Football Nation Japan

How Japan's largest advertising agency, Dentsu, brought football to Asia.

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Preface

Dentsu
A Name that Runs through Football History

The national anthems had been sung. The circle of Japanese players slowly broke up, and the eleven men headed off to their positions on the pitch.

When the whistle eventually blew at 6 p.m. on June 4, 2002, for the kickoff of the Japan vs. Belgium game, the massive cheer that went up from the excited crowd of 55,500 people rocked Saitama Stadium 2002. The venue was an almost unbroken sea of blue, the Japan team colour. The tournament had officially got underway on May 31, but for Japan this, their national team's first match, marked the true start of the global festival that is the FIFA World Cup. People everywhere were exhilarated, ecstatic. I was there myself and I felt absolutely and totally happy.

I had started working on Japan's bid for the 2002 World Cup back in 1994. I was seriously committed to working for the "national good" for the first time in my life. For almost two years, from 1994 to 1996, my work had been one never-ending slog. I had flown the equivalent of fifteen times

round the globe asking key figures everywhere to support Japan's bid. But we had also got drawn into the political battle between the Fédération Internationale de Football (FIFA) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), and been forced to accept the compromise of a World Cup co-hosted by Japan and Korea. Mortified though I was to feel that Asia was not taken seriously as a region, I started flying to Seoul on a monthly basis, building bridges with my Korean counterparts and working like crazy to make sure the historic, first-ever co-hosted World Cup would be a success.

In one sense, the start of the 2002 World Cup was actually a conclusion that we had reached after a journey full of twists and turns. But surprisingly I felt no great sense of achievement or relief when all the trouble we had been through finally bore fruit. I am an Edokko—a native Tokyoite—born in Ningyocho, Nihonbashi, in the old centre of the city. Even as a boy, I loved being part of the group which carried the portable shrines through the streets at the Kanda Shrine and Asakusa Sanja festivals. I suspect it was this deep-rooted fondness for traditional festivals that made me so totally happy when I saw the uninhibited enthusiasm the Japanese were showing for the World Cup, the greatest festival of them all.

And a festival is precisely what it was. In my role as adviser to the 2002 FIFA World Cup Japan Organising Committee (JAWOC), I chaperoned important guests from around the world who were visiting Japan for the event. Wherever I went, I was bowled over by the general level of excitement: in the subways, bullet trains and shuttle buses after every match, you could see the fans from different countries chatting and making friends with one another, and when the Japan team scored, spontaneous happy crowds would form in the streets up and down the country; no doubt the same was true for all the other participating nations too. The co-hosted World Cup gave me the chance to re-experience the truth that "football is the ultimate media"—a favourite saying of Haruyuki Takahashi, a colleague of mine at Dentsu for whom I have the greatest respect. The World Cup is a festival that unites the world through the message of football. I needed to be reminded of that unshakeable truth. Even now, whenever I hear the nineteenth-century Italian composer Verdi's triumphal march from Aida—the official music for the Japan national team in 2002—the memories and emotions of the time flood vividly back and I find myself waxing nostalgic.

My involvement with the football business dates from 1982, ten years after I first joined Dentsu. In fact, I have spent the greater part of my career at the firm working on football, starting with the FIFA World All-Star Game for the Benefit of Unicef, followed by sponsorship sales for the 1986 FIFA World Cup in Mexico and World Cup USA 1994 (the latter including sponsorship and broadcasting rights sales for the Asian qualifiers), organising the Toyota European/South American Cup, then bidding for the 2002 World Cup and launching the FIFA Club World Cup. From my track record, it's only natural to assume that the 2002 World Cup must have been the climax of my career. Of course, I'm proud of all the hard work I put into Japan's hosting of the 2002 tournament, but that doesn't mean that 2002 was a full stop that marked the end of anything. For me, 2002 was just a comma, a pause on the way to the next step forward. I didn't fall into any hang-over-type state of exhaustion; indeed, more than anything I felt the need to make a fresh start. Alongside the preparations for the 2002 World Cup, I had in fact been working with the Japan Football Association (JFA) to help establish the East Asian Football Federation (EAFA). My determination to contribute to Japanese football and the development of the game in Asia

was only growing stronger.

Although I reached the official retirement age at my company in 2008, I'm still battling away on the front lines at Dentsu. My employment was extended and, staying on as executive producer of the Sports Business Division, I ended up very busy as executive adviser to the Japan 2022 World Cup Bid Committee. What this meant in practical terms was that, in my role as a key member of the lobbying team, I flew all around the world—to Argentina, Paraguay, South Africa, France, United Arab Emirates, Angola, Israel, Ireland, Brazil—trying to get the 24 members of the FIFA Executive Committee (the men with a vote to select the World Cup host country) and the various football associations and confederations to support Japan. It was a punishing job for someone over sixty like me, but on the other hand, I thought, "If I don't do this, then who will?"

I mentioned earlier that I had been deeply involved in Japan's bid for the 2002 World Cup. It may sound a little arrogant, but the truth is that there's probably no one else in Japan with more know-how or know-who when it comes to the bidding process than me. I want to use all the experience and connections I have built up to bring that festival back to

Japan again…. We need the World Cup here. It's about more than football. It can be a trigger to inspire and invigorate the whole nation…. It's this passion—plus the sense of responsibility I get from my long involvement with international football and my obligation to use the job as a way to pass on my know-how and know-who to my colleagues—that keeps me going.

This plugging on—refusing to treat 2002 as the grand finale of my career, still being deeply involved in the football business now—is something my Dentsu predecessors taught me by example. For my older colleagues in the football business, one-off success was never enough. They were always looking ahead, fearless of risk, eager to find the next big opportunity, and their contribution to the world of football is beyond doubt. I believe they were driven by a sense of social responsibility; they felt they had a duty to explore football's latent possibilities. I feel the same way too. I was lucky: the world of football taught me an enormous amount, and my work in the football business exposed me to many different fields. That's why getting the 2002 World Cup was not enough to satisfy me, and why I started looking to the next stage: working to

contribute to society through football and to further develop the sport in Asia; and putting heart and soul into the bid to bring the World Cup to Japan again.

As the achievements of my predecessors like Noriyuki Nabeshima and Haruyuki Takahashi show, look at the history of both Japanese and international football and Dentsu is always behind the scenes somewhere. It may sound as if I'm blowing my own (or Dentsu's) trumpet, but that's simply a matter of incontestable fact. We may never venture out centre stage, but the important part that Dentsu people have played in global football's development cannot be denied.

Dentsu's football business is like a thread that runs through the whole fabric of football history. That's why I'm sure our involvement with the game will interest football fans. In fact, I'm confident that shedding light on new, behind-the-scenes facts about the game will only make the world of football more attractive and more compelling in its complexity.

This book tells the story of Dentsu's football business, a story which mirrors the history of football itself. I wrote it for people who love football as a sport; for people interested in football as a business (and a very attractive and enjoyable business it is); and for people eager for a career in

international business. Please forgive any minor factual or typographical errors. The responsibility is entirely mine.

