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Author(s): Donald Roden

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Baseball and the Quest for National Dignity in Meiji Japan

DONALD RODEN

THE SURGE OF INTEREST in athletics and gymnastics that overtook parts of Europe and the United States at the end of the nineteenth century has begun to receive the scholarly attention it deserves as a remarkable manifestation of the spirit of the times.¹ Despite Johan Huizinga's characterization of the sporting world as "illusionary" and "standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life," it is apparent that the defenders of outdoor games in Victorian England and America "quite consciously" used the playing field for very real political and social ends.² For Thomas Hughes, cricket and football superseded book learning in the cultivation of Christian "manliness"; for Edward Thring, athletic contests were a "priceless boon" in helping the English become "such an adventurous race"; for Herbert Spencer, "sportive activities," free from gymnastic regimentation and peer-group coercion, were "divinely appointed means" to human welfare and development; and, for Theodore Roosevelt, "the strenuous life" of physical strife and challenge was a key to "true national greatness."³ Underlying the views of these and other spokesmen for "the life of manly vigor" is the attempt to link sport, first, to the ideal social character of a governing elite and, second, to the strength of the nation.

Presumably, the recognition of the social and political value of sport was rooted in the Social Darwinist perception of "civilization" generated by what Spencer called "a persistence of force." But along with the notion of the rectitude of might was a corresponding fear that the mechanization of power in an industrializing state spawns moral lassitude. Routine, convenience, docility, and protruding stomachs were all alarming signs that, as Roosevelt declared in 1894, "a peaceful and commercial civilization" was on the verge of forfeiting those

This article emerged from a talk before the Rutgers Seminar in Asian Studies on January 26, 1978.

¹ For recent studies that are devoted, at least in part, to the late nineteenth-century athletic revival, see Eugen Weber, "Gymnastics and Sports in *Fin-de-Siècle* France: Opium of the Classes?" *AHR*, 76 (1971): 70-98; John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890's," in John Weiss, ed., *The Origins of Modern Consciousness* (Detroit, 1965), 25-48; David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning* (London, 1961); John R. Betts, *America's Sporting Heritage, 1850-1950* (Reading, Mass., 1974); and Allen Guttman, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York, 1978).

² Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (Boston, 1955), 8-13.

³ For Thring's view of sports, see Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning*, esp. 213-14, 222; and John R. Gillis, *Youth and History* (New York, 1974), 110-11. For Spencer's, see his *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* (London, 1909), 273; and, for Roosevelt's, see his *The Strenuous Life* (New York, 1900), 22.

“virile fighting qualities” that were the source of its rise.⁴ Thus, participation in athletics became a moral imperative to counteract the sloth that progress brings and to keep the fires of adventure burning among those who occupy the highest offices of state. In an age when many assumed that only the fittest nations could survive and flourish in a hostile world, athletics, patriotism, and the ideology of manliness were inseparable.

While sport was gaining recognition as a symbol of national strength and elitist pretension in late nineteenth-century England and America, the absence of sport in any foreign land could be interpreted, conversely, as a sure signal of cultural weakness and even racial inferiority. According to the logic of Rudyard Kipling and Thomas Hughes, lands not inhabited by Stalkies, Tom Browns, or Dink Stovers were not “civilized” and, hence, deserved to be colonized by the bold and the athletic. William Mathews, professor at the University of Chicago, wrote in his popular, late-century handbook for “young America,” “that the splendid empires which England has founded in every quarter of the globe have had their origin largely in the football contests at Eton, the boat-races on the Thames, and the cricket-matches on her downs and heaths, who can doubt? The race so widely dominant . . . is dominant because its institutions cultivate self-reliance, and its breeding develops endurance, courage, and pluck.”⁵ Destitute of these hearty attributes, the “lesser races” had little hope of rising above a feeble state of subjugation. It is little wonder, then, that colonial settlements from Shanghai to Algiers had their share of sportsmen whose conspicuous club activities could be construed as evidence of superior “breeding” and vindication of imperialism. The athletic subculture in the coastal treaty ports of Japan was no exception.

In the mid-nineteenth century Japan was, like the rest of Asia, vulnerable to imperialist incursion. The “unequal” treaties negotiated among the Western powers and the Tokugawa *bakufu* in the 1850s opened six coastal ports for preferential trade and granted Americans and Europeans living in those ports complete extraterritorial authority in all criminal and civil matters. Foreign garrisons backed up by men-of-war, which used the ports as coaling stations, helped guarantee trading and residential privileges during the turbulent years of the Meiji Restoration. As a consequence of the treaties, the foreign residents, visitors, and military personnel, whose combined numbers soared to over fifteen thousand during the 1860s,⁶ were free to transform the settlements into distinct

⁴ Roosevelt, *American Ideals* (New York, 1897), 40.

⁵ Mathews, *Getting on in the World: or, Hints on Success in Life* (Chicago, 1883), 58–59.

⁶ It is impossible to get precise figures for the floating population of foreigners in the treaty ports. Both William E. Griffis and M. Paske-Smith estimated that in Yokohama alone there were as many as seven thousand Westerners at any time during the late 1860s and early 1870s, and Harold S. Williams has given the same estimate for the European and American population in Nagasaki. The combined numbers of Westerners in the remaining settlements must have easily topped one thousand. The number of permanent foreign residents from the West, however, never rose much higher than three thousand. According to a census in 1897, Yokohama had just under that number of permanent residents from Europe and the United States. Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire* (10th ed., New York, 1903), 35; Paske-Smith, *Western Barbarians in Japan and Formosa* (2d ed., New York, 1968), 218; Williams, *Tales of the Foreign Settlements* (Tokyo, 1958), 31; F. C. Jones, *Extraterritoriality in Japan* (New Haven, 1931), 93; and D. W. S., *European Settlements in the Far East* (New York, 1900), 27.

cultural enclaves. And, once the initial problems of accommodation and security were overcome, the leaders of the settlements devoted much of their civic energies to enhancing the amenities of colonial life with “international clubs” staffed by major domos in white jackets, “public parks” interlaced by sidewalks for Sunday morning strolls, spacious lawns for afternoon teas and games of croquet, and gymnasiums and playing fields for local sportsmen.⁷

From the early years of Japanese treaty ports athletics was at the center of the male-dominated social and recreational life of the foreign community. Writing about the largest settlement in Yokohama during the 1880s, John Morris noted that “sport is pursued in all its branches with that ardour which distinguishes the Anglo-Saxon race wherever met with.” Among the sports that Morris witnessed were cricket, tennis, crew, and rifle-shooting—all performed with “a zest that amazes the native population.”⁸ Other early visitors to the foreign settlement in Yokohama were similarly impressed by the “zest” for athletics that accentuated the cultural disparity between “the rough and aggressive Anglo-Saxons” and “a nation whose men flew kites, studied flower arrangement, enjoyed toy gardens, carried fans, and manifested other effeminate customs and behaviors.”⁹ Despite a fascination for “old samurai tales” and an awareness of the “enlightened” policies of the Meiji government, popular stereotypes of the Japanese as being “essentially feeble”—and most certainly wanting in the virtues of the athletic field—continued to influence the attitudes of resident Westerners in the 1870s and 1880s.

The cultural lag that allowed foreign citizens in the treaty ports to foist the image of effeminacy and unmanliness on the Japanese would not, of course, stand up against the overwhelming realities of the *fin de siècle*. The development of a strong constitutional government, the triumph in the Sino-Japanese War, the growth of the textile industry for foreign export, and, finally, the negotiations to abrogate the “unequal” treaties all combined in the 1890s to make old stereotypes untenable. Suddenly, “Japan the exotic” became “Japan the competitor” in war, diplomacy, commerce, and, one may add, baseball.¹⁰

Of the outdoor games that attracted Japanese youth at the turn of the century, none rivaled baseball in igniting enthusiasm among players, spectators, and readers of an expanding popular press. How baseball rose from oblivion to embody the Social Darwinist spirit of competition and “vigor” (*genki*) that

⁷ According to Paske-Smith, Yokohama was “a rival to Shanghai in its immoderate expensiveness,” something that did not seem to daunt the free-spending patrons of the race track or the “officers and gentlemen” who had the exclusive privilege to carouse at the Hotel Anglo-Saxon; *Western Barbarians in Japan and Formosa*, 218, 267. For other colorful descriptions of life in the settlement, see Griffis, *The Mikado’s Empire*, 327–52; Williams, *Tales of the Foreign Settlements*, 37–63, 108–36, 220–36; Paul C. Blum, *Yokohama in 1872* (Tokyo, 1963), esp. 24–44; and Otis M. Poole, *The Death of Old Yokohama* (London, 1966), 17–28.

⁸ Morris, *Advance Japan* (London, 1895), 223.

⁹ This typical Victorian characterization is taken from Edward S. Morse, *Japan Day by Day*, 2 (New York, 1917): 433. Morse merely summarized the mid-century, Western view of Japan, a view that he, writing after the Russo-Japanese War, no longer accepted. Morse went on to quote from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1857, which describes the Japanese as “essentially feeble and pusillanimous.” For more on the late nineteenth-century image of the feminine East versus the masculine West, see Earl Miner, *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (2d ed., Princeton, 1966), esp. 22–23.

