also, magpies, the 'Bird of Terror' ([link](#)), are out and about, so I won't forget my helmet and sunglasses.



The Captain Cook Memorial Water Jet and a cycle path around Lake Burley Griffin



Watch out for magpies!



A cycle path that leads to everywhere in the city

Once the COVID-19 pandemic is over and you are able to visit Canberra, how about doing some cycle touring around town?

The sun shines dazzlingly and a cool breeze blows. The surface of the lake sparkles while far-off mountain ranges are covered in haze. I can't be the only one enveloped by a pleasant sense of liberation, which may possibly change your view on life.



The view from the National Arboretum, located 8 minutes by car from the city centre,  
looking in the direction of the Parliament of Australia building

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