Chapter1

"Football is the Ultimate Media" A Game with a Special Magic

My first project: an enthusiastic crowd of 80,000 leaves a lasting impression

It's August 7, 1982. John Lennon's "Imagine," one of my all-time favourite songs, is playing over the speakers of the Giants Stadium in New Jersey, USA, putting the capacity crowd of 80,000 in an upbeat mood. When the players of the European All-Stars and the Rest of the World teams emerge onto the pitch, the excitement in the packed stadium reaches a climax.

Let's rewind the clock and go back some thirty-nine years. I had already been working at Dentsu for exactly ten years when I first found myself involved in a football project. The event was the FIFA World All-Star Game for the Benefit of Unicef, my first FIFA job, and I was standing at one corner of the pitch. The sound of the cheering before kickoff was like a great earthquake rumbling up from the bowels of the earth. For me, that was it. From that moment, football, and the amazing energy it can unleash, had me under their spell.

In the US, while the "Big Three" sports of baseball, basketball, and American football were all immensely popular, football was seen as a no-hoper sport that never manages to put down roots. I'd be lying if I claimed not to have experienced a twinge of anxiety about how the event would go, but this particular charity match ended up a tremendous success.

Franz Beckenbauer of Germany was honorary captain of the European All-Stars, while Pelé from Brazil was the honorary captain of the Rest of the World. The teams also featured Dino Zoff, Marco Tadelli, Giancarlo Antognoni, Paolo Rossi, Michel Platini, Zico, Falcão, and Socrates—the best-loved football heroes of the age who were all then at the top of their game. Conventional wisdom had it that football wasn't popular in the United States, but 80,000 people had made their way to the stadium and were in a state of supreme anticipation as they waited for this battle of the titans to get underway. I'm not exaggerating when I say that the raw power of the emotion I felt that day has sustained me ever since.

The whole thing had got off to a very odd start. In order to run the FIFA World All-Star Game for the Benefit of Unicef, Dentsu had established a base in New York City, across the

river from the State of New Jersey. The irony was that I had only got involved in the project because the original plans for my transfer to Dentsu's New York office had collapsed.

It was towards the end of December 1981 when Kikuzo Kato, director of the Planning and Project Coordination Division where I was working, approached me about a transfer to New York. He explained that a move was afoot to boost staff numbers at our New York office, and he was planning to recommend me.

As I had never even thought about working abroad and could hardly speak a word of English, it was all rather a bolt from the blue. Seeing how shocked and worried I was, Kato and Akira Hase, the general manager immediately below him, were considerate enough to take the time to persuade me of the merits of the move. My initial response—one of unconditional rejection—gradually started to soften. I also sought the advice of various friends and colleagues. Without exception, and much to my surprise, everyone advised me to go to New York. It took me three weeks to make up my mind. One more difficulty, however, remained: my wife. In those days, my wife was a teacher at an elementary school, and convinced that the teaching profession was her lifelong vocation,

she was passionate about education. Though persuading her was no pushover, she finally accepted, meaning that about four weeks after getting unofficial notice of the transfer, I gave my response to Kato. And soon after the start of the final term of the school year, my wife put in her notice. Once February came around and my wife found herself being invited to farewell parties by her fellow teachers, the reality of the move to New York began to sink in. Then along came a major hitch. In mid-February, my transfer to New York suddenly fizzled out. The whole plan to increase personnel numbers in the New York office had been turned down. It was a shock for me, but it was also discombobulating for my superiors at the Planning and Project Coordination Division who had worked so hard to change my mind. I had strong misgivings towards the company for the way it had treated me, but the good nature of my bosses helped me get over these feelings.

In the meanwhile, Hase, who had an unparalleled nose for information inside and outside Dentsu, had heard about a football event the firm was organising. It was to be held in the suburbs of New York (more accurately, in New Jersey) and produced by Haruyuki Takahashi of the Business Development Division. Hase put in a request on my behalf:

"Look, poor old Hamaguchi's had a tough time of it. The least you can do is send him on a business trip to New York." Takahashi, who was in a tight spot with too few staff to manage the event, was no less sympathetic.

Thanks to my colleagues' kind intervention, I got my marching orders to New York from Kato in mid-April. That was the roundabout route which had brought me to the Unicef All-Star Game. As I had played football on the Dentsu team during my first few years at the firm, I was very curious about what exactly this overseas football event would turn out to be. But as I was unable to speak English, my duties while abroad consisted only in performing simple tasks to help with the press conference we were due to hold at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York at the end of April, so I rolled into New York in a pretty carefree state of mind. On the afternoon of the day I got there, I went for a stroll in an overcast Central Park with Yuzo Irie, director of the Business Development Division and Takahashi's direct boss, who had been on the same plane. We were both gorging ourselves on large ice creams. "There's a good chance that football will turn into a big business in the future," said Irie, as we walked together. "So do a good job." This was encouraging, but at the same time I felt that any part

I had to play would end with the press conference, so hardly felt nervous at all.

Irie, for his part, had much heavier responsibilities. At the press conference, he was going to make the official announcement of the FIFA World All-Star Game for the Benefit of Unicef and explain the rationale behind it. Although Irie's English was no better than mine, he had managed to memorise the English speech drafted for him by Ryoko Sunaga, a bilingual member of the project team. Thanks to her coaching, he gave a fluent and authoritative performance in front of the press. I was full of admiration. Admittedly, he did blanch when the assembled journalists, convinced that he was a master of the language, began to pepper him with questions in English, but he somehow steered the conference to a safe conclusion by deploying Ryoko as his interpreter. Just as I was relaxing with the thought that my job was finished now that the press conference was over, Takahashi half-invited, half-compelled me to see the thing right through to the end. "Well, since you're here, you might as well stick with it," he said. Football is going to grow into something really big. Football is the ultimate media. This will be a good experience for you too…. Now I think back on it, Takahashi lost

no opportunity in the run-up to the charity match to share his philosophy that football was the ultimate media…. Anyway, that was how I came to extend my involvement in the Unicef All-Star Game through to the end of the project.

Since I had originally expected to stay in New York for just a couple of weeks, I had not packed that many clothes. On May 5, 1982, I briefly returned to Japan to get what I needed for a longer posting. I was also put in charge of sponsorship sales for the Unicef All-Star Game, so the first thing I did when I got back to Japan was get in touch with the Osaka Office of Dentsu. They provided me with an introduction to Mita Copiers (now Konika Minolta), a major office equipment manufacturer. Thanks to some serious assistance from Isao Maruyama of our Osaka Office, I managed to get them on board as a sponsor relatively simply.