¹⁰ For a discussion of images at the turn of the century, see Akira Iriye, “Japan as a Competitor, 1895–1917,” in Iriye, ed., *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), 73–99.

swept Japan in the 1890s, how it heralded a new chapter in Japanese-American relations, and how it ultimately enhanced both the social image of a student elite and the geopolitical image of a nation that was just breaking free from the shackles of “unequal” treaties are the subject of this essay.

IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANYONE ATTENDING COLLEGE in the 1870s in Japan could have predicted that athletics in general and baseball in particular would figure in the quest for national dignity at the end of the century. As it was, most students and their teachers had only the foggiest conception of Western sports, let alone a plan for an extracurricular athletic program under institutional sponsorship. In fact, early Meiji educators were not at all convinced of the need for physical education in any form. The preamble to the Educational Code of 1872, the document that gave shape and purpose to the post-Restoration school system, made no mention of physical fitness; the code’s articles assigned the lowest priority to physical exercise in the primary schools and ignored the subject entirely in establishing academic guidelines for secondary schools.¹¹ Behind this unhesitating dismissal was a widespread sense of urgency among educators that “practical knowledge” in the form of “Western studies” must be disseminated as quickly and as efficiently as possible. To interrupt the study of geography, basic science, or foreign languages with extended recesses for students to hoist dumbbells or skip rope seemed like a luxury the nation could ill afford. Besides, on a philosophic level, it was generally assumed in the early 1870s that a “civilized man” was someone of intellectual, and not necessarily physical, prowess.¹²

Among the first to voice concern over the lopsided academic demands imposed upon early Meiji students were foreign teachers who had been employed by the government to facilitate the transmission of Western learning. Reflecting upon his four years of service at a commercial school in Tokyo between 1876 and 1880, W. Gray Dixon noted that “the frequency of sickness among the students and their generally delicate physique demanded greater attention to out-of-door exercise.” Indeed, “a passion for intellectual development,” he continued, “seemed to blind them to the necessity of an accompanying development of the body.”¹³ Dixon’s critique of the “narrow intellectualism” in the early Meiji school system was echoed by other Western teachers at the time, including William E. Griffis, who contrasted the scholarly aptitude of his advanced students with their “docile” dispositions and their lack of “fire, energy, and manly independence.” Nor was his assessment unique: “The experience of foreign teachers on this point is almost unanimous.” And, Griffis asserted in 1874, “native officials have no clear idea, often none at all, of the absolute necessity of ex-

¹¹ Imamura Yoshio, *Nihon taiikushi* (Tokyo, 1951), 61–62, 74. The low priority of physical education was evidenced as late as the Education Ordinance (*Kyōikurei*) of 1879, in which calisthenics was grouped with music, painting, and other optional subjects that could be appended to the core curriculum “depending on local conditions”; Inoue Kazuo, *Gakkō taiiku seidoshi* (Tokyo, 1970), 13–14.

¹² For what may be the best statement in English of the materialist-utilitarian perspective, see Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Encouragement of Learning*, trans. David Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst (Tokyo, 1973).

¹³ Dixon, *The Land of the Morning* (Edinburgh, 1882), 364–65.

ercise, in the open air and sunshine, for young persons of both sexes.”¹⁴ Like Dixon, Griffis believed that Japan’s development as a modern civilization would depend as much upon the building of physical character as it would upon the mastery of science and foreign languages.

Responding in large part to the opinions of American educators, the Ministry of Education decided in 1878 to establish a special Gymnastics Institute (*Taisō Denshūjō*), the purpose of which was to train physical education instructors for the primary schools. Selected as the first director of the institute was Dr. George A. Leland, a recent graduate of the Department of Hygiene and Physical Education at Amherst College and a student of Edward Hitchcock, one of the pioneers in the development of physical education in the United States.¹⁵ While in Japan, Leland concentrated on developing a regimen of “light calisthenics” (*kei taisō*) or group setting-up exercises that could easily be institutionalized in the primary schools. “Heavy exercise” that required more than bean bags or hoops for equipment and organized athletics were of less interest to Leland for two reasons. First, his own sense of cultural relativism, supported by “scientific” studies of Japanese stature and mores, led him to consider the Japanese psychologically and physically incapable of excelling in rigorous team sports like baseball or football. (He was more sanguine about Japanese capabilities in “softer” sports, such as tennis or croquet.¹⁶) And, second, Leland probably feared that the encouragement of competitive sports might foster a resurgence of a small athletic elite that would continue the samurai legacy of using physical training as a status privilege, while the rest of the population languished in a state of obsequious indolence. Naturally, such a possibility would have undermined the goal of developing a national program of physical fitness in which every student took part.¹⁷

Leland’s hope for a universal and compulsory program of physical education was realized soon after his return to the United States in 1881, although not exactly in the manner he had envisioned. Beginning in the same year with the issuance of the Principles of Primary School Instruction (*Shōgakkō kyōsoku kōryō*), twenty minutes of each school day were set aside for light calisthenics. The exclusive reliance on Leland’s methods was short-lived, however, as the new Primary School Ordinance of 1886 prescribed a more elaborate program of physical education that included infantry-style exercises in rank and file.¹⁸ The appearance of “military calisthenics” (*heishiki taisō*) in the primary, middle, and normal schools must be attributed to the influence of Mori Arinori, the minister of education from 1885 to 1889. Even before assuming office, Mori had spoken out on the need for a tightly regimented program of paramilitary drills that could supplement the less demanding routine at the Gymnastics Institute.¹⁹

¹⁴ Griffis, “Education in Japan,” *College Courant*, 14 (1874): 97, 170. For a similar view, see F. W. Strange, *Outdoor Games* (Tokyo, 1883), i–iii.

¹⁵ Paul C. Phillias, “The Amherst Illustrious: George A. Leland,” *Amherst Graduates’ Quarterly*, 14 (1924–25): 29–33.

¹⁶ Kimura Ki, *Japanese Literature: Manners and Customs in the Meiji-Taishō Era* (Tokyo, 1957), 252.

¹⁷ Phillias, “The Amherst Illustrious,” 30–31.

¹⁸ Imamura, *Nihon taikushi*, 113–16.

¹⁹ Ivan Hall, *Mori Arinori* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), 337–42.

Through this expanded regimen, he hoped not only to build stronger bodies but also to instill the nation's children with the virtues of unquestioning obedience to the state. The interlocking of body, mind, and nation was made explicit in officially sanctioned slogans and "physical education songs" that called upon the young to exercise faithfully every day "for the sake of the country."²⁰

While group calisthenics were quickly institutionalized for the rudimentary grades, the physical fitness program in the advanced higher schools and at the university was slower in developing.²¹ The underexercised student elite continued to attract unfavorable attention in the 1880s, as it had during the previous decade; only now Japanese educators led the attack. The depth of concern was reflected in an essay by one of Leland's assistants at the Gymnastics Institute, Hiraiwa Nobuo, who criticized the contemporary college students for their distorted academic "mania." "They are contemptuous of their bodies," Hiraiwa claimed, "as if strength of physique were tantamount to savagery or animalistic power." Therefore, he continued, "they just sit at their desks absorbed in their studies, failing to realize that their brains might expire with the oil in their lamps."²² What especially worried Hiraiwa—and a number of his colleagues—was the potential for discrepancy in a school system that forced students at the lower levels to exercise vigorously, while students in the higher schools and at the university were left alone to study or, worse yet, philander in the streets of Tokyo as their muscles grew flabby and their complexions paled. Was it not the obligation of an academic elite to be strong of body as well as of mind? Most educators thought that it was, but they were still reluctant to impose the same routine of daily exercise on the student elite that was becoming universal in the primary schools. As one higher school headmaster explained in 1888, the advanced academic institution should not be run like a military academy.²³

So the question arose: how could the higher school and university administrators promote physical training without turning their students into mindless followers who were stripped of all leadership capability? The best resolution was to require only minimal doses of group calisthenics and military exercises while compensating for any slack in physical fitness that might result by encouraging students to participate in "outdoor games" (*kogai yūgi*). Initially, the games were limited to occasional field days (*undōkai*), highlighted by obstacle races, tug-of-wars, and capture-the-flag contests. Unfortunately, these events failed to inspire students with a serious appreciation of physical culture. Popular literature of the 1880s tells of students entering field-day competitions solely to attract the atten-

²⁰ Imamura Yoshio, *Nihon taiikushi no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1967), 806–09.

²¹ The structure of the post-Restoration school system is best perceived as a pyramid with a rudimentary primary school education for all children at the base and a university education for a select few at the top. (Until 1897 there was only one national or, as of 1886, imperial university, Tokyo University, which towered over an assortment of private colleges and technical schools.) In between the exclusive university and mass primary schools were two layers of middle schools and university preparatory schools. The exact nomenclature for the latter was in continual transition until 1886, when the advanced secondary school became the "higher middle school" (*kōtō chūgakkō*), which was simplified to "higher school" (*kōtō gakkō*) six years later. To avoid unnecessary confusion, I am using the simplified designation throughout this article. For the best discussion in English of the Meiji school system, see Hall, *Mori Arinori*, chaps. 9–10.

