

SWIMMING IN JAPAN

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Part 5. Famous Figures of Japanese Swimming History

Baron Masao Matsunaga

was born in Kumamoto, in the Island of Kyushu, where swimming as a military art has flourished since the olden days. There, he went swimming with his father since he was five or six years old.

But it was not until 1895 that he formally began to learn how to swim at the swimming department of the Nippon Taiiku Kai (. Tapali Physical Education Society), of Hamach5, Tokyo. Among the forms that he learned were: Mukai Ryu, Suifu Ryu, and Kobori Ryu.

Baron Matsunaga has taught swimming from about twenty years of age at the Chiba and Miyagi secondary schools and also at the Military Academy. The reason for Baron Matsunaga's earnestness in learning and teaching swimming is because his younger brother was drowned while taking swimming exercises at the Sendai Local Military Cadet School. As a memorial to his brother, Baron Matsunaga is endeavoring to teach swimming so that there will be no one not knowing how to swim in Japan.

Since 1918 foreign style of swimming has influenced Japanese swimming and has turned it from the traditional swimming to a racing and competitive sport.

As there is danger of the old traditional swimming as a military art being forgotten, Baron Matsunaga created the Nippon Yuei Remmei (Japanese Amateur Classical Swimming Federation) in 1925 with others of similar opinion. The followers of the various schools of Samurai styles of swimming are members of the league which is interested in developing and spreading the traditional Japanese swimming.

Baron Matsunaga is training swimming coaches mainly now.

Ikkaku Matsuzawa

is the noted honorary coach who led the Japanese swimming team to victory in the Tenth Olympic Games at Los Angeles. For nearly ten years of his student life, while attending the Tokyo First Middle School, the First Higher School and the Imperial University of Tokyo,

he was active as a swimmer of the first rank in Japan. At first, he was a champion of the short distance races, but gradually changed into a long distance swimmer. Incidentally, his beautiful form was the object of great admiration. In 1921, while a student at the First Higher School, he was instrumental in forming the Nippon Intercollegiate Swimming Association as its promoter and executer.

In those days as there were no suitable pools in Japan, the swimming meets were held in the seas or lakes. When the First Higher School sent their champions to the intercollegiate games, there was only one, Matsuzawa, who was able to offer competition to the others, as there were so few outstanding ones. It is quite appropriate then that he, who suffered such inconveniences **and** who created the league with very little help, should become the leader of Japanese swimming. For some time after graduation from the Imperial University, he did not appear actively in swimming associations, but occupied

himself with the business and organization of the Amateur Swimming Federation of Japan. In the year 1929, when for the first time the Japanese girls' swimming team went on an expedition to Hawaii, he went along as their coach. As a result of this trip, he formally became a coach although, previous to that time, he had often taught students and also swimming teams from every part of Japan.

He is kind-hearted and courteous; and it is recognized by all that his swimming form itself is graceful.

This girls' team was the first expedition from Japan to participate in a swimming contest in Hawaii and Mr. Matsuzawa was greatly responsible for its success as was the brilliant work, of Miss Hideko Maehata. After that the Japanese swimming team prepared itself for the Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Mr. Matsuzawa was immediately appointed as coach, and he with his assistant, Kazuo Noda, made every effort to develop a winning team.

In 1931, the N.S.R. welcomed American teams to Japan and defeated them. Encouraged by such contests, they easily became the victors at the Tenth Olympiad. At that time Mr. Matsuzawa resolved on different tactics with regards to coaching the team. He undertook a strict system of training according to army discipline. He made them lead a systematical life. It is said that the reason for Japan's victory in America is the strict and systematic coaching of Mr. Matsuzawa. At the forth-coming Eleventh Olympiad in Berlin, he will un-questionably appear as the coach.

His major characteristics are prudence and frankness. And now he is giving self-sacrificing devotion to the swimming federation. One can seldom find as fine a coach as this.