While I was in Japan, it also occurred to me that I could probably sell the broadcasting rights for the charity match as well. All the connections I had built up during my stint in the Broadcasting Media Division came in handy here. I had been in Broadcasting Media for my first eight years after joining Dentsu in 1972. For much of the time, I was in charge of managing the relationship with Tokyo Broadcasting System

(TBS), one of Japan's major commercial networks, and Hiroshi Inoue of the TBS Programming Department treated me like a brother. When I got some of the people above me to approach him about buying the rights for the Unicef All-Star Game, his initial response was extremely positive: "If Hama [my nickname, short for Hamaguchi] is in charge, then count us in."

My bad English provokes a storm

Soon after my return to New York on June 2, the news came that TBS had officially purchased the broadcasting rights for the Unicef All-Star Game. I suspect Inoue had thought, "Can't very well turn down Hama," and had decided to help me out. So on top of Mita Copiers having provisionally decided to be a sponsor, the broadcasting rights had also been sold. I could have been forgiven for thinking everything was going swimmingly when it all got turned on its head. What happened was that one of my colleagues, Ryoko, tore a strip off me and called me a "damn fool," despite being a good decade my junior. Now that almost forty years have passed, I can look back on the episode fondly, but at the time I felt deeply

humiliated.

Ryoko, however, had good grounds for her outburst. At the time, we were using space in Dentsu's New York branch office. Every time the phone rang my blood ran cold. The reason was simple: I couldn't speak English. When I heard the phone ring, I'd pretend not to notice and stare out of the window as if lost in thought. When I did answer, it was often worse. My automatic response was to cut off the caller, and one day Ryoko caught me red-handed as I was slyly putting the receiver down on what could have been an important call.

Ryoko's first impression of me had been profoundly negative. Educated in the US, English was like a second mother tongue for her, hence her being Takahashi's interpreter-cum-personal assistant for this project, a very responsible job. Worried about there being too few people when the project team got up and running, she was the one who had asked Takahashi to boost the headcount. That was where I came in.

Ryoko had been looking forward to the team being bolstered by the arrival of someone dependable and fluent in English. Instead, what she was landed with was me, whose English was halting and clumsy. Less depressed than angry at the way things had turned out, Ryoko refused to talk to me

for some time. Given this background, it's hardly surprising that she yelled at me when she saw me sneakily hanging up the phone, despite the age-gap.

But Ryoko was also rock solid. Sure, she gave me a hard time for being an idiot and hanging up that call, but she later took pains to drum proper telephone etiquette into me. As well as basic advice like, "When you answer the phone, the first thing you should say is 'Hello,'" she also taught me simple phrases like, "Please wait a moment."

Genichi "Gen" Shimada, who worked for Dentsu Corporation of America (DCA), a Dentsu affiliate with an office down the hall, also helped me with my English. A designer with a degree from a fine arts university, his then job had nothing to do with the football business, but his English communication skills were known to be good, so he was drafted into the team to work as my assistant.

The core project team consisted of ten or so people. Takahashi was in charge, then there were representatives of the United States Soccer Federation (USSF), the North American Soccer League (NASL), and Unicef USA, plus Ryoko, Gen, and myself. Since communication was my Achilles' heel, Ryoko and Gen, who combined excellent English with great

personalities, were indispensable to me.

DCA helped enormously in selling sponsorship for the charity match. The firm also took care of the whole artwork production side of things. They worked hard to create all the print media for the game, from a poster prominently featuring the two captains, Beckenbauer and Pelé, to flyers and the official programme.

Direct negotiations with 33 celebrity players

1982, the year we took on this project in New York, was also the year of the FIFA World Cup in Spain. The tournament lasted about a month, starting on June 13 and finishing on July 11. Frantically shuttling between the US and Spain, Takahashi took advantage of the World Cup to clinch deals with players to appear in our Unicef All-Star Game.

At the start of things there were only two players whose appearance was guaranteed. These were Franz Beckenbauer, who had played for the New York Cosmos from 1977 to 1980, and Pelé who had played for the same team from 1975 to 1977. We had been able to set up contracts with them at an early stage because the USSF and the NASL were

working with us.

A date was set for the charity match: August 7. We promptly started selling advance tickets even though we only had two footballers confirmed to play. Even Takahashi who had scored a major success with the "Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan"—the official farewell match of the Brazilian superstar that he had organised some five years earlier—felt a twinge of panic.

But Takahashi, being the man he is, pulled it off. Ultimately, he managed to negotiate contracts with 33 celebrity footballers. The majority of them were stars whose performances at the Spain World Cup had electrified the worldwide audience. Without exception, their names still loom large in the annals of football history.

Takahashi's methods of negotiation were very instructive. He had two channels for securing the players—one for the European All-Star Team, and one for the Rest of the World Team where the South Americans were likely to dominate. He hired George Taylor, the Dutch president of sports marketing company Sports Mondial, to deal with the European players. For the South American players, he appointed Felix and Juan

Carlos Acosta, Mexican-American brothers, to be his point men for negotiating contracts.

The fact that we finally managed to assemble such a stellar roster of players may give the impression it was easy. That would be misleading. Getting the players on board was one of the toughest parts of the whole job. The biggest obstacle we faced was the World Cup being underway at the time in Spain. Naturally enough, the big stars of the game want to perform to the very best of their abilities on that greatest of stages which only comes around every four years, so they were unlikely to casually agree to some bloke who popped out of the woodwork with a proposal like, "Hey, could you take part in a charity match in about two months' time?" Understandably, footballers often take a short vacation after the World Cup to rest mentally and physically for the upcoming season and the last thing they want to do is cut short their break and drag themselves off to far-away New York. This was a further obstacle in our path.

I have to take my hat off to Takahashi's passion and powers of execution. Undeterred by all the difficulties, he persisted and negotiated successfully with the players. Working closely with George, the Acosta brothers, and his

assistant Ryoko, Takahashi not only managed to get the agreement of the players and their agents, he also secured approvals from the club teams they played for, not to mention all the relevant football associations and confederations. Takahashi emphasised that while we would pay airfares for two, accommodation costs and a modest appearance fee, the project was really all about donating a share of the profits to Unicef. He also stressed that New York was easily accessible both from Europe and South America. With this clever pitch, Takahashi managed to sign up the players.

Agents have so much power these days that Takahashi's method of direct negotiation with the players is unthinkable now. This is one example of what an innocent, Arcadian place the football world was back then. One other thing was different too: although the match was an officially FIFA-approved event, FIFA had zero involvement in organising it.

"Mister No Problem" brings the team together

While Takahashi was focusing on securing players for the event, we were equally busy back in New York. I had rented

an apartment on New York's Second Avenue but only used it for sleeping. I was in America—a great opportunity—but had no time for sightseeing or any fun of that kind. In the little free time I had, all I could manage was a short stroll or a quick drink in a bar on my way home.