²² Imamura, *Nihon taiikushi*, 103.

²³ Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō, *Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō rokujūnenshi* (Tokyo, 1939), 106.

tion of onlooking courtesans—not exactly what administrators had in mind.²⁴ By the early 1890s, it was clear that, in order for “outdoor games” to have the desired effect of fostering stamina and self-discipline, they would have to be integrated into a program of extracurricular athletics. In contrast to the haphazardness and spontaneity of the field days, the new program would be devoted to organizing athletic clubs, requiring a total commitment from their members to train for intercollegiate competition in which the reputation of the school would be at stake. “Outdoor games” that had been viewed as simple fun by the students were replaced by Western team sports characterized by formal organization, rigorous training, strict rules, and the presence of officials at all matches. Although the first sport to gain popularity on the campuses was crew, which had the obvious advantage of being relatively simple as well as fiercely competitive, baseball was the sport that ultimately won the hearts of the student community in the 1890s and early 1900s.

THE RISE OF BASEBALL IN JAPAN cannot, of course, be separated from the origins and development of the sport in the United States. By 1870, when cultural and diplomatic exchanges between the two countries were commencing in earnest, baseball was already widely played across the United States and was heralded by many as “the national game.”²⁵ In part, the soaring popularity of the sport was tied to the belief that baseball was, as Henry Chadwick so quickly pointed out, “in every way . . . suited to the American character.”²⁶ This particularist view was echoed by other early promoters of the sport, notably Albert G. Spalding, who summarized his long-standing feelings in one of the first histories of baseball, which was written in 1911. Baseball, said Spalding, had “all the attributes of American origin [and] American character”; indeed, it was “the exponent of American Courage, Confidence, Combativeness; American Dash, Discipline, Determination; American Energy, Eagerness, Enthusiasm . . . ; American Vim, Vigor, Virility.”²⁷ To play baseball, in other words, was to exude those manly virtues that were singularly appropriate to the United States.

Accepting baseball as the incarnation of the Yankee spirit, Spalding and his colleagues had an ambiguous attitude toward the spread of the sport to other parts of the world. On the one hand, the laws of cultural relativism stipulated that baseball was created for Americans to be played by Americans, leaving little opportunity for the foreigner to learn to play. At the same time, the promoters insisted that baseball, to use Spalding’s expression, “follow the flag around the world,” and they made elaborate efforts, beginning with Spalding’s celebrated mission to England in 1874, to introduce America’s “national game” to peoples in distant lands. Even if the primary motivation behind such mission-

²⁴ Tsubouchi Shōyō, *Tōsei shosei katagi*, in *Nihon no bungaku*, 1 (Tokyo, 1971): 11. For another fleeting reference to field-day activities, see Higuchi Ichiyo, “Growing Up,” trans. Edward Seidensticker, in Donald Keene, ed., *Modern Japanese Literature* (New York, 1960), 71.

²⁵ Betts, *America’s Sporting Heritage, 1850–1950*, 92–97; and David Q. Voight, *American Baseball: From Gentleman’s Sport to the Commissioner System* (Norman, Okla., 1966), 12–13.

²⁶ Chadwick, as quoted in David Q. Voight, *America through Baseball* (Chicago, 1976), 83.

²⁷ Spalding, *Baseball: America’s National Game* (New York, 1911), 3–4.

ary zeal was to put American manliness on display, there was an implicit assumption that, if British, French, or Egyptian youth could begin to experiment with baseball on their own, they would also come to appreciate the depth of American ingenuity and determination.²⁸ In this sense, baseball could enlarge the American cultural sphere of influence and bring greater respect for the nation around the world.

Among the American sailors and businessmen in Yokohama, who were undoubtedly the first to play baseball on Japanese soil, the game was the means of preserving a frontier spirit of daring and adventure that had brought them to this curious and distant land in the first place. By smashing home runs, a young bachelor from the Midwest compensated for the demoralizing effects of settlement brothels and grog shops while safeguarding the integrity of his national identity. Such activity was important in order to maintain social and cultural distance from the Japanese and, to a lesser extent, from the British, who outnumbered the Americans in Yokohama by as much as three to one. Owing to their superior numbers, the British initially dominated social and recreational life, including the Yokohama Athletic Club, whose cricket enthusiasts made greatest use of the one playing field in the settlement. The situation changed during the 1880s, however, when Americans joined the club in sufficient numbers to gain equal access to the field, thus paving the way for baseball to eclipse cricket as the most popular spectator sport in Yokohama.²⁹ At any event, the Yokohama Athletic Club, as the sponsoring organization for all major sporting activities in the settlement and as an enduring bastion of wealth and privilege, upheld strict regulations, which lasted into the early 1890s, that forbade Japanese from entering the park where the playing field was located.³⁰ Such restrictions were not, obviously, conducive to the spread of any Western sport, including baseball, beyond the perimeter of the settlement.

While young businessmen and sailors were happy to maintain baseball as a symbol of extraterritorial privilege and unique cultural identity, a few American educators in Japan had a quite different perspective on the sport. Four teachers in particular—Horace Wilson, F. W. Strange, G. H. Mudgett, and Leroy

²⁸ For a discussion of baseball and “the mission of America myth,” see Voight, *America through Baseball*, chap. 7. For a general analysis of American assumptions of originality and calling, see Edward Burns, *The American Idea of Mission* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1957).

²⁹ Undoubtedly, cricket preceded baseball as a popular sport in the settlement. According to Paske-Smith, the first cricket match was held in Yokohama in 1864 between teams from the British army and navy. Thereafter, the sport flourished for two decades under the aegis of what was originally called the Yokohama Cricket Club, the precursor to the Yokohama Cricket and Athletic Club (for which I am using the simpler designation—Yokohama Athletic Club—in this article). The decline of cricket at the turn of the century, which seemed to parallel the rise of baseball, is referred to explicitly in the *Japan Weekly Mail*. In describing a game that took place in the spring of 1902, for example, the reporter for the *Mail* described “the pitiable display of bowling and slack inefficient fielding” of the players. The “decay” of cricket had, in the reporter’s words, “reached its nadir,” and it was now the solemn obligation of “old public school boys” to try to “revive” the sport “for the sake of the best traditions of the fine old English game.” The warning, apparently, was never heeded, as a few would-be cricket players even joined the American baseball team, presumably out of desperation. See Paske-Smith, *Western Barbarians in Japan and Formosa*, 270; and *Japan Weekly Mail*, May 31, 1902, July 12, 1903.

³⁰ According to Kimijima Ichirō, there were signs posted on the park grounds that read, “Japanese may not enter” (*Nihonjin hairu bekarazu*); Kimijima, *Nihon yakū sōseki* (Tokyo, 1972), 13. Also see Hirose Kenzō, *Nihon no yakūshi* (Tokyo, 1964), 8.

Janes—were avowed baseball *aficionados* who arrived in Japan in the early 1870s hoping to introduce America's "national game" to their students.³¹ Although no evidence suggests the four coordinated their missionary effort, each seemed convinced that baseball could effectively break down cultural barriers. Moreover, unlike Leland and other believers in the exceptional nature of American athletics, they were optimistic that Japanese students, if properly motivated and instructed, would excel in Western team sports. Toward this end Strange wrote a special handbook in 1883, entitled *Outdoor Games*, "to induce Japanese schoolboys to take more physical exercise." Among the activities discussed, Strange devoted the most attention to baseball, which he described as "the national game of the American people" and a sport requiring "mental ability" and "manly qualities."³² Despite his enthusiasm, the initial campus response was less than overwhelming. Whereas isolated student groups in Tokyo, Sapporo, and Kumamoto showed some interest, baseball was generally regarded throughout the 1880s as a novelty to be played along with capture-the-flag on university field days.

The rise of baseball as a serious intercollegiate sport did not occur until the end of the century, long after America's baseball missionaries had left Japan. Certainly, the drive by faculty and students to establish extracurricular athletic programs gave impetus to the sport in the 1890s. At the same time, baseball, like other sports, appears to have been the beneficiary of a surge in nationalistic sentiment aroused by the campaign to revise the "unequal" treaties and to protect Japanese interests in Korea. Peculiar to the nationalism of the 1890s was the convergence of Social Darwinism and neo-traditionalism, as public spokesmen made conscious attempts to locate the values of manliness and strength in Japan's pre-Meiji past. By so doing, Western ideas and institutions could be assimilated, rather than adopted indiscriminately, thus facilitating the quest for a proud, yet discrete, national identity.³³ In a similar vein, student interest in athletics coincided with the search for a "national game" (*kokugi*) that would symbolize the collectivist ideal and fighting spirit of the nation as it prepared for war against China.³⁴ Although indisputably lodged in traditional culture, judo and kendo were too solitary to engender the kind of public excitement required of a "national game." Western team sports were best suited to this purpose, and baseball, in particular, seemed to emphasize precisely those values that were celebrated in the civic rituals of state: order, harmony, perseverance, and self-restraint. To focus attention, therefore, on the compatibility of the sport with Jap-

³¹ Kimijima, *Nihon yakyū sōseki*, 19–23, 27–32, 35–37; and Hirose, *Nihon no yakyūshi*, 1–2. Actually, F. W. Strange was an Englishman with a heretical preference for baseball over cricket. Several Japanese were also instrumental in introducing the sport to their countrymen. Hiraoka Hiroshi, a supervisor from the Ministry of Engineering who had studied in the United States, probably organized the first Japanese baseball team, made up largely of railroad officials, in 1878. Serious team competition did not begin, however, until the sport took hold on college campuses.

