

— Reader Survey Results —

A big thank-you to all of you who kindly responded to our reader survey enclosed with the last issue.

We read through *all* the feedback we received and compiled results to give us a good picture of what you are interested in reading, how you read the newsletter and what you would like to see in future issues.

Below is a snapshot of the results.

— Japan Reports is available online! —

Quite a number of teachers mentioned that they would like to be able to use the travel or cultural articles digitally in their classrooms.

Well, you can! Each issue of *Japan Reports* is uploaded to our website after the initial mailout by post. Pages are available as individual PDFs. Archives stretch back to 2009.

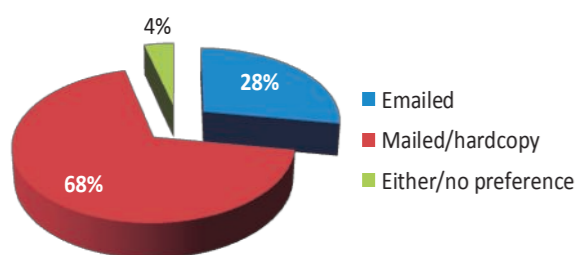
See: [www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/english/culture.htm](http://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/english/culture.htm)

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The overall **evaluation of content and structure** was positive with 96% of respondents saying newsletter content was easy to read and again 96% saying the content was relevant. Respondents indicated that they were **most interested in articles relating to culture**, followed by education and Australia-Japan relations. In fact, one of the most common responses was the combination of all three (multiple choices were possible). This was reflected in the **most popular articles** in the previous edition: the article on the Japanese Film Festival was top, followed by the article on Cowra Sakura Matsuri and then our regular travel article Destination Japan on Toyama.

Skimming the newsletter for articles of interest proved the most common reading pattern at 53%, which we had expected, but we were pleasantly surprised that 40% said they read issues thoroughly.

Thank you to all those who pass on the newsletter to other people; the newsletter has **multiple readership** among 78% of survey respondents.



The results showed that **respondents preferred receiving a hardcopy**. A preference for email was not skewed to younger readers—many older readers stated a preference for emails.

Interestingly, it is clear that people have **quite different ideas of what is convenient** for them; both those who prefer email and those who prefer mailed hardcopies cited the same reasons – ease of sharing, ease of storage.

Out of our respondents, the majority (57%) would like to see the newsletter published more frequently: 42% chose quarterly, 17% bimonthly and 40% monthly. At this stage, the newsletter will remain quarterly, but we have noted this preference.

Many thanks!

Samurai Blue at the 2015 Asian Cup

The 2015 Asian Cup graced Australia's shores for the first time this January, adding further international flavour to an already action-packed summer of sport. After only joining the Asian Confederation in 2006, Australian Football authorities worked extra hard to have everything in place for their inaugural hosting of the region's most prestigious football tournament.

With matches spread throughout the eastern seaboard – in Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Newcastle and Sydney – organisers wanted to ensure local fans were offered every opportunity to witness the best Asian football had to offer.



Keen supporters wore the team colours—Samurai Blue jerseys were spotted hanging in the consulate ready for action after hours!

Needless to say, the reigning Asian Cup champions – **Japan's Samurai Blue** – made the pilgrimage Down Under to defend their crown. Starting their campaign with an exhibition charity match in the country town of Cessnock in the heart of NSW's wine region, Japan eased their way to a comfortable victory over Auckland City in a perfect precursor to what they knew could be a gruelling campaign for Asian football dominance.

However, Japan were fortunate to be drawn in what many commentators labelled a relatively weak preliminary grouping, thus progressing virtually unimpeded through the early rounds and comfortably topping Group D with convincing wins over Palestine (4-0) in Newcastle, Iraq (1-0) in Brisbane and Jordan (2-0) in Melbourne. Having the opportunity to witness a number of these games, it was gratifying to see the Japanese expatriate and local community get right behind their boys in blue with highly vocal and colourful support.

The media and pundits had named the stalwart Samurai as the team to beat for the 2015 tournament and predicted a much anticipated clash with Australia's high-flying Socceroos. Alas, this was not to be, as Japan faced a resilient United Arab Emirates in their quarter-final clash where they were held to a 1-1 draw after extra time. Sydney's 2000 Olympic stadium was the setting for this epic clash and the cries of "Nippon!" and "UAE!" echoed throughout until the very last moments, with neither side willing to concede defeat. The game thus came down to a nerve-wracking penalty shootout where fans were left stunned as Japan's international superstars –Keisuke Honda and Shinji Kagawa– were unable to convert, enabling the UAE to book a coveted semi-final berth against the Socceroos.

The Samurai Blue were left pondering what might have been, but despite this setback, they still remain a force to be reckoned with in world football and will undoubtedly return with even more hunger and determination for the next Asian Cup in 2019. The 2015 Asian Cup Champions, the Socceroos, will face some determined competition!

J-FOOTBALL FACTS

- In Japan they usually call it soccer.
- The Japan Football Association was established in 1921.
- The **professional league** is a much younger beast. The decision to establish the J-League was made in 1991 and competition play began in May 1993. By 1998, the J-League already had two divisions, J-1 and J-2.
- The national team—the **Samurai Blue**—**first qualified for the World Cup in 1998.**
- **Samurai Blue have won the Asian Cup in 1992, 2000, 2004 and 2011.**
- **Women were playing soccer in the 1920s, but a league was only established in 1989.**
- The national women's team—**Nadeshiko Japan**—**first appeared in the World Cup in 1991 and became world champions in the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup!**

Kemari—

Japan's traditional take on football

The competitive world of modern football (soccer) would have a problem with one of the basics of the traditional Japanese football game called *kemari*. Namely, there are no winners or losers in this game!

The love of kicking a ball around and testing your skill seems a universal one. It's also an old one in Japan. *Kemari*, also called *shūgiku*, came to Japan from China around 1,400 years ago. In Japan today modern football is one of the most popular and widely played sports. *Kemari* on the other hand is seldom played. Its continuance is largely thanks to the Kemari Preservation Society which was established with a donation in 1903 by Emperor Meiji.



Kemari players' 'uniforms' certainly add a layer of difficulty to the game.

The reason for the imperial connection is *kemari* first became popular in court circles during the Heian Period (794-1185). *Kemari* is mentioned in mid-Heian Period literature. It grew in popularity and by the Kamakura Period (1185-1333) the game was also played by samurai. It continued to be popular through to the Edo Period (1600-1867) and was also played by commoners. However, after the Meiji Restoration (1867) it was no longer widely played and so the then Emperor acted to preserve it.

To the game. The aim of *kemari* is to try to keep the ball in the air for as long as possible. The number of players is usually eight or six, but it can be played with as few as four. A player will kick the ball up and down several times, on his or her instep, and the pass it to another player. Another feature of the game is that players call out as they kick the ball and then position themselves to receive it. It's that simple but still requires skill to play well!

The players kick a light ball made of deer skin. The pitch is square varying in size and in each corner there is a tree. Some keen court nobles would sometimes have trees – a pine, a cherry, a willow and a maple – planted in each corner, but saplings in pots or bamboo are more common markers and allow the size of the pitch to change.

*Kemari* can now be seen at temple festivals at certain times of the year. The players pictured here are playing at UNESCO-listed Shimogamo Shrine in Kyoto as part of the New Year's festivities. Maintaining the imperial connection with the game, *kemari* is also performed during the Kyoto Imperial Palace public open day.

Now, can you imagine playing football with long kimono sleeves?

## Kemari— Japan's traditional take on football

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