My English wasn't getting any better, but as the project progressed, I began to acquire a kind of self-confidence. When I voiced my ideas and opinions using Ryoko or Gen to interpret for me, the team tended to agree with me. It may sound a little presumptuous, but I started feeling that the other people were making their decisions based around me, at least to some degree. Even Ryoko, who had initially shunned me because I could not speak English, started to accept me when she realised that my way of doing things was helping to strengthen the team and make it work better. I was touched when Gen recently said: "If you hadn't been the lynchpin of the group, there's no way I could have worked as hard as I did back then."

Ryoko, as interpreter, frequently had to go to Spain to help Takahashi negotiate contracts with the footballers. On such occasions, I would end up as the only Japanese in our team

meetings. I focused intently on what was being said, but barely caught anything, let alone subtle nuances. Although my colleagues were all well aware that English was not one of my strengths, they would still sometimes ask me what I thought. The phrase that invariably sprang to my lips was "No problem." While my not really knowing what was going on lay behind this response, it was also inspired by the trust I placed in my colleagues. They were reliable, ergo they would choose the right course, I reasoned. My "no problem" auto-response may seem irresponsible, but it was actually proof positive of the faith I had in the people around me. "No problem" created a virtuous circle of mutual trust between myself and the other team members, enabling us to work together even more closely.

I also have fond memories of the way I made over all the responsibility for pitch boards to Gen with a casual, "Will you be director for advertising boards?" He took care of the entire process from designing the sponsors' boards to ordering them, checking the colours and typefaces, and even delivering and installing them in the stadium.

Apparently, a few days before the match, Gen placed a collect call back to his parents in Japan. "I'll be sitting in

front of the Descente board," he told them, instructing them to keep their eyes peeled for him on the TV. Then, whenever the ball came his way during the match, he waved. He was that sort of happy-go-lucky guy. Though it could never happen now, back then no one made a fuss if someone on the organising team waved directly into the camera. Like football itself, the football business was a lot mellower and more relaxed.

A major problem surfaces just before the game

However that same Arcadian innocence did cause us one very serious problem. Takahashi had arranged for Warren Lockhart Productions from California to take charge of the production of the match broadcast. They were responsible for selling broadcasting rights outside Japan, and filming and transmitting the match. FIFA thought so highly of Julian Cohen, the man in charge of the broadcast transmission, that for many years they were to channel all their TV work through him at Warren Lockhart. Back in 1982, however, a serious problem confronted Julian soon before the game.

Julian had provisionally reserved an uplink to a satellite to transmit the signal of the match. He had not, however,

confirmed his booking. The rule for one-off broadcasts (it was different for regular shows like the news) was that you had to make the final confirmation up to two weeks before the actual broadcast; if you failed to do so, your provisional reservation would lapse automatically. Julian's frantic inquiries to Intelsat, the satellite operator, elicited a less-than-gracious response: "You didn't reconfirm," he was told, "so your booking's been cancelled." In fact, things were worse than that; the satellite channel we had provisionally reserved was now scheduled to be used by another broadcaster. Luckily for us, there were several Atlantic channels, so we sidestepped disaster in that quarter, but things were different with the Pacific, which then had only two satellite channels. We had lost our slot and there was nothing we could do about it. The simplest comparison is probably with losing your seat on an aeroplane if you forget to reconfirm: we had lost our transpacific "seat" and found ourselves unable to transmit footage of the All-Star Game to Asia, including Japan. We were in the tightest of tight spots.

We had already sold broadcasting rights to TV stations in over 20 countries in Asia. With less than two weeks to go to the

match, we had to figure out a way of extricating ourselves from the bind we were in. I can never forget how Takahashi, in his role as chief event producer, did not display even the slightest sign of anger when he realised the situation we were in. Without wasting any energy on blame, he stayed calm and expressed his complete trust in the project team. "I'll leave this issue for you to sort out," he told us. At that moment, I really felt he was a man of unusual calibre. I was also touched at the very supportive attitude shown by TBS, our Japanese broadcasting partner, who had every right to be furious. A crisis, which could easily have blown up into a major incident, had occurred, but the TBS New York office responded in the most sympathetic way possible by suggesting a trick for us to get our channel back.

Time was running out and that meant trying every means possible to get back the Pacific channel which we had originally provisionally reserved. The strategy proposed to us by TBS was to call up all our contacts to find out which broadcaster was going to be using "our" channel, and negotiate to buy the uplink back from them. We immediately launched into negotiations and somehow managed to get back the Pacific satellite channel just two days before the match. Incidentally,

I remember that our strategy of sending out letters to the various broadcasters requesting their cooperation in the names of Henry Kissinger (US Secretary of State from 1973 to 1977 and then honorary president of the US Soccer Federation) and Unicef, was particularly effective in engineering this reversal of fortune.

But we were not out of the woods yet. While it was now sure that the match would be broadcast to 56 countries worldwide, we had secured only a limited time slot on the Pacific channel. Not to put too fine a point on it, we'd be stuffed if the match went into extra time. We needed a clean result within 90 minutes. We'd managed to claw our way back, but if the match went over its allotted 90 minutes, we would not be able to broadcast the conclusion of this dream match to Japan and the rest of Asia.

Believe the big idea: "Football is the ultimate media"

August 7, 1982. When the European and Rest of the World All-Stars emerged onto the pitch, a roar rose from 80,000 throats, engulfing the packed Giants Stadium in Rutherford, New Jersey, and driving the excitement level to fever pitch. I

trembled and wept uncontrollably. It was me who proposed "Imagine" as the song for the teams to make their entrance to. Hwi-Sook Taylor, wife of George Taylor, was the one who negotiated with John Lennon's widow, Yoko Ono, for the right to use it. This rambling train of thought was succeeded by a kaleidoscope of memories from the months I had been up to my neck in work. "You did a good job. Well done." When both Takahashi and Ryoko came up to thank me, the tears welled up again, and the stadium became a big blur.

Maybe it was the afterglow of the Spain World Cup that made the Unicef All-Star Game such a success. Having so many players who had distinguished themselves at the recent World Cup taking part certainly worked to our advantage. We had several players from Italy, the new world champions, on the pitch and that must have given us a boost in New York, where so many people are of Italian stock.

That aside, here we were in the US, the so-called "Death Valley of football," with 80,000 spectators thrilling to every play on the pitch. A couple of days before the game, we had placed a "Sold Out" notice in the local daily paper, The New York Times. It was almost accidental. We had

originally bought the advertising space for a final sales push just before the match to top up spectator numbers, but when the appointed day came, the tickets had already sold out so we just announced our sell-out success instead. I suppose it was the sort of misstep one should be happy about making. On the day of the match, plenty of fans who had not been able to get tickets headed for the ground, creating an unusual atmosphere of excitement both inside and outside Giants Stadium. I've been in the football business for many years now, but I don't honestly think I have ever experienced a more charged atmosphere. That was when I finally felt I'd understood the meaning of Takahashi's favourite remark, "Football is the ultimate media." That was when I realised deep inside that I wanted to work in football, a business built on emotion that can move people in their tens of thousands.