³² Strange, *Outdoor Games*, i–iii.

³³ Kenneth Pyle, *The New Generation in Meiji Japan* (Stanford, 1969), 167–68. For more on the problem of reconciling traditional values with the demands for a strong national state, see Marius Jansen, "Changing Japanese Attitudes toward Modernization," in Jansen, ed., *Changing Japanese Attitudes toward Modernization* (Princeton, 1965), esp. 74–75.

³⁴ Imamura, *Nihon taiku no kenkyū*, 792–93.

anese sensibilities, proponents compared the skilled batter to samurai swordsmen and embellished descriptions of the game with poetic allusions to medieval warrior epics. Despite foreign provenance, baseball reputedly nourished traditional virtues of loyalty, honor, and courage and therefore symbolized the “new *bushidō*” spirit of the age.³⁵ For, unlike the mindless tackling and punching that were sanctioned in American contact sports, baseball struck a harmonious balance between physical strength and mental agility. The resulting demand for concentration and finesse harkened to the cultivated martial ideals of the samurai gentleman. Thus, at the end of the century, while Americans in Yokohama played baseball to be more American, Japanese students, especially in the higher schools, turned to baseball in an effort to reify traditional values and to establish a new basis for national pride. An international confrontation on the diamond had become unavoidable.

OF THE TEN SCHOOLS TO DEVELOP reputable teams in the 1890s, the club representing the First Higher School (Ichikō) of Tokyo quickly emerged as the most formidable. Since Ichikō was one of five elite preparatory schools for the national university, the students who attended were especially sensitive about maintaining an outstanding public reputation, and their concern in this regard applied as much to the athletic field as it did to the classroom.³⁶ The strength of the team was initially demonstrated in a series of victories in the fall of 1890 and the spring of 1891. Thereafter, the team compiled a near perfect record in intercollegiate competition until 1904, when Keiō and Waseda Universities became the chief contenders for the national championship.³⁷ Still, for nearly fifteen years, the First Higher School held the center of attention in Japanese baseball, and for a while even their strongest rivals seemed resigned to accept the players’ immodest protestation that “there are no [worthy] opponents in the land” (*tenka teki nashi*).³⁸

³⁵ Nakauma Kō, “Bēsubōru no junbi,” *Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō Kōyūkai zasshi*, no. 10 (1891): 37–38; “Bēsubōru buhō,” *Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō Kōyūkai zasshi*, no. 58 (1896): 59–60; and Kimijima, *Nihon yakyū sōseki*, 94–95.

³⁶ Students attended the higher schools for three years, usually between the ages of 17 and 20, during which time they were exposed to a broad liberal arts curriculum aimed as much at building character as at academic achievement. Given the stress on character development and elite socialization, the schools functioned much like preparatory schools in the West, especially the German Gymnasium and the British public school. For more on the philosophy and social role of the Meiji higher schools, see my “‘Monasticism’ and the Paradox of the Meiji Higher Schools,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 37 (1978): 413–25.

³⁷ The early history of Japanese baseball can be clearly divided between the “Ichikō era” of the 1890s, which is the focus of this article, and the “Keiō-Waseda era” that followed. Part of the reason why Ichikō initially dominated the world of intercollegiate baseball was that the sport developed more slowly at Keiō and Waseda. Keiō students organized a team in 1885, but they received no recognition from the school administration until 1893; Nihon Taiiku Kyōkai, ed., *Supōtsu hachijūmenshi* (Tokyo, 1958), 485. Two one-sided losses to Ichikō on June 24, 1893, and on June 22, 1895, apparently discouraged the team from mounting another serious challenge to Ichikō until 1903. Waseda, known as Tokyo Senmon Gakkō before 1902, did not even have a baseball team until 1901. Through the encouragement of one of the school’s most illustrious faculty members, the Christian Socialist Abe Isoo, the team developed quickly in the early 1900s. Although Abe is often called the “father of Japanese baseball,” he took little interest in the sport before coming to Waseda in 1902; Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō Kishukuryō, ed., *Kōryōshi* [hereafter, *Kōryōshi*] (2d ed., Tokyo, 1925), 647–49, 674–75; and Katayama Tetsu, *Abe Isoo-den* (Tokyo, 1958), 166–67.

³⁸ *Kōryōshi*, 647. (*Kōryōshi* is the history of the student dormitories and clubs at the First Higher School. Students began compiling this history in the 1890s, although the first published edition was not available until 1920.)

Once convinced of their superiority among Japanese teams, the Ichikō players sent word to the Yokohama Athletic Club of their interest in an “international match” (*kokusai shiai*). The first formal challenge was made in October 1891, and it was followed by successive challenges spaced over the next five years; but the response from Yokohama was always negative.³⁹ Ostensibly, the reason for not giving the idea serious consideration was the ill feeling toward the higher school, which stemmed from an incident that took place on the Ichikō campus during a baseball game with an American missionary school in the spring of 1890. Midway through that contest, an American teacher from the opposing school, Reverend William Imbrie, was apprehended by several irate Ichikō students for scaling the school fence instead of entering the campus through the main gate. Exaggerated reports of how the “good reverend” was severely beaten and even “stabbed” by the attacking students sent shock waves through the foreign community in Yokohama, which immediately condemned First Higher as an “uncivilized” bastion of antforeignism and samurai-style “barbarism.” In actuality, Reverend Imbrie sustained a small cut on his left cheek from a flying stone or piece of tile.⁴⁰ To his angry assailants, this injury was justified retribution for a breach of etiquette and was probably far less severe than what would have been in store for any Japanese student who dared to intrude upon the settlement playing field.

Was the “Imbrie incident” really at the root of American hostility toward First Higher, or was it merely a *casus belli* to lend credence to claims of cultural superiority? After all, to engage the Ichikō baseball team on the athletic field was to admit that the students were, in effect, cultural equals—an admission few foreign residents in Yokohama were prepared to make in 1891, three years prior to both the Aoki-Kimberley accords and the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. In this spirit of discrimination, the Yokohama Athletic Club took pains to describe the Ichikō students as culturally and even physically unfit for international athletic competition. The haughtiness of the club’s attitude is suggested by one student chronicler, who noted, “The foreigners in Yokohama have established an athletic field in their central park into which no Japanese may enter. There, playing by themselves, they boast of their skill in baseball. When we attempt to challenge them, they refuse, saying, ‘Baseball is our national game’ or ‘Our bodies are twice the size of yours.’”⁴¹ Such condescension by the Yokohama Athletic Club toward the “little Japanese” only reinforced student determination to gain the opportunity to prove themselves on the settlement playing field. In their view, the continued refusal to accept an “international match” was shocking evidence that the settlement in Yokohama clung to the illegal privileges of the “unequal” treaties. A simple game of baseball therefore began to assume the dimensions of a righteous struggle for national honor.

³⁹ *Kōryōshi*, 644–45, 649–51.

⁴⁰ For the reaction of the foreign community to this incident, see *Japan Weekly Mail*, May 24, 1890; and Clarence Brownell, *Tales from Tokio* (New York, 1899), 73–76. (Brownell mistakenly referred to William Imbrie as Charles Eby.) For the contrasting perspective of the Ichikō students and alumni, see *Kōryōshi*, 642–43; Moïwa Toyohei, *Ichikō tamashii monogatari* (Tokyo, 1925), 104–06; and Nagasawa Dunroku, “Inburī jiken no omoide,” *Ichikō Dōsōkai kaihō*, no. 38 (1938): 24–26.

⁴¹ “Yokohama ensei kiji,” *Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō Kōyūkai zasshi furoku*, no. 58 (1896): 1; and *Kōryōshi*, 651.

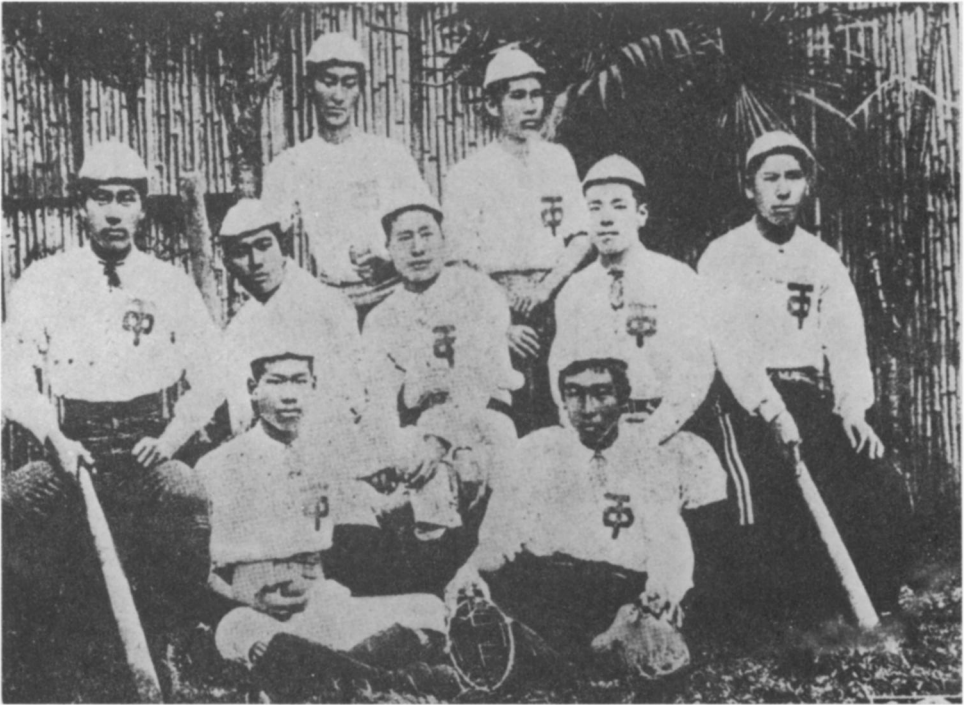


Figure 1: The Ichikō team of 1891.
Photograph reproduced courtesy of Kōdansha publishers.

