

OKU MEMORIAL TROPHY

奥 記念杯

RUGBY MATCHES

SUNDAY 24TH NOVEMBER 2024



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.

奥 克彦

RICHMOND ATHLETIC GROUND



HCBCRFC



SPONSORS



Harrington
Cooper



OKU TROPHY PAST RESULTS

20/09/2004
Waseda University 25 Oxford University 39
Chichibunomiya Stadium, Tokyo

26/11/2005
Kew Occasionals 31 London Japanese 28
Richmond Athletic Ground

25/11/2006
New York Japanese 7 London Japanese 0
Kew Occasionals 30 New York Japanese 5
Kew Occasionals 25 London Japanese 7
Richmond Athletic Ground

24/11/2007
Kew Occasionals 31 London Japanese 19
Richmond Athletic Ground

10/12/2008
Kew Occasionals/OURFC 1988 XV
48 London Japanese 26
Richmond Athletic Ground

28/11/2009
Kew Occasionals 44 London Japanese 31
Richmond Athletic Ground

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
Iffley Road, Oxford

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
Iffley Road, Oxford

08/12/2012
Kew Occasionals 35 London Japanese 12
Vincent's/Hertford 29 London Japanese 24
Kew Occasionals 31 Vincent's/Hertford 7
Iffley Road, Oxford

07/12/2013
Vincent's/Hertford 57 London Japanese 0
Kew Occasionals 48 Vincent's/Hertford 22
Kew Occasionals 31 London Japanese 7
Iffley Road, Oxford

13/12/2014
Vincent's/Hertford 24 London Japanese 10
Kew Occasionals 47 Vincent's/Hertford 10
Kew Occasionals 42 London Japanese 10
Iffley Road, Oxford

13/09/2015
*Oxford University 26 Waseda University 7
Kew Occasionals 63 London Japanese 7
Iffley Road, Oxford

15/05/2016
Waseda University ROB 31 Kew Occasionals 32
Kami-igusa, Tokyo

03/12/2016
Kew Occasionals 48 London Japanese 21
Richmond Athletic Ground

02/12/2017
Hertford College 24 London Japanese 12
Kew Occasionals 21 Hertford College 7
Kew Occasionals 29 London Japanese 7
Richmond Athletic Ground

11/03/2018
Oxford University 27 Waseda University 19
Iffley Road, Oxford.

17/11/2018
London Japanese Veterans 23 Commons & Lords 19
Kew Occasionals 33 London Japanese 10
Richmond Athletic Ground

18/09/2019
*Waseda University 0 Oxford University 3
Kami-igusa, Tokyo

07/12/2019
Kew Occasionals 43 London Japanese 24
Richmond Athletic Ground

17/04/2021
Touch Rugby Tournament
1 Hertford College 2 OURFC Old Boys
3 Kew Occasionals 4 London Japanese
5 Commons & Lords
Richmond Athletic Ground

17/11/2021
Hertford College 7 OU Whippets 5
Kew Occasionals 31 London Japanese 28
OU Whippets 17 London Japanese 7
Kew Occasionals 12 Hertford College 7
Iffley Road, Oxford

12/11/2022
London Japanese 50 Kew Occasionals 22
Commons & Lords 28 London Japanese Veterans 23
Richmond Athletic Ground

25/11/2023
(1)London Japanese 15 HCBC 5; Kew Occasionals 37
HCBC 7; London Japanese 10 Kew Occasionals 7
(2)London Japanese Vets 49 Commons & Lords 5; Kew
Occasionals Vets 27 Commons & Lords 7; Kew Occasionals
Vets 12 London Japanese Vets 0
Richmond Athletic Ground

***World University Invitational Tournament**

LONDON JAPANESE RFC

President: John Lee **Captain:** Hideki Itabashi **Vice-Captains:** Tetsuo Furukawa & Jimmy Reeve
Treasurer: Shuya Takahashi **Secretary:** Koh Ishikawa **Veterans Captain:** Shintaro Ninomiya

KEW OCCASIONALS RFC

President: Chris Stone **Chairman:** Tom Clark **Captains:** Callum Macdonald and Jack Henchy
Secretary & Treasurer: Ed White **Veterans Captain:** Robbie King