Despite our worries about the match running on too long, it came to a safe conclusion within the 90-minute mark. Zico scored in the 29th minute, and Lakhdar Belloumi of Algeria in the 35th, meaning that the Rest of the World finished the first half 2-0 up. Of course, no sooner had I comforted myself with the thought that we wouldn't need any extra time at this rate, than Kevin Keegan scored for Europe

in the 58th minute. The counterattack was now well and truly underway and when Bruno Pezzey of Austria netted again in the 75th minute, the European All-Star Team had fought its way back to a draw—and there were just over ten minutes left! My blood ran cold at the thought that the match might run into extra time, but in the 88th minute Giancarlo Antognoni scored the third, decisive goal from the left corner of the penalty area. The European All-Stars had secured a win within the 90 minutes.

As well as giving the crowd an emotional rollercoaster ride, the event also raised a good sum for Unicef. Takahashi, Ryoko and I were invited to the UN headquarters and presented with a certificate from Unicef in recognition of our hard work. We had solved all sorts of problems, strengthened our relationship with FIFA, and made a success of the Unicef All-Star Game, both in business and football terms. It was good for us individually, but of great benefit to Dentsu too.

On August 7, 1982, the unique power of football took me prisoner. My most vivid memory from the evening of the event is not the darkness of the night, but the pale glow that suffused the summer sky. Was it the magic of football that

made the night shine like that?

Chapter2

The Pioneer of a New Business: Football

Dentsu starts out by reforming competitive high school soccer

The energy and passion of the crowd on August 7, 1982, had shown me the awesome power of football. I was hooked. I had also learned to share the conviction of Haruyuki Takahashi, producer of the Unicef All-Star Game, that football is the ultimate media.

Dentsu's connections with the football business predate the Unicef game and stretch back to the late 1960s. Traditionally, there are a couple of major, established football events around New Year in Japan: there's the New Year's Day final of the Emperor's Cup All Japan Soccer Championship Tournament (a knockout competition for all JFA member teams), and the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament, where the kids play with a whole-hearted dedication which is touching to see. It was Noriyuki Nabeshima, a Dentsu employee, who first discovered the endless business opportunities latent in the high school championship.

The first All Japan High School Soccer Tournament was held in 1918. The tournament serves as the passport to success in both the J.League and the national side.

I should probably point out that in Japan school sports teams enjoy greater prominence than in many other countries. There's a historical explanation for this: Japan adopted a western-style education system when it started modernising in the Meiji Era some 130 years ago, and sport, then considered an essential element of a well-rounded education, was officially incorporated into the school system. The most popular school sport is probably high school baseball. The National High School Baseball Championship, held at Koshien Stadium every August after heated prefectural preliminaries and televised by NHK, the public broadcaster, is a beloved national institution that garners a TV audience in the tens of millions. It was in this tournament that stars like Hideki Matsui, who played seven seasons for the New York Yankees, and Yu Darvish, current starting pitcher for the Nippon-Ham Fighters, first attracted notice.

Although the J.League clubs have their own youth development programmes, many stalwarts of the Japan national team like Shunsuke Nakamura (Yokohama

F-Marinos), Makoto Hasebe (Wolfsburg), Keisuke Honda (CSKA Moscow), Eiji Kawashima (Lierse), Atsuto Uchida (Gelsenkirchen Schalke), Hiroto Nagatomo (Inter Milan), Shinji Okazaki (Stuttgart) and Yasuhito Endoh (Gamba Osaka) turned professional after their quality was noticed in the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament. "This competition is my way of landing a job," a lad in the tournament who ended up signing with a J.League club once said to me. For high school boys who aspire to a career as a professional footballer, the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament has become their chance to showcase their talents and realise their dream.

The sponsor of the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament up until the forty-fourth tournament in 1966 was the Mainichi Shimbunsha, one of Japan's big three daily newspaper companies. But in 1966 (the year of the Beatles' only visit to Japan), the Mainichi newspaper decided to bring its four-plus decades of sponsorship to an end.

Nabeshima, who was then in Dentsu's Broadcasting Media Division, was looking into possible new business ventures based around Japan's regional broadcasters, who were thriving at the time. Considerable thought led Nabeshima to

sports, an attractive field because of the low barriers to entry, before he finally settled on the high school soccer tournament, an event he was confident would grow enormously in the years ahead.

Back then, baseball was at its zenith and very much ruled the sports roost. In football, Japan had made it into the quarterfinals at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and even went on to win a bronze medal at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. This success ignited a temporary burst of popularity, but it was not enough to change the fact that football was very much a minor sport in Japan. Nabeshima himself was dumbfounded when he went to a match played at Komazawa Stadium in Komazawa Olympic Park in Tokyo to see what kind of crowds football could pull in. Although the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries team, with the brilliant striker Kunishige Kamamoto and the incredibly popular forward Ryuichi Sugiyama, were on the pitch, there were less than 200 people watching from the stands. From a business point of view, this was rock bottom. The realities confronting Nabeshima were harsh.

Nabeshima refused to abandon his idea of using the regional TV stations to broadcast high school soccer. His intuition that

the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament was a surefire money-spinner remained unshaken. Nabeshima presented his plan to the directors of the Broadcasting Media Department. The reception was distinctly chilly, but Nabeshima was unfazed by their negativity. He got a much more positive response when he discussed the matter with his immediate superior, Jiro Kagoshima, and rapidly took steps to put his plan into action.

The first step for Nabeshima to build the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament into something bigger was to develop a close working relationship with the Japan Football Association (JFA) and the All Japan High School Athletic Federation. To make contact with them, Nabeshima got in touch with Tsuyoshi Miyamura, a high school friend from Kochi Prefecture who worked for the Tokyo office of the Kochi Broadcasting Company. As organiser of an amateur football team of the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters in Japan, Miyamura had a wealth of connections in the football world. Miyamura introduced Nabeshima to Jujiro Narita, also a native of Kochi, who was working as coach of Miyamura's football team.

A graduate of Tokyo Education University (now

the University of Tsukuba), Narita had frequently been called up for the national team. He had also played a big part in bringing over Dettmar Cramer from Germany to coach the Japanese team in preparation for the Tokyo Olympics so was by no means a minor figure in the Japanese football world. Nabeshima was lucky to get to know him at such an early stage. Narita advised Nabeshima that the first thing he would need to do to get involved in the running of the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament was to build a relationship with the High School Athletic Federation, and he set up a meeting for Nabeshima with the federation's directors.