Ironically, the foreign residents in Yokohama were not alone in perpetuating the stereotype of the unmanly Japanese. A number of early Meiji intellectuals reacted to Western thought and institutions with a deep sense of cultural insecurity and a fatalistic acceptance of the “unequal” treaties. Such a view was espoused by Inoue Tetsujirō, a prominent professor of philosophy, who opposed treaty revision on the grounds that the Japanese were “greatly inferior to Westerners in intelligence, financial power, physique, and all else.”⁴² Any attempt, according to Inoue, to stand side by side with Europeans or Americans was a sure invitation for invidious comparisons that exposed the innate weaknesses, both physical and mental, of the Japanese. For this reason, Inoue supported the continuation of the semi-colonial settlements in Yokohama and other coastal ports as a protective guarantee against undue contact with a superior Caucasian race. Obviously, educators who shared Inoue’s view would lend little encouragement to the Ichikō students’ bold defiance of biological reality.

Yet the warnings from conservative educators did not deter the students from their outlandish goal to engage “the six-footed Americans” in their “national game.” Finally, after five years of fruitless inquiries, the students’ efforts were rewarded. With W. B. Mason, an English teacher at Ichikō and long-time resident of the settlement, acting as intermediary, a game was arranged between Ichikō and the Yokohama Athletic Club, to be held on the latter’s home field on May 23, 1896. It was the first official baseball game between American and Japanese teams, and its impact reverberated far beyond the settlement playing field.⁴³

⁴² Inoue, as quoted in Pyle, *The New Generation in Meiji Japan*, 110.

⁴³ Yokohama Shiyakusho, *Yokohama shikō: Fuzokuhen* (Yokohama, 1938), 648; and Kimijima, *Nihon yakyū sō-seki*, 85.

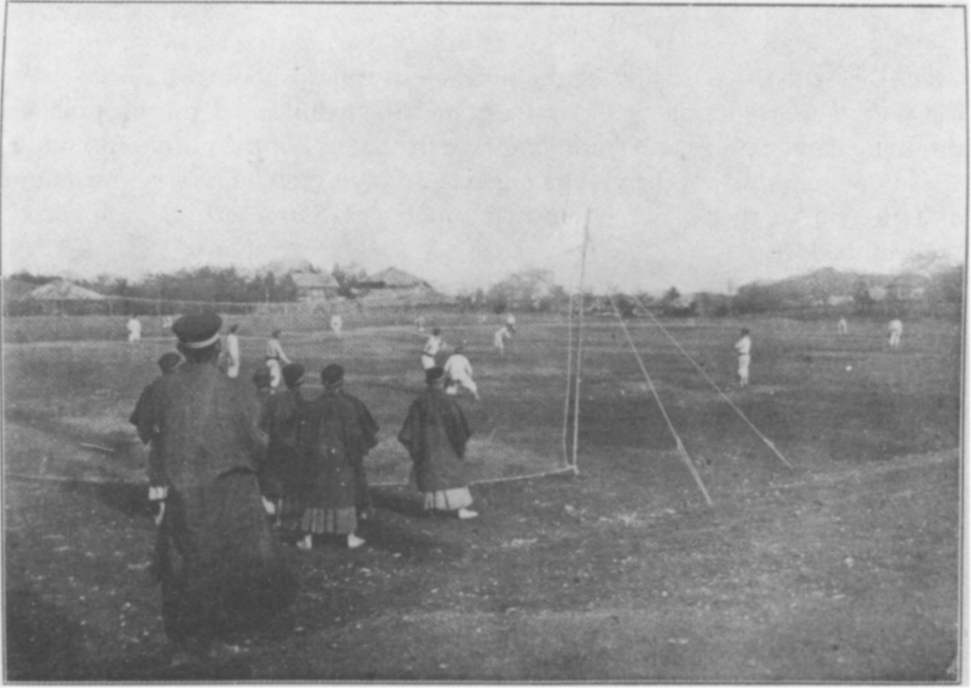


Figure 2: Baseball practice at Ichikō in the 1890s.
Photograph reproduced courtesy of Kōdansha publishers.

WITH ONLY FOUR DAYS' NOTICE from the Yokohama Athletic Club, the Ichikō players had little time to practice for their historic confrontation. Lack of preparation did not worry them, for they believed that, even if the Americans had an advantage in “form” (*keitai*), the Japanese athletes had the “spirit” (*shinki*) to win. The power of the spiritual over the physical did not apply to the weather, however, which was so miserable on May 20 and 21 that the students decided to send a telegram to Yokohama to inquire whether the field would be playable. A curt reply—interpreted to mean “Are you trying to flee from us?”—was all the students needed to prepare for their departure, rain or shine.⁴⁴ After leaving a written “testament” (*isho*) vowing to fight to the bitter end, the team, along with a band of faithful rooters, boarded a morning train on May 23 for their rendezvous with the Yokohama Athletic Club. At the insistence of the headmaster who wished to erase the stigma of primitivism that had haunted the students since the Imbrie incident, the players traveled in spotless school uniforms with tall white collars and polished shoes, carrying their new baseball uniforms in small satchels.⁴⁵

Even though the Ichikō players were intent upon behaving like gentlemen, their American hosts revealed little inclination to reciprocate. Unable to accept the sight of young Japanese using a field that had always been restricted to Westerners, many spectators greeted the Ichikō students with jeers and howls

⁴⁴ Transmitted in cryptic Japanese, the telegram was susceptible to misunderstanding. Mirroring the tensions of the day, the students jumped to the conclusion that the message was insulting, although, after reflection, they conceded that it might also be a benign inquiry about their schedule; Kimijima, *Nihon yakyū sōseki*, 73.

⁴⁵ Kimijima Ichirō, *Daryō ichiban shitsu* (Tokyo, 1967), 147–48.

when they entered the park for the pregame warm-ups. Somewhat shaken by the uncivil welcome, the Ichikō players had their difficulties during practice, dropping easy pop-ups and stumbling over the bases. For the unruly spectators, the initial ineptitude of the visitors made them even more of a target for taunts and sneers. “Are they players?” one man shouted each time a student slipped on the wet field.⁴⁶

The jeering quickly dissipated once the game got under way. Except for the first inning, the Ichikō players completely dominated the contest, delivering the Yokohama Athletic Club an embarrassing defeat, 29–4. The same spectators who had been bellowing catcalls from the stands were now left in stunned disbelief as the Japanese students marched off the field to the rickshaws, drawn by their rooters, that carried them triumphantly down the main street of Yokohama to the train station. Never in the forty-year history of the treaty ports had resident sportsmen been so utterly humiliated on the playing field. In a terse statement that belied a deeper sense of wounded pride, the *Japan Weekly Mail* reported, “The baseball team of the Athletic Club was badly beaten on Saturday by nine from the Tokyo Higher School, being outmaneuvered at all points of the game.”⁴⁷ While gloom pervaded Yokohama, Ichikō athletes returned home to a rousing welcome marked by *banzai* chants, choruses from the national anthem, and overflowing cups of *sake*. Underlying the ecstasy of the moment was the awareness that the victory had transcended the playing field. As the student president proclaimed, “This great victory is more than a victory for our school; it is a victory for the Japanese people!” The captain of the team concurred, explaining how he and his comrades had realized that “the name of the country” (*kokumei*) was at stake in their competition.⁴⁸ Since the game was covered in many newspapers around the country, the Ichikō students were suddenly national heroes.

The broader implications of the game apparently did not escape the defeated Americans. Members of the Yokohama Athletic Club had waited five years before accepting the original Ichikō challenge, but it took only two or three days for them to decide on a rematch. Again, the place was Yokohama and the date was June 5, 1896. For this game, the slightly shaken athletic club recruited additional players from the crews of two American cruisers, the *Charleston* and the *Detroit*, conveniently moored in Yokohama harbor. Nonetheless, even with reinforcements from the United States Navy, the Americans fared no better in meeting the Ichikō challenge. The game ended in another rout, with the visitors winning 32–9.⁴⁹

Highlighting the contest on June 5 was an unprecedented outpouring of public support for the student athletes. After receiving hundreds of telegrams from well-wishers in primary and secondary schools across the land, the Ichikō team was greeted in Yokohama by a boisterously enthusiastic crowd of native citizens,

⁴⁶ “Itsuwa,” *Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō Kōyūkai zasshi furoku*, no. 58 (1896): 15; and *Kōryōshi*, 652.