Zorai Kimura

is a graduate from the Waseda University as in Katsuo Ta.kaishi, and was a back stroke swimmer. He took part in the Olympic Games in 1928 at Amsterdam, and joined an expedition to Hawaii. Now, lie is it writer for the Shimbun Rengo. He is also a swimming critic.

Masaji Kiyokawa

came out into the limelight in the American-Japanese Swimming' Meet in 1931, the year previous to the Tenth Olympic Games at Los Angeles. He also made it new world record in the 100 metres back stroke at the Tenth Olympiad.

He became a swimmer when he was a pupil of middle school. He won his place among the world's swimmers while at the Nagoya Higher Commercial School. At present, he is attending the Tokyo College of Commerce. Between last year and this year, he went to

Australia and coached many swimmers there in the Japanese style swimming.

He has a resolute character and is rather reticent but has a great popularity.

Miss Hideko Maehata

besides being, supreme in Japanese women's swimming, is foremost in the world for women's breast stroke swimming.

She is a student of Sugiyama Women's College in Nagoya. She had initially gone to the contest in Hawaii and then had participated in the Tenth Olympic Games at Los Angeles where she won the second place in 200 metres breast stroke. She is resolved that at the next Olympiad in Berlin, she will win first place.

Her swimming is novel among Japanese women, her arms are strong, as it should be, for she has an excellent physique. Since she was thirteen years old, she has appeared in women's swimming contests, and every year she has renewed her own record. At present she holds three world records.

Shozo Makino

is one of Japan's greatest hopes in the next Olympic Games in 1936, because of his excellent health.

At the last Las Angeles Olympiad, 1932, he was defeated by Kitamura in the 1500 metres but he has improved. Now, he has two national records, one is 4 min. 46.4 sec. in the 400 metres race, and the other, 10 min. 1.2 sec. in the 800 metres race, and in 1935 he renewed the latter with the time of 9 min. 55.8 sec. He has a Japanese record in the 500 metres of 6 min. 9.8 sec., and also a splendid record in 1500 metres.

He is twenty years of age, and a student at the Waseda University. He weighs 117 pounds and is 5 feet, 1 inch tall, therefore, his body is rather small for swimming. But, we must duly appreciate his fine fighting spirit, full ambition and eagerness to win the world's record inspite of a rather small body. This fact shows that it is not necessary to have a body of perfect measurements in order to become good swimmers. The success of swimmers depend upon their training and upon the coach. Makino has a good and gentle nature, and is a diligent student.

Yasuji Miyazaki

won the victory in the 100 metres free style swimming in the Los Angeles Olympic Games. He is one of the world's foremost short distance racers. In 1934, as he impaired his health, he rested for a year from exercises and games, in order to recuperate for the coming Olympiad in Berlin, 1936. He is very careful of his condition and having a deeply-rooted endurance, checked himself from displaying his ability. But lately, as he has recovered his health, he has been exercising diligently and will appear in the Olympic Games, and no doubt, in the preliminary swimming meets before Berlin. We cannot say anything about his condition lately but his speed is just the same as before. He is a student of the Keio University.

Shigeo Sagita

was the first to advocate the Nippon Intercollegiate Swimming Association in 1921, and has been exerting himself in the Japanese swimming world greatly. Now, he is the sport's reporter for Nippon Shimbun Remmei, and besides this, he is the editor of "Baseball," a magazine.

Takahiro Saito

was a free style swimmer in 100 and 1500 metres races in the early days of swimming in Japan. Afterwards he began to practice the 100 metres back stroke. At the Eighth Olympic Games, Paris, 1924, he placed sixth in the 100 metres back stroke race with the record of 1 min. 19.8 sec.

In 1925, as the Captain of the Nippon Swimming delegates, he went to Hawaii, and the next year, 1926 he went to Australia with Takaishi, one of the famous swimmers and showed glorious results there.