Joint venture with Nippon Television Network set up in ten minutes flat

Nabeshima's opposite number in the negotiations was Toshio Matsuura, head of the football department in the All Japan High School Athletic Federation. Matsuura was an old friend of Narita's and a fellow-graduate of Tokyo Education University. Nabeshima, who was then in his early thirties, was worried that it might look disrespectful if a relative youngster like himself went along as Dentsu's sole representative,

so asked Kagoshima, his department chief, to accompany him to the meeting. Sure enough, when Matsuura first met Nabeshima in February 1971, he could not conceal his doubts: What on earth can a greenhorn like this do for me? Despite his background as a teacher with no experience of the advertising world, Matsuura was serious and sincere in his dealings with Dentsu. He provided an introduction to Ryosaku Kohase at the JFA. Kohase proved not only to be very interested in Dentsu's corporate culture and its "Ten Principles" (a list of precepts on how to go about your job that the fourth president, Hideo Yoshida, had distributed to the staff in 1951), but he was also unexpectedly keen on Nabeshima's idea of broadcasting high school soccer nationally.

Dentsu stated that it would support the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament on the following conditions:

- The tournament should be held in summer, not winter.
- The tournament should be broadcast exclusively by private TV channels. (At the time, the public broadcasting company NHK was broadcasting the final only.)
- Qualifiers for the tournament should be held nationwide.
- Corporate sponsors and broadcasters would have the right to call themselves official partners of the tournament.

- The final, previously played in the Kansai area (western Japan), should move to a venue in the Tokyo metropolitan region in the near future.

The JFA and the High School Athletic Federation readily consented to three of the five demands. Holding qualifiers nationwide, however, meant a drastic change to the existing tournament format where the top seeded schools got to take part. They responded to Dentsu's proposal to transfer the final from Kansai to the Tokyo region by agreeing to the move in three years' time.

They ultimately accepted our proposal for private broadcasters to get exclusive coverage, but insisted on coverage of 80% of the whole country. (NHK could, of course, broadcast nationwide.)

Nabeshima's first thought on hearing this last condition was to approach Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS), which had many affiliates around Japan. When he mentioned this plan, however, Matsuura made a startling revelation. "We actually already have a three-year contract with Nippon Television Network (NTV) starting from 1971," he said. NTV was a group company of the Yomiuri Shimbunsha, one of

Japan's big three daily newspaper companies. The Yomiuri had launched the Yomiuri Soccer Club (now Tokyo Verdy) in 1969. Convinced that establishing businesses to foster new talent and boost football's popularity would help their new club develop, the Yomiuri and NTV, just like Dentsu, had decided to target high school soccer. NTV had in fact sponsored a high school soccer tournament in the summer of 1970, to which the teams of the eleven strongest schools in Japan had been invited.

The news about the contract with NTV threw Nabeshima into a panic. It's hard to imagine now, but back then NTV had a paltry 14 affiliated stations around the country. It had no affiliates in Niigata and Aichi Prefectures, both important markets, nor in Shizuoka, almost the only region in Japan where football's popularity was already well established. In fact, NTV's first attempt to cover the 49th All Japan High School Soccer Tournament, which took place in 1971, ended in a compromise with simultaneous transmission on the 14 affiliates of NTV and on national broadcaster NHK. If the tournament format were changed so that qualifying games were held throughout Japan, NTV would be unable to fulfil the condition

of providing coverage of 80% of Japan, so prospects for a new business model based on the use of regional broadcasters were hardly bright. The Dentsu people were pulling their hair out trying to figure out how to achieve the 80% coverage, when Matsuura stepped in. "Our Federation is not wedded to the contract with NTV," he said. "We're happy for Dentsu to select the right broadcasters to achieve the desired 80% nationwide coverage." Nabeshima's anxieties were swept away.

Thoughts of TBS again went through Nabeshima's mind, but NTV seemed to be very go-ahead and committed to high school soccer as a new form of programming. Impressed with their attitude, Nabeshima decided to go with them. As he was in charge of regional broadcasters outside of Tokyo, he had no direct links with the Tokyo-based NTV. After some careful thought, he approached a friend at Aomori Broadcasting Corporation, an NTV affiliate, who then introduced him to Toshiaki Kamiko, a member of NTV's board. Nabeshima entered into direct talks with him and proposed that the two companies work together to build up winter high school soccer into something exciting. Kamiko took the idea straight to the president of the firm, Yosoji Kobayashi, who took less than ten minutes to agree to collaborate on the project. "I don't care if

we show losses at the beginning. Let's work together for long-term success," was his benign response.

The costs of the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament were to be covered by a combination of funds provided by the JFA and the All Japan High School Athletic Federation, and subsidies from the Ministry of Education. When Nabeshima heard where the funding would be coming from, he couldn't suppress a smile: the business would be profitable no matter what. Nabeshima's confidence that high school soccer was destined to succeed just kept rising.

Difficulties sorted. 80% coverage achieved in year one

The final of the tournament was traditionally played in Kansai, but this meant low spectator numbers and a general lack of buzz. Potential corporate sponsors were sure to find that a big turn-off. The outlook was not encouraging.

With Dentsu's top management against the idea, the company as a whole was not getting behind the project. There were still many areas of concern, but encouraged by the backing of his immediate boss Kagoshima, Nabeshima had frank discussions with NTV about how to build up high school

soccer and give a boost to both the sport and the regions. The plan he presented to NTV had just two components: NTV should be in charge of all aspects of production, while Dentsu would be responsible for sponsorship sales and the selection of regional broadcasters. Since everything looked kosher, NTV agreed to the idea and the arrangement was adopted for the 50th tournament in 1972.

Thanks to Dentsu's network of contacts, a total of 38 regional broadcasters—a number far in excess of NTV's 14 affiliates—signed up to broadcast the 1972 tournament. In the very first year Nabeshima had successfully met the challenge of achieving 80% TV coverage nationwide to replace NHK, the public broadcaster, which had branches throughout the country.

The public response to Dentsu and NTV's collaboration on broadcasting the 1972 tournament on a nearly nationwide basis far surpassed expectations. This extract from an article by NTV announcer Katsuhiro Masukata in the March 1972 issue of Soccer Magazine gives an idea of just how much appeal high school soccer turned out to have for the general public.

The staff and match commentators from the 38 broadcasters arrived in Osaka before the teams from the various regional blocs. As the competition progressed from shock result to shock result, they were furious, astounded, moved. All over the country, the broadcasters' offices were swamped with phone calls. In Yamanashi Prefecture, which had sent the Nirasaki High School team to the tournament, record-breaking viewing figures of nearly 100% were recorded. Such was the enthusiasm in the home district of Nyugawa Technical High School (the team everyone was talking about this time), that the streets were deserted whenever a game was on TV. And in the Kanto area, home to Narashino High, the viewing figures were twice as high as last year.

As Masukata points out in this passage, our achievement of 80% broadcasting coverage established nationwide recognition for high school soccer. That recognition would continue to rise steadily thereafter, supported by the grassroots efforts of Nobuyuki Hirano who assisted Nabeshima. Hirano joined Dentsu in 1972, the same years as me, and spent his first ten years in the firm working on building a foundation for high school soccer. Wanting to develop the tournament from the

regions in, he travelled around Japan together with a representative of NTV. Visiting all the individual regions—Tohoku, Kanto, Tokai and so on—he educated the broadcasters in one region about what sort of advertising their counterparts in others were getting. This helped foster a sense among the regional broadcasters that they were part of an interlinked community working with Dentsu to revive the new All Japan High School Soccer Tournament and all sharing their unique strategies for getting it in front of the biggest audience possible. The work of local broadcasters helped boost the recognition of the tournament and the popularity of high school soccer itself.