⁴⁷ *Japan Weekly Mail*, May 30, 1896.

⁴⁸ “Yokohama ensei kiji,” 4; and “Itsuwa,” 18.

⁴⁹ *Kōryōshi*, 655.

who lined the street that led from the station to the baseball park.⁵⁰ Although the crowd was denied entrance to the spectator stands, many waited outside shouting words of encouragement while the game was in progress. The enthusiasm of local citizens was shared by the national press, led by the *Asahi Newspaper*, which gave the second game front-page coverage under the headline, “A Great Victory for Our Students.” In celebrating this achievement the paper claimed that “the superiority [of the Japanese team] is now self-evident” (“yūretsu mizukara hanzuru tokoro ari”).⁵¹ Similarly stirred, the newspaper *Jiji shinpō* reported that the Ichikō players made the Americans look “unspeakably clumsy.”⁵²

While basking in the public’s affection, the Ichikō students were not happy with the response to their victory in the foreign settlement. At the conclusion of the second game, after receiving perfunctory congratulations from their opponents, the students were brusquely ushered off the playing field as if their continued presence might violate its sanctity. Interpreting this rude behavior as a desperate attempt to reassert the privileges of extraterritorial status, they grudgingly acquiesced, not out of respect to their hosts, but, as they explained, because “the foreigner’s private property” could have “contaminated our feet.” “So we were willing to leave—after spitting three times.”⁵³ Even more upsetting to the students was the unfavorable coverage of the second game in the foreign press. English newspapers in Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki registered strong protests against the “uncivilized” manners of Ichikō rooters, who were accused of hurling obscenities at the American players. (Any rowdiness at the game, First Higher School spokesmen countered, took place among the “unlearned vagrants” who stood outside the gates while the students who accompanied the team inside behaved like gentlemen.⁵⁴) Foreign newspapers also belittled the significance of Ichikō’s victories by noting, “School-boys with their daily opportunities for practice, their constant matches, and *sparer figures* have always the advantage over a team of grown men . . . who have not played together before and besides are never in practice even in the best of times.”⁵⁵ For nearly five years the athletes in Yokohama had been rejecting the higher school challenge on the grounds that the students did not measure up to the Americans in physical stature and stamina. Now, rather suddenly, the tables were turned and the students’ “sparer figures” were seen as an unfair advantage. The claim that businessmen were somehow deprived of the time they needed for practice was

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 654–55; “Yokohama ensei kiji,” 7; and Kimijima, *Nihon yakyū sōseki*, 87.

⁵¹ *Asahi shinbun*, June 7, 1896.

⁵² *Jiji shinpō*, June 6, 1896.

⁵³ “Yohai kaette sanda shite motte saru ni yabusaka narazaru”; “Itsuwa,” 19. For a contrasting perspective that suggests, without citation, that the two teams met over tea and cake at the conclusion of the game, see Ikei Masaru, *Hakkyū Taiheiyō o wataru* (Tokyo, 1976), 43. According to Ichikō sources, the team received a large amount of candy from local Japanese officials in Yokohama, which they shared with other students at a post-game victory celebration on the campus of the Yokohama School of Commerce (*Yokohama Shōgyō Gakkō*), located in the Japanese quarter of the city; *Kōryōshi*, 654, 656. All accounts, including Ikei’s, agree that there was a residue of bitterness after the second game manifested especially in the foreign press; Ikei, *Hakkyū Taiheiyō o wataru*, 43; *Kōryōshi*, 655–56; and Kimijima, *Nihon yakyū sōseki*, 87–88.

⁵⁴ *Kōryōshi*, 655–56.

⁵⁵ *Japan Weekly Mail*, June 13, 1896.

明治廿九年六月五日試合 我 校

Seat	Innings		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	Sum
	Names											
S.S.	Ihara	井原	O	X ^I		O	S	X ^I		O	X ^I	3
III.B.	Murata	村田	X ^F	X ^{II}		O		OX ^F		X ^I	O	3
I.B.	Miyaguchi	宮口	X	X ^{III}		X ^I		O	O	O	O	4
L.F.	Tominaga	富永	O		O	X ^I		O	O	X ^{II}	O	5
P.	Aoi	青井	O		O		X ^I	O	X ^{II}	X ^I	X ^{II}	3
C.	Fujino	藤野	X ^L		X ^{II}		X	X ^I	O	S	O	2
II.B.	Inoue	井上		O	X ^{II}		O	O	X ^I		OX ^I	4
R.F.	Kamimura	上村		O	X ^{II}		O	O	O		O	5
C.F.	Moriwaki	森脇		O		X ^I	X ^{III}	O	X ^{II}		O	3
Total			3	3	2	2	2	7	4	2	7	32

附 録

横濱連合軍

Seat	Innings		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	Sum
	Names											
III.B.	Ellis		X ^{II}		X		O		X ^I	S	X ^{III}	1
L.F.	Chipman		X ^I		X ^F		S		X ^{II}	S	X ^{III}	0
C.F.	Abel		S			X ^I	X		S	X ^F	S	0
C.	Golden		X			X ^I		O	X ^{III}		O	2
II.B.	Douglas			X ^I		X ^I		X ^I	S		O	1
P.	Callen			X ^I			O	X ^{II}	S		O	2
R.F.	Whitny			X ^L			X ^I	S ^I		O	X ^{III}	1
S.S.	Tilden				S		O	X ^F		X ^{II}	O	2
I.B.	Casery				X		X ^{II}	S		X ^{II}	S	0
Total			0	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	4	9

十二

Figures 3a and 3b: Scorecards of the game of June 5, 1896.

Figure 3a: Photograph by the author of the scorecard as it appeared in the Ichikō student magazine.

勝負表 (Table)

明治29年6月5日

第一高等学校 対 横浜外人

2回戦

(高橋泰太郎編 明治29年7月18日発行)
ベースボール術による

Seat	Innings Names	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	Sum
SS	井原	○	×		○	S	×		○	×	3
3B	村田	×	×	○		○			×	○	3
1B	宮口	×	×	×		○	○	○	○		4
LF	富永	○		○	×		○	○	×	○	5
P	青井	○	○		×	○	×	×			3
C	藤野	×	×	×	×	○	S	○			2
2B	井上		○	×		○	○	×	○		4
RF	上村		○	×		○	○	○	○		5
CF	森脇	○		×	×	○	×	○			3
Total		3	3	2	2	2	7	4	2	7	32

Seat	Innings Names	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	Sum
3B	Fillis	×	×	○		×	S	×			1
LF	Chipmeo	×	×		S		×	S	×		0
CF	Abel	S		×	×		S	×	S		0
C	Golden	×		×	○	×		○			2
2B	Douglas		×	×		×	S		○		1
P	Callen	×			○	×	S		○		2
RF	Wittny	×			×	S		○	×		1
SS	Tilden		S		○	×		×	○		2
1B	Casery		×		×	S		×	S		0
Total		0	0	0	3	1	0	1	4	9	

符号 S 三人のOut生じ打方より Fielding に代らんとする際ベースにありたる走者を Standing と云い、S を以て其記号とす、之れは計算に入れざるものなり
 説明 × Out の記号其右肩に 1 2 3 F 又 H と記すべしこれは 1B 2B 3B F1 HB の Out なり (X' X' X' X')
 ○ HB (Home base) に降りたる記号

Figure 3b: The official Japanese scorecard for June 5, 1896. Photograph reproduced courtesy of Kōdansha publishers.

equally unconvincing. The working day in the settlement rarely exceeded four hours.⁵⁶

In the heated aftermath of the second international game, both sides were eager for a rematch, only this time the Ichikō stalwarts insisted that the contest take place on their home field. From Yokohama, a team made up exclusively of sailors from the cruiser *Detroit*, who apparently felt they were better off without the assistance of the athletic club and with the full prestige of the United States Navy at stake, accepted the challenge. On the afternoon of June 27, the team of sailors marched proudly through the gates of the First Higher School, followed by a naval band that, presumably, filled the air with “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean.” As the Americans entered the campus, they were undoubtedly surprised to discover that a throng of nearly ten thousand had already squeezed around the playing field. Indeed, every inch of standing room had been occupied since the middle of the morning, forcing police to turn away some of the

⁵⁶ According to Brownell, the working day began at ten in the morning and ended at three in the afternoon with “at least one and a half hours . . . spent at the United Club or in the Grand or Club Hotels” for lunch; *Tales from Tokio*, 96.

overflow crowd. In addition to the thousands of Tokyo citizens, a select group of one hundred dignitaries, including representatives from the American legation and the Japanese government, sat comfortably behind home plate under a pavilion especially constructed for the occasion. As the band played and the crowd roared and reporters, both foreign and Japanese, scribbled madly, Ichikō romped over its visiting opponents by a score of 22–6. To avert a repetition of the acrimony that had followed the previous match, the Ichikō administration invited all American guests and players to a postgame reception in the teachers' lounge. No sooner had crackers and tea been served than the sailors, who Ichikō observers described as “smitten with humiliation,” floated the idea of yet another rematch for July 4 in Yokohama. After considerable urging, the Ichikō team accepted.⁵⁷