HERTFORD COLLEGE & BALLIOL COLLEGE RFC

Chairman: John Collis **Vice Chairman:** Ben McDermott **Captain:** Joseph Dingle
Vice Captain: Connor Mair **Treasurer:** Frederick Goodfellow **Players' President:** Rory Tyler

COMMONS & LORDS RUFC

Chairman: Tonia Antoniazzi MP **Club Captain & Secretary:** Lord Addington **Treasurer:** Michael Wheeler MP
Assistant Chairman: Lord Hayward **Assistant Chairman:** Lord Evans **RFU Representative:** Charlie Dewhurst MP
Assistant Treasurer & Fixtures Secretary: Richard Austin

MESSAGE FROM H.E. MR. HIROSHI SUZUKI, AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN



It has been more than a decade since I last attended the Oku Memorial Cup, when I was Minister for public diplomacy at the Embassy. I fondly remember the atmosphere of warm friendship evident between the British and Japanese players on that occasion – although, in keeping with Ambassador Oku's legacy, they put such sentiments aside in their endeavours on the pitch.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have been involved in organising the event, in particular Mr Reg Clark, CEO of Rhino Sport & Leisure Limited. For this continuous dedication and friendship, he was awarded The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays (Kyokujitsu Soko Sho) last year.

Ambassador Katsuhiko Oku was tragically killed in the line of duty in Iraq in 2003 while on a reconstruction mission. "Katsu" was driven not only by his work for the international community as a diplomat but also by his enthusiasm for deepening Japan's partnerships with other countries through sport.

His particular passion was rugby, and his unparalleled enthusiasm for deepening Japan-UK relations together with his dedication to international peace remain a source of inspiration for many young people. Indeed, the fact that the Oku Memorial Trophy continues to be contested every year is proof of the friendship and respect that Katsu Oku attracted. I am very happy to see that younger sports people, both British and Japanese, have continued to celebrate that passion through this memorial competition.

This year, the Trophy matches will be held on the very same day that Japan's national rugby team plays against England. I very much look forward to these encounters and sincerely hope the occasion will serve to further strengthen the ties between our two nations.

鈴木 浩

MESSAGE FROM REG CLARK

Once more we gather in London to play rugby games to celebrate the life of and honour the memory of Ambassador Katsuhiko Oku, who was tragically taken from us far too young whilst on diplomatic duty with the UN post-war reconstruction programme in Iraq in November 2023. The passage of time, now 21 years, does not lessen the sadness we feel at this terrible loss and as ever our thoughts and prayers are with Katsu's family at this time of year.



Last year the Embassy of Japan in the UK, who have always strongly supported these memorial rugby events, marked the 20th anniversary of this sad event with a reception and rather than my having to elaborate here on what an extraordinary man Katsu Oku was, I refer you to the exhibition boards the Embassy displayed on that occasion, first produced for a 10th anniversary event in 2013, which are reproduced here on page 6 of this programme, and which demonstrate that clearly.

For the third time this year, we are able to stage these matches on the same day as an England vs Japan international – as in 2018 and 2022, we can all look forward to heading to the Allianz Stadium, as it now is, to round off a wonderful day of rugby and nostalgia. In addition, next weekend our friends at Itami High School in Hyogo Prefecture in Japan, Katsu's alma mater, will be staging their annual memorial rugby games for him and we send our best wishes to them.

Finally, can I take this opportunity once more to express my heartfelt thanks for the award to me at this time last year of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays by the Emperor. My part in helping to celebrate my friend's life over the years clearly played a significant role in that award and I therefore accepted it with some humility and sadness as well as considerable pride and once more without hesitation I would like to dedicate it to Katsu's memory.

Reg Clark

MATCH SCHEDULE

FROM 12 NOON ON PITCH 3

London Japanese, Kew Occasionals and Hertford & Balliol Colleges
3 games of 20 minutes each way.

FROM 12 NOON ON PITCH 4

London Japanese Veterans, Kew Occasionals Veterans and the Commons & Lords XV
3 games of 20 minutes each way.