The 1972 tournament reinforced Nabeshima's conviction that high school soccer could give a psychological boost to the regions. Mibugawa Technical High School from Ehime Prefecture, an area where football was far from popular, managed to finish as runners-up. In retrospect, Nabeshima was clearly right. Perhaps inspired by the heroic showing of Mibugawa, schools like Kagoshima Jitsugyo High School (Kagoshima Prefecture) and Kunimi High School (Nagasaki Prefecture) later made dramatic progress in the competition, and it was generally agreed that high school soccer had given

a shot in the arm to Japan's provincial cities.

The sponsors of the 1972 tournament were Fuji Xerox, the copier manufacturer, and Bridgestone, the tyre company. According to Nabeshima, his colleagues were a great help in securing these first sponsors. Wakao Fujioka was in charge of the Fuji Xerox account. With a philosophy that "advertising was a way of giving something back to society," Fujioka liked Nabeshima's enthusiasm and personally won over Yotaro Kobayashi, the company president, to bring Fuji Xerox on board. Many of the regional broadcasters also worked hard on sponsorship sales with Dentsu. We approached a number of firms, and thanks to the support of Miyagi Television, Bridgestone finally signed on as a sponsor.

A furious outburst: "Who do you think you are?"

Around this time Nabeshima had a chance encounter that sealed Dentsu's link to football. He had arranged to meet Matsuura one evening at a restaurant in Hongo in Tokyo. Ken Naganuma and Shun-ichiro Okano, both on the Executive Committee of the JFA, happened to be there too. Both men would go on to chair the JFA, so meeting them was enormously

significant for Nabeshima as an individual, and for Dentsu as a company.

Nabeshima and Matsuura were debating one of the rules of the high school tournament and the JFA men joined in. When a match ended in a draw at the ninety-minute mark, the winner was decided by drawing lots. Nabeshima and Matsuura proposed either changing the rule or abolishing it entirely, instead deciding the result with a penalty shoot-out. In front of the JFA top brass, Nabeshima was adamant: "Deciding the result by drawing lots is meaningless," he insisted. "Introducing penalty shoot-outs is the best way to make the tournament more exciting." The four men had a no-holds-barred discussion, and it was Matsuura who finally carried the day. "I think it's a good idea to adopt penalty shoot-outs," he argued. "But in the final, the psychological shock for any player who misses his penalty will be immense. So I propose that in the final—and only in the final—we don't introduce penalties, but instead adopt a format where both schools are declared winners." Penalty shoot-outs, excluding the final, were introduced in the 52nd tournament (1974) and are in use to this day.

According to Dentsu's original contract with the All Japan High School Athletic Federation and the Japan Football Association, the final was supposed to move from Kansai to the Tokyo metropolitan area in 1975. Despite this agreement, the 1975 final between Tokyo's Teikyo High and Shizuoka's Shimizu Higashi High was held in Kansai as per usual. Nabeshima believed it was important to move the final to Tokyo or its environs as soon as possible to help develop the tournament. High school soccer was more popular in Kanto (east Japan), and when the Committee Chiefs of the All Japan High School Athletic Federation actually took a vote on the move, those in favour were in the majority.

Faced with ferocious opposition from the Osaka Football Association and the other Kansai football associations, the move showed little sign of taking place. "It's been held in Kansai since the Taisho Period [1912-1926]," objected some, while others became downright abusive, "You're just a damn advertising company throwing your weight around." Nabeshima began to think that if the move wasn't going to happen, Dentsu should think about getting out. Even Matsuura suggested that he secede from the All Japan High School Athletic Federation and establish an alternative organisation

through which to manage the tournament. These sorts of schemes show how confident they both were that holding the final in the Tokyo region would generate higher revenues and boost the competition's visibility.

The move to Tokyo finally happened in 1977, the year of the fifty-fifth tournament. That it finally happened, thinks Nabeshima, was down to the support of NTV and the All Japan High School Athletic Federation (particularly Matsuura), both organisations with a real passion for the game of football. But despite the move, Nabeshima was still concerned about not attracting sufficiently large crowds. He decided to create a link with the final of the Emperor's Cup All Japan Soccer Tournament, always held on New Year's Day at the National Stadium in the heart of Tokyo. He deliberately arranged for the opening ceremony, semifinal and final of the high school tournament to be held at the same venue, which was already an institution in the Japanese football world. Luck was further on his side when it turned out that the two teams in the final that year—Urawa Minami High from Saitama and Shizuoka Gakuen High from Shizuoka—were both from the greater Tokyo area. Nabeshima was unable to suppress his excitement as he went to inspect the ground on match day.

As he left the nearest train station and headed for the venue, he encountered hundreds of disconsolate-looking people: they were on their way back after failing to get their hands on tickets at the stadium. The final was a sell-out. At that instant, Nabeshima felt a great load lifted from his shoulders.

"Football is the ultimate media." Putting theory into practice.

With the move to the Tokyo area, the 1977 finals of the fifty-fifth All Japan High School Soccer Tournament managed to pull in 230,000 spectators over an eight-day period. The final itself, between Urawa Minami and Shizuoka Gakuen, filled the National Stadium to capacity with 55,000 spectators. Back in 1971, when NTV and Dentsu had first taken on the project, the gate for the entire tournament was only around 8,000. The hard work of the High School Athletic Federation, NTV and Dentsu had resulted in total spectator numbers shooting up by a multiple of almost thirty in just five short years. Nabeshima's conviction that moving the finals to Tokyo was the key to success was right on the money.

But Nabeshima had got one thing wrong. When he

started negotiating with the JFA and the High School Athletic Federation, he insisted that he wanted the tournament to be held straight after the All Japan High School Baseball Tournament, which was always held in Osaka's Koshien Stadium in the summer. He had two reasons for this. Firstly, in winter there was a risk of snow disrupting the smooth running of the tournament. Secondly, there was a very real concern that, with the tournament in January, many of the final-year students might drop out of their teams to focus on their university entrance exams, something that would definitely drag down the level of excitement. But the summer calendar was crowded. Since the Inter-High School Athletic Meet football competition and the National Athletic Meet were already taking place in or around August and October, respectively, Nabeshima's proposal to shift the event to summer was put on the backburner as "an item for consideration," and a decision was taken to continue holding the tournament in the winter for a while yet.