In the wake of Ichikō's third overwhelming victory, baseball players in the settlement came under enormous pressure to redeem their athletic reputations. The situation was especially tense since the next contest with the “higher school nine” was scheduled for the Fourth of July, and the specter of another humiliating defeat on Independence Day was unconscionable. Hence, every effort was made to field an “all star team” drawn from the combined ranks of the Yokohama Athletic Club and the United States Navy. Fortunately, the potential pool was greatly augmented by the arrival in Yokohama harbor of the flagship of the Pacific fleet, the battleship *Olympia*, whose crew members were noted for their prowess in baseball. Five sailors from the *Olympia* were recruited for the Independence Day game, including one who had played shortstop professionally before entering the navy.⁵⁸

The irony of playing a team of Americans in their national game on Independence Day was not fully appreciated by the Ichikō students, who were quite amazed when they arrived in Yokohama on the morning of July 4 to see all of the American men-of-war in the harbor festooned with flags and blasting out twenty-one gun salutes. Whether by design or not, the reverberations of the canon-fire had a slightly unsettling effect on the students, who had just completed final examinations and were not in the best psychological condition for the game. As it turned out, the American team was able to take full advantage of the situation, eking out a 14–12 victory before a much-relieved crowd of holiday spectators. At the conclusion of the game, the American team, heeding the code of good sportsmanship, gave their Japanese opponents a rousing “Hip, Hip, Hourray!” The cheers were given “in good earnest,” according to the reporter for the *Japan Weekly Mail*, for it was difficult to deny that the Japanese nine, even in defeat, had “played a neater and better game in the field than did their opponents.”⁵⁹ Perhaps the ultimate tribute to the Ichikō stalwarts was a letter received during the same summer from Yale University, inviting the team to join an intercollegiate tournament on the East Coast.⁶⁰ Lack of funds pre-

⁵⁷ *Jiji shinpō*, June 30, 1896; *Kōryōshi*, 656–67; and Ikei, *Hakkyū Taiheiyō o wataru*, 43–44.

⁵⁸ *Kōryōshi*, 657–58.

⁵⁹ *Japan Weekly Mail*, July 11, 1896. For more on the festive atmosphere that surrounded the game, see Ma-bel Loomis Todd, *Corona and Coronet* (New York, 1898), 179–80.

⁶⁰ *Kōryōshi*, 660.

vented acceptance, but the First Higher School players were gratified, nonetheless, to hear that news of their achievement had crossed the Pacific.

From 1897 to 1904, there were nine more games between the Ichikō Baseball Club and American teams in Yokohama. Of these, Ichikō emerged victorious in eight contests, losing only one 6–5 “squeaker.” Among the victories was a 4–0 shut-out (“skunk game”) against the Yokohama Athletic Club and two impressive wins (34–1, 27–0) over a team of sailors from the giant battleship *Kentucky*, which replaced the *Olympia* in the early 1900s as the flagship of the Pacific fleet. Over the entire twelve-game series, Ichikō scored 230 runs to only 64 for the American teams—a statistic that raised the question of whose “national game” baseball really was.⁶¹

SINCE SPORT HAS VIRTUALLY ESCAPED the eye of professional historians in Japan, the task of rescuing the early history of Japanese baseball from oblivion has been left to sportswriters, university alumni, and private athletic associations.⁶² Inevitably, the year books and popular histories that have been written by these groups devote a page or two to the Ichikō Baseball Club and its “heroic” encounters with the Yokohama Athletic Club; but always the significance of the series is limited to its impact upon the development of baseball in Japan. In this truncated view, the Ichikō-Yokohama series is considered important for capturing wide public interest, hastening the introduction of new fielding and batting techniques, and paving the way for baseball to become Japan’s most popular spectator sport after World War I. To be sure, the last of these achievements is no small distinction given the conspicuous lack of interest that baseball has generated outside North America, the West Indies, the Philippines, and Taiwan.

Still, the disposition to view the rise of Japanese baseball in the 1890s only in terms of the later development of the sport is both simplistic and somewhat misleading. When First Higher School students took to the playing fields, they showed little interest in securing the fate of baseball in Japan or even in introducing the sport to their less privileged contemporaries. What excited them instead was the possibility that excellence in America’s “national game,” demonstrated in competition with American teams, would compel Westerners to reconsider fictitious stereotypes about the unmanly Japanese. Baseball was, in this sense, an instrument for the rectification of the national image. The intensity of feeling over this issue is suggested in one of the yearly reports of the Ichikō Baseball Club submitted in the immediate aftermath of the first international games in 1896. “The Americans are proud of baseball as their national game just as we have been proud of judo and kendo,” the student chronicler noted. “Now, however, in a place far removed from their native land, they have fought against a

⁶¹ The number of runs is derived from the individual accounts of each game; see *ibid.*, 651–79. The score for one game, that between Ichikō and the crew of the battleship *Yorktown* on June 8, 1897, does not appear in *Kōryōshi*; for that score, see “Waga gun daini beigun to tatakau,” *Undōkai*, no. 2 (1897): 5.

⁶² In addition to the works by Kimijima Ichirō and Hirose Kenzō, the “popular histories” include Ōbunsha, ed., *Yakyū taikan* (Tokyo, 1949); Nihon Taiiku Kyōkai, ed., *Supōtsu hachijūnenshi* (Tokyo, 1958); Nihon Fuzokushi Gakkai, *Supōtsu to goraku*, in *Kindai Nihon fuzokushi*, 6 (Tokyo, 1968); and Kubota Takayuki, *Kōkō yakyū hyakunen* (Tokyo, 1976). For one notable exception, see Ikei, *Hakkyū Taiheiyo o wataru*.

'little people' whom they ridicule as childish, only to find themselves swept away like falling leaves. No words can describe their disgraceful conduct. The aggressive character of our national spirit is a well-established fact, demonstrated first in the Sino-Japanese War and now by our great victories in baseball."⁶³

Accepting the Social Darwinist formula that a civilization is defined by its "aggressive character" (*tekigaishin*), the Ichikō students regarded their victories on the playing field in Yokohama as a great service to the nation, ranking in importance with the military victories on the battlefields in the Korean peninsula. The bold analogy bore a striking resemblance to the Duke of Wellington's supposed adage, with which the students were quite familiar, that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton.⁶⁴ Be this as it may, the immediate inspiration for correlating baseball with national destiny was the outpouring of public gratitude that swelled with each victory over the Americans. Typical of the letters that flooded the administration office in June 1896 was one from Yokoyama Tokujirō, an elementary school principal in Gifu, who declared the Ichikō triumph "an augury [*zenchō*] of our nation's victory over the entire world."⁶⁵ No less carried away were the service workers and other elements of the *Lumpenproletariat* attached to the settlement. Each time the Ichikō team played in Yokohama, hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of these uprooted citizens congregated outside the ball park, waiting patiently for word of the results. Upon hearing the news that Ichikō had won, the bystanders, according to student accounts, would "jump for joy" as if their livelihood depended upon the outcome. In reacting to this social phenomenon, the students imagined they were fighting for the emancipation of their downtrodden countrymen who were "suppressed by the foreigner's monetary power."⁶⁶

Given the degradation of Japanese workers in the settlement and the tense international environment in which the games were played, it is not surprising that the Ichikō students assumed the role of "combatants" (*senshi*) in the struggle for national dignity or that they resorted to bellicose language in describing their athletic exploits. Although the negotiations between the Western powers and Japan to abrogate the "unequal" treaties were well under way when the international series commenced in the spring of 1896, the students believed that the humiliating legacy of the settlements could never be erased without some form of retribution. Baseball was ideally suited for this task. Winning a game against a proud foreign team produced all of the glory of a military victory with few of the risks. In a more positive vein, the Ichikō team took special satisfaction in witnessing a gradual improvement in the attitude of their American opponents, who were increasingly willing to shake hands and utter half-hearted cheers as the series progressed. Such displays of respect, they reasoned, could never have been elicited without first beating the foreigners in their own

⁶³ *Kōryōshi*, 649.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Katayama Yoshikatsu, "Undōka o kōgū suru michi," *Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō Kōyūkai zasshi*, no. 92 (1899): 9–12.

⁶⁵ "Yokohama ensei kiji," 6.

⁶⁶ "Itsuwa," 17–18.

game and even suggested that the day was coming when American and Japanese teams could play without cultural bias.