REFEREES:

Rob Park, Nick Edmonds, Dan Burges and Huw Evans (LSRFUR)

2013 MEMORIAL EVENTS



Embassy of
Japan
in the UK

OKU MEMORIAL TROPHY 2013

奥 記念杯

London Japanese RFC and Kew Occasionals RFC

Courtesy of His Excellency Mr Keiichi Hayashi,
Ambassador of Japan to the United Kingdom

Request the pleasure of your company at a reception in advance of the ninth
OKU MEMORIAL TROPHY RUGBY TOURNAMENT

Thursday 28th November 2013
Embassy of Japan, 101-104 Piccadilly, London W1J 7JT

Doors open at 5.30pm.
Programme and speeches kick-off at 6.00pm sharp.



Katsuhiko Oku in Iraq



Katsuhiko Oku arrived in Baghdad in April 2003, the first Japanese official to be based in Iraq following the regime change. Between April and November 2003, Oku shared his thoughts with people back in Japan in a regular report called "Iraq Diary" (A Letter from Iraq). Listed below are some translated excerpts.



Katsuhiko Oku arrived in Baghdad on 23 April 2003. Immediately he took it upon himself to visit different areas of Iraq. On 4 May, Oku visited local schools.

"After WWII, my parents' generation received powdered milk and other goods from UNICEF. It is now Japan's turn to help."
"We must cooperate with international society and the NGOs."

On 8 May, the Japanese Embassy in Baghdad reopened. "At last, with the help of the Iraq people, a Japanese national flag was raised in the blue early-summer sky of May. Everyone started clapping. The Embassy has reopened."

Oku's eyes were focused on Iraq's future, especially on the future of Iraqi children.

"There is hope. It is in the sparkling eyes of the children. Anywhere, anytime, children's eyes declare their pure curiosity. Looking at the light in their eyes, I get the feeling that this country's future will surely be all right."

On the other hand, the security situation was tense. On 19 August, the UN Office in Baghdad was bombed. Among those killed was UNICEF's Christopher Klein-Siekman. Later, Oku visited the site.



"To my surprise, a name card came into my sight. It was Chris's. It seemed as though it was telling me, 'Japanese friend, go straight ahead! Why are you hesitating? There are things you have to do.' I could but promise myself that I would fulfil Chris's wishes."

(Later he writes)

"What we should learn from the precious lives lost ought to strengthen us in our resolve not to succumb in the fight against terrorism. Terrorism can happen anywhere in the world. Eradicating it is the common mission for all of us."

27 November, in what became his 71st and final report, Oku describes sharing a Thanksgiving holiday feast with American troops who were thinking about their families for away.

The 82nd Airborne Brigade will go back home next March. They spent Thanksgiving night with their families back home in their minds, looking forward to the day when they could meet again."



27 November, Katsuhiko Oku, his colleague Masamasa Inoue and their driver, Jerjes Sulaiman Zura, were shot and killed outside Tikrit in central Iraq.

6 December, These thousand people gathered for the funeral for Oku and Inoue in Tokyo. Then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi read these words of condolence: "The two men are the pride of their families, and of Japan and its people. We shall never forget their passion and their contributions."



Katsuhiko Oku in the UK



Oxford era (1982 - 1984)

Following his graduation from the Politics and Economics Department of Waseda University, Katsuhiko Oku joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1981, after which he conducted his studies at Hertford College in Oxford from 1982 to 1984, while attached to the Embassy of Japan in London.



Having previously played rugby at his high school and then at the collegiate powerhouse Waseda University, he became the first Japanese national to play for the Blues XV during his time at Oxford. After two years at Oxford, Oku went back to Tokyo to continue his career in the Foreign Service.

London era (2001-2003)

In November 2001, Katsuhiko Oku returned to the UK and took up the post of Director of the Japan Information and Cultural Centre (JICC) at the Embassy.

He immediately began serving as Joint Chief Executive of Japan 2001, a post he held for the last six months of the year-long festival, attending and encouraging numerous cultural and educational events. A keen believer in the importance of public relations, Oku initiated the renewal of the Embassy's newsletter, which has since been superseded by a web magazine, backed up by the Embassy's active presence on social media. He also initiated a series of exhibitions in the Embassy's Foyer Gallery and made efforts to promote the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme. In addition, he had extensive contacts among British journalists and exchanged views on how Japan could receive more balanced coverage in the media.