From February to November, 1935, he was engaged as a swimming coach to Brazil, appointed by the Amateur Swimming Federation of Japan, and endeavored to

improve Brazilian swimming and has made remarkable progress. So much improvement has been shown, that one of the swimmers shortened his own record time about two minutes in the 1500 metres race. Saito gained credit with the public as a great coach.

Since he is a back stroke swimmer, and was formerly an expert in long distance swimming, he understands all the styles of swimming. He is prominent as coach in swimming. It is splendid that he, when he trains swimmers, reforms and corrects their bad habits very kindly showing each one his faults.

Saito is a graduate of the Rikkyo University, and now is a sports writer on swimming for the Osaka Mainichi and the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi.

Katsuo Takaishi

is the first swimmer who made Japanese swimming internationally popular. At the Eighth Olympic Games, Paris, 1924, he was fifth in both the 100 metres in 1 min. 03.0 sec., and the 1500 metres in 22 min. 10.8 sec. This was the first time that a Japanese swimmer succeeded in placing in the Olympic Games.

In the Ninth Olympiad, Amsterdam, 1928, he competed as the captain of the Japanese swimming team. He swam the 100 metres in 1 min. flat, and was third after Weissmuller and Barany. He also took part in the 1500 metres, but gave up before the end.

Takaishi took part as the captain of the swimming team in 1932, at the Tenth Olympic Games, Los Angeles. But at that time he did not compete in the races, because of his health and because there were many swimmers who made better records than he. So he worked hard as a member of the coaching staff in order to get the Japanese team in condition to win.

There are only a few swimmers who have competed in the Olympic Games three times as he has. His record improved year after year, making a new record every year for about ten years. This proves how diligently he practiced his swimming and exerted himself to improve the swimming in Japan. He swam both the 100 metres and the 1500 metres free style, but his favorite race was the 100 metres and, in the days when he was in best condition, he established a record of 58.6 sec. which no one in Japan could break for a long time.

He is a graduate of Waseda University and is twenty-nine years old. He took part in the Paris Olympic Games when he was nineteen years of age, and swam in his first Japanese contest when he was fifteen years old, a pupil at the Ibaraki Middle School.

He competed not only in the Olympic Games but in Far Eastern Championship Games several times, and always placed first in the 100 metres race. He also visited Hawaii and Australia where he exhibited his swimming and tried to introduce Japanese swimming.

Now, his life as a champion being over, he is devoting his time and energy to coaching the juniors in Osaka. He is 5 feet, 8 inches tall, weighs 148 lb. and has a perfect body for swimming.

Yoshiyuki Tsuruta

was the first Japanese to win a championship in an Olympic swimming contest. He won the 200 metres breast stroke at the Ninth Olympic Games held in Amsterdam, 1928 making the Olympic record of 2 min. 48 sec., his usual record.

Next, at the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1932, Tsuruta again won the championship in the 200 metres breast stroke with 2 min. 45.4 sec. and again renewed the

Olympic record. At that time lie was 30 years old, 5 feet, 7 inches in height, and 160 pounds in weight.

In swimming it is said that the prime of life is from 17 to 23 or 4, when the body is strongest. Most of the Japanese champions are young, so a champion, who made such it great record in middle age as lie did, is very rare. It is very unusual for one person to win the championship twice at the Olympic Games, but he did so, and he is in high spirits as he grows older. His energy is hopeful. But now he has withdrawn from competition and has taken charge of the Nagoya Swimming Pool.

Primarily lie learned the Japanese classic style of swimming. When he was in the Saseho Naval Station as a sailor, lie appeared in the All-Japan Swimming Championship Meet and was recognised. From that time he devoted himself to breast stroke. After he finished his military service, he entered Meiji University and applied himself to his studies.

Not only did he take part twice in the Olympic Games, but he also wielded much power in the Hawaii expedition. Moreover he, as one of the Meiji University team, went to Hawaii and contested against Yale University.

He is a never-to-be-forgotten man who has rendered good service in the Japanese swimming circle and in his knowledge about breast stroke, he is without a peer.