Thus, baseball was heralded for both accelerating Japan's rise to equal status among the world powers and serving as a possible tool for what student leaders at Ichikō once called "the preservation of diplomatic stability" (*gaikō shusei*) across the Pacific.⁶⁷ This idea of using the athletic field to sublimate hostilities that might otherwise be acted out on the battlefield was echoed by a number of Americans in Japan, including W. B. Mason, who was deeply committed to the notion of exchanging baseball teams in an effort to bridge the Pacific. Mason's dream was finally realized in the decade following the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), when teams from Waseda and Keiō Universities visited America and Wisconsin, Washington, Chicago, and Stanford sent teams to Japan. Whether or not such exchanges could ever have taken place without the initiative taken by the Ichikō players in the 1890s is doubtful. Perhaps with this in mind, Lindsay Russell, president of the Japan Society in 1914, singled out the Ichikō-Yokohama series as one of the "landmarks" in inter-Pacific relations.⁶⁸

BY THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, student athletes in Japan were expounding the Victorian ideology of manliness and duty with the same determination as their counterparts in the West.⁶⁹ Like the Tom Brown and Dink Stover generations, they paid homage to the "fighting life" (*sentōteki seikatsu*) or the "strenuous life" (*funto seikatsu*) as a necessary penance to be borne by a young elite in its mission to inspire the nation and to defend against the softening influences of "materialistic civilization" (*bushhitsu-teki bunmei*).⁷⁰ Nor was it uncommon for them to speak of the "sacredness of games" (*gemu no shinsei*) in expressing a self-abnegating devotion to school and nation. "The three years spent as a member of the Ichikō Baseball Club are years of total sacrifice," exclaimed a young sportsman in 1906. "Ah, sacrifice!" he continued, "Is this not the virtue that holds our society and nation together?"⁷¹ Amateur sportsmen in the West would have undoubtedly agreed. The value of baseball, as H. Addington Bruce put it in 1913, was that it nurtured "courage," "self-control," and "social solidarity," all of which were "requisite . . . in the life of an individual and a nation."⁷²

While the crack of the bat sounded a common ideological theme across the

⁶⁷ *Kōryōshi*, 656.

⁶⁸ Russell, ed., *America to Japan* (New York, 1915), 304. Russell mistakenly referred to 1898 as the date for "the initial game of baseball played between a Japanese (the First High School team) and an American nine won by the former."

⁶⁹ It would be erroneous to infer that all students, even during the 1890s, were rabid about sports. In most of the higher schools, there were small groups of "philosophic youth" (*tetsugaku seinen*) or "anguished youth" (*hanmon seinen*) whose preoccupation with romantic love and the riddles of existence set them distinctly apart from campus sportsmen. Not until the early 1900s, however, were their numbers significant enough to cause serious tensions within the student community. I discuss the configurations of student culture in my forthcoming book, *Schooldays in Imperial Japan: A Study in the Culture of a Student Elite*.

⁷⁰ "Dai ichi gakkai zenryō sawakai kiji," *Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō Kōyūkai zasshi*, no. 151 (1905): 95; and Kimijima, *Daryō ichibanshitsu*, 62.

⁷¹ "Dai san gakkai zenryō sawakai kiji," *Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō Kōyūkai zasshi*, no. 158 (1906): 121–22.

⁷² Bruce, "Baseball and the National Life," *Outlook*, 104 (1913): 105.

Pacific, was the movement of the United States and Japan toward a shared, bilateral culture of home runs and stolen bases in the clear interest of friendly relations between the two nations? Perhaps. But the legacy of the Ichikō-Yokohama series compels approaching the question cautiously, with an awareness of the ambiguities and inconsistencies of both American and Japanese participants that defy easy generalization. Although the two sides partook of the same culture of athleticism and manliness, that culture was inherently aggressive and, therefore, virtually impossible to “share” in an atmosphere of amity and mutual respect. Cosmopolitan Social Darwinism is a contradiction in terms.

From the perspective of Americans who were familiar with Japan, there was always a tension between the goal of encouraging the spread of baseball abroad and maintaining exclusive mastery over a sport that, in the words of Albert Spalding, only “American manhood” could provide the “brain and brawn” to play *par excellence*.⁷³ Within limits, of course, it could be gratifying to see, as Fred Merrifield put it, “little brown people” running the bases,⁷⁴ such a sight made Japan seem less strange and inscrutable to the American visitor. Yet it was also extremely unsettling to see the same “little brown people” humiliating the crews from the flagships of the Pacific fleet, men-of-war that were, to borrow naval historian William Braisted’s phrase, “the embodiment of the wealth and pretensions” of U.S. foreign policy in the Far East.⁷⁵

The ambiguous attitude had its parallel in world politics, as exemplified in the pronouncements of Theodore Roosevelt, who could, at one moment, cheer the Japanese for “playing our game” in the confrontation with Russia, only to admonish them five months later on the evils of “get[ting] the big head.”⁷⁶ In other words, the Japanese were admired for their revitalization of the fighting spirit at the end of the century and for their refusal to be lumped with the Chinese, who, according to Roosevelt, were “content to rot by inches in ignoble ease.”⁷⁷ If, however, the Japanese became overly proficient in “our game,” whether on the battlefield or the baseball diamond, the hue and cry was heard that “they” were not playing by “our” rules, that they were using their “sparer figures” to undue advantage, that they were guilty of hitting and pitching “samurai style.” Then, as now, cultural relativism supplied the last line of defense for ensuring the national integrity of the sport.⁷⁸

Vacillation between seemingly irreconcilable goals characterized the attitudes of student athletes in Japan as well. The Ichikō players spoke in one breath about retribution for past injustices and, in another, about using baseball to forge harmonious relations between the two countries. They were also torn between playing baseball to project the image of the cosmopolitan, man of the world and playing to revive the stoic virtues of the feudal warrior. The con-

⁷³ Spalding, *Baseball: America's National Game*, 5.

⁷⁴ Merrifield, “University Athletics in Japan,” *University of Chicago Magazine*, 2 (1909–10): 105.

⁷⁵ Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897–1909* (Austin, 1958), 3.

⁷⁶ Roosevelt, *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, vol. 4: *The Square Deal*, ed. Elting E. Morison (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), 724, 830.

⁷⁷ Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life*, 7.

⁷⁸ For a recent example of a cultural relativist approach to contemporary Japanese baseball, see Robert Whiting, *The Chrysanthemum and the Bat: Baseball Samurai Style* (New York, 1977).

fusion extended to basic nomenclature: some students used the Anglicized term “bēsubōru” while the majority insisted upon identifying the sport with a combination of Chinese characters (*ya-kyū*) that were selected by one of the first captains of the team.⁷⁹ Hence, it was as difficult for Japanese students to admit that they were playing baseball “just like the Americans” as it was for the Americans to admit that the Japanese were playing “just like us.”

If the Ichikō-Yokohama series did not contribute immediately to harmony and good will across the Pacific, it most certainly did contribute to the inter-related quest for national dignity and social status among student athletes. By overwhelming the Americans in their “national game,” the students aroused considerable patriotic ferment and pride in the 1890s that extended down to the lowliest denizens of the treaty ports. While they dedicated their victories quite magnanimously to the nation, the Ichikō players were also helping themselves. In an era when the athletic field was the exclusive preserve of amateurs, baseball in Meiji Japan, like campus sport in Victorian England and America, was the “pivotal link” between nationalism and social status.⁸⁰ Before higher school and university students were equipped with bats and balls, they had little opportunity to establish their credibility as a hard-working and public-spirited elite. As privileged students, they were largely absolved of responsibilities to serve in the military, to participate in community-assistance programs, or to add anything to the productive capacity of the economy. Uprooted from their homes and vulnerable to the hedonistic and socially leveling pleasures of the city, the students needed athletics to overcome any perception of indolence in the public mind. Through baseball, they demonstrated both that the battle for national dignity could be won on the playing field and that an academic elite could be imbued with the fighting spirit expected of future leaders of the land. Whether in the form of laudatory press coverage or of impoverished citizens “jumping for joy” on the streets of Yokohama, the more praise the students received for their achievements on the diamond, the greater was the social distance between the players and their adulators. Therefore, when examining the lyrics of Ichikō’s “Baseball Club Rouser” (*Yakyūbuka*), written in 1905 in commemoration of the Yokohama series,⁸¹ one senses a distinct overlapping of national pride with self-interest:

I

Among literary and martial arts pursued
In the righteous air of the First Higher School
Baseball stands especially high
With its spirit of honor that refuses to die.

II

The crack of the bat echoes to the sky
On cold March mornings when we chase balls on the ice

⁷⁹ Kimijima, *Nihon yakyū sōseki*, 71.

⁸⁰ J. A. Mangan, “Play Up and Play the Game: Victorian and Edwardian Public School Vocabularies of Motive,” *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 23 (1975): 324–35.

⁸¹ Genkōsha, ed., *Ryōka wa ikiteiru* (Tokyo, 1963), 76.

Year in and year out, through wind and rain
Enduring all hardship, we practice our game.

III

While the years have seen many a foe
Come to our schoolyard where strong winds blow
Upon touching the sleeves of our armoured knights
We turn them away, speechless with fright.

IV

The valorous sailors from the *Detroit*, *Kentucky*, and *Yorktown*
Whose furious batting can intimidate a cyclone
Threw off their helmets, their energies depleted
Behold how pathetically they run away defeated.

V

Courageously, we marched twenty miles south
To fight the Americans in Yokohama
Though they boast of the game as their national sport
Behold the games they have left with no score.

VI

Ah, for the glory of our Baseball Club!
Ah, for the glitter it has cast!
Pray that our martial valor never turns submissive
And that our honor will always shine far across the Pacific.