In particular, Oku focused on the promotion of Japanese culture and targeted the younger generation through the JICC school visit programme "Club Taisikan". As well as welcoming schools to visit the Embassy itself, he stressed the importance of outreach, taking to the road in person to visit schools around the UK, encouraging hands-on experience and actively participating in slide shows as well as origami and calligraphy workshops.

In the meantime, he never lost his love for his second stint in the UK. He was a founding member of the London Japanese RFC and a regular and enthusiastic player with the Kew Occasionals RFC, an informal club involving many London-based Oxford and Cambridge graduates and Blues. These two clubs take part in the Oku Memorial Trophy every year in his honour.



Oku, Rugby and Beyond



Oku and Japanese Rugby



Following his return to Japan in 1984, Katsuhiko Oku energetically helped to promote Japanese rugby and strengthen its position as an emerging force on the world stage whilst working as a foreign service officer. He also served as a member of the International Committee of the Japan Rugby Football Union.

He also maintained a close relationship with Waseda RFC. According to his former player and manager Mr Katsuyuki Kiyomura, Mr Oku would travel to Wales and Ireland without an appointment in the hope of arranging matches for Waseda. Mr Oku also travelled with the Waseda team for most of its matches abroad.

Rugby World Cup in the UK and in Japan

One of the goals Oku worked on tirelessly was for Japan to host the Rugby World Cup. His dream later came true in 2009.

It was in 2009, six years after the tragic death of Mr Oku, that Japan won the bid for the 2019 Rugby World Cup. It is a gratifying twist of fate that Japan will be hosting it after the 2015 World Cup in England, a country where Mr Oku spent so much time and made so many friends.

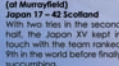
The JRFU has already embarked on its preparations for 2019, and has published its vision "Scrum Japan". The main aims of "Scrum Japan" are to create an even more exciting tournament, to showcase the spirit of rugby and to continue the development of rugby in Asia.

Japan national team tours the UK

The Japanese national team is currently on a tour of Europe. They played Scotland, a Gloucester XV and Russia (in Wales) before travelling to Spain. The tour is an important part of the team's preparations for the 2015 World Cup.



09 November vs Scotland (at Murrayfield)



12 November vs Gloucester XV (at Gloucester)

Japan 05 - 40 Gloucester XV

The Japan XV failed to score a try despite pushing their opponents.



15 November vs Russia (at Colwyn Bay)



Japan 40 - 13 Russia

After a struggle in the first half, the Japan XV pulled away for their first win on the tour with four tries in the second half.



EMBASSY RECEPTION, NOVEMBER 22ND 2023

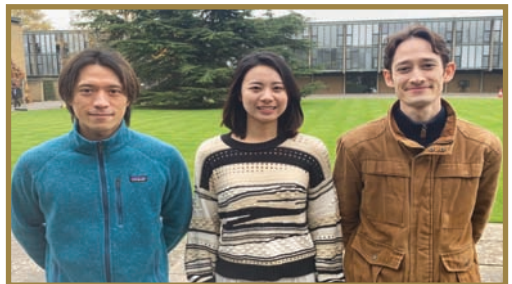


OXFORD KOBE SCHOLARSHIPS - ANNUAL AMBASSADOR OKU AWARD

The Oxford Kobe Scholarships were endowed in 1991 by the erstwhile St Catherine's College Oxford Kobe Institute in Japan, which itself had been established and endowed by Kobe Steel and a number of other leading Japanese companies.

Over 80 Japanese postgraduates have studied on this programme and in 2021 Oxford University decided to award the highest-ranking annual scholarship in memory of Ambassador Katsuhiko Oku.

There are currently three Ambassador Oku scholars in residence at St Catherine's – pictured left to right Atsushi Kanayama (DPhil in Education), Shiho Takada (Foreign Ministry Scholar - MBA) and Toma-jin Morikawa-Focquet (DPhil in Modern History).





Remembering Katsu