It took some time for Nabeshima to abandon his plans for a summer event. Eventually it became clear that any worries he might have had about a winter tournament struggling to get noticed were unfounded. As we have seen, just a few years after Dentsu first got involved, the final drew a crowd

of 55,000. Dentsu managed to recoup our original investment in either 1977 or 1978, says Nabeshima, so the venture was far from a failure. Recently, the two of us were reminiscing about those days. With a thoroughly benign expression on his face, Nabeshima said, “When you come to think about it, there’s nothing wrong with holding the tournament in winter. Lots of students already know where they’re going after graduation by the summer so they’ll continue playing for their team till the end of the school year. And the success and excitement of the tournament doesn’t have to rely on the participation of prep schools anyway; there’s plenty of talent in high schools all over Japan.”

Nabeshima always had an unwavering belief that the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament would succeed, both as a business and as an event, despite the initial opposition of top executives at Dentsu. These days the tournament has multiple corporate sponsors and is promoted by 43 regional broadcasters. It is firmly established as one of the wintertime institutions of Japanese football. Spectator numbers for the final confirm that it remains a consistent big draw—48,884 for 2008; 40,102 for 2009; 43,635 for 2010; and 39,767 for

2011. Nabeshima worked hard to sow the seeds. That they flowered proves the truth of Takahashi's saying, "Football is the ultimate media."

The exclusive broadcasting contracts of the local broadcasters get local communities involved and helps boost the popularity of high school soccer. Developing close relationships with the JFA and the All Japan High School Athletic Federation, getting a roster of corporate sponsors, and working with a large number of broadcasters enabled Dentsu not only to establish a viable business, but also to offer a public stage to high school talent. Nabeshima, who stuck to his guns in the teeth of initial hostility, was extraordinarily insightful. He deserves to be hailed as one of the true pioneers of the football business in Japan.

Chapter3

The Dawning of the Japanese Football Business

"King" Pelé's retirement game rescues the JFA from financial troubles

Dentsu managed to deepen its connections with the JFA through organising the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament. In 1974, the JFA was incorporated as a foundation and adopted its current name, and it was in 1977 that Dentsu won the JFA's complete trust by executive producing an event that proved a massive success: the Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan.

During a 1976 trip to Japan with the New York Cosmos, his then team, Pelé informed Yoshio Aoyama, his promoter and agent here, that he was planning to retire the next year. The revelation prompted the thought in Aoyama that a retirement match staged in Japan could be something of a show business coup. Having no background in organising football matches himself, the first thing Aoyama did was get in touch with the JFA. But since the JFA had no experience of planning or organising such an event either, discussions fizzled out at a very early stage. This was when Aoyama decided

to sound out Takayoshi Saigo, a friend of his who headed Dentsu's Business Development Division. What did Saigo think about organising an official retirement match for Pelé in Japan?

The first Dentsu person to really cotton on to the project's potential was Haruyuki Takahashi. Takahashi was then in his early thirties, full of energy and working for Saigo. Although Takahashi went on to stage the FIFA World All-Star Game for the Benefit of Unicef with spectacular results in 1982, at this point in his career he had no football expertise. Takahashi was familiar with the conventional wisdom of the time that football would never be a moneymaker, and when he started out, the department he was in had no direct involvement with the sport.

Of course Takahashi knew of the world-famous football hero Pelé. Celebrity had made him a household name well beyond the football world. Convinced that there would be plenty of fans eager to see Pelé's last-ever stadium appearance, the young Takahashi volunteered to executive produce the retirement match.

Takahashi decided to set up a match between Pelé's New York Cosmos and the Japan national squad. He then

turned his attention to dealing with something then accepted as gospel truth in Japan, namely that "you can never get a decent crowd for football." Fine, he thought, if people weren't prepared to come to see football as a sport, then he'd put the emphasis not on football, but on Pelé the virtuoso and phenomenon. Stressing the fact that this would be Pelé's last-ever appearance would drive the level of public interest higher still. These insights inspired Takahashi not to go with a simple descriptor like "New York Cosmos vs. the Japan National Team," but to maximise the game's appeal with a strategic name: the "Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan." ("Sayonara" is the Japanese for "goodbye.")

Takahashi's approach to PR was equally revolutionary. To keep the costs of advertising the event to a minimum, he struck a sponsorship deal with the beverage company, Suntory. Suntory launched a campaign which involved collecting and sending in a certain number of bottle tops—renamed "king's crowns" in honour of Pelé—from a recently launched soft drink called Suntory Pop for the chance to win tickets to the Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan. Naturally, the TV commercials for the new beverage made reference to the upcoming Pelé Sayonara Game too. The PR strategy was all about exploiting

the synergy effect. Suntory could look forward to a spike in sales of their soft drink as people eagerly collected bottle tops, while Dentsu could be confident of increased spectator turnout.

As a member of Dentsu's Broadcasting Media Department at the time, I made a small contribution as well by helping to sell the broadcasting rights for the event to Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS).

On September 14, 1977, legions of enthusiastic football fans headed for the National Stadium in Tokyo to see "King" Pelé for the last time. The official JFA records put the attendance at around 65,000, but Takahashi maintains the real figure was probably closer to the 72,000 mark. Since in those days a crowd of 2,000 was considered cause for celebration at the Japan Soccer League (JSL, the precursor of the J.League), the turnout for the Pelé game was truly astounding. The presence of the "Emperor" Franz Beckenbauer—another superstar then in the Cosmos line-up—plus this being the last appearance for the national team of Kunishige Kamamoto, one of the most brilliant names in Japanese football history, were other factors that helped pull in the punters.

Takahashi's achievement was not limited to generating amazing attendance figures. He also generated substantial revenues by placing advertising boards for the event's corporate sponsors in the stadium. Since the National Stadium belongs to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, it falls under the parks' law. A clause in this law states that the display of any kind of advertising inside the National Stadium is forbidden. Takahashi, however, got the ministry to make an exception for the Pelé game. Setting up a meeting with the director of physical exercise-related matters at the ministry, Takahashi got him to change his mind by emphasising the fact that generating income from advertising boards was standard procedure worldwide, and also by stressing that a part of that income would go for the upkeep of the National Stadium.

On top of his triumphs with ticket sales and advertising, Takahashi also achieved impressive sales of commemorative merchandise. Goods ranging from the match programme to knick-knacks like badges and key rings featuring Pelé in silhouette mostly sold out. Merchandise sales alone reached well over $300,000 in today's terms. Takahashi's genius lay in generating handsome profits from ticket sales, sponsorship and merchandising before this kind of synergistic marketing

had established itself as the core framework of the football business. It's fair to say that the entire Japanese football business has its origin in this one match.

The New York Cosmos defeated the Japan National Team 3-1 and solemn retirement ceremonies were held for Pelé and for Japan international Kunishige Kamamoto. According to Takahashi, once the proceedings were safely over, Ken Naganuma, General Secretary of the JFA, was told that his association stood to earn north of 100 million yen (equivalent to about $1.2 million today) from the proceeds of the match. "Well now I can sleep at night," he declared, heaving a great sigh of relief. No wonder he felt that way. The JFA was then in the midst of a financial crisis, in part because of the trouble they were having in attracting spectators to their league games. As a foundation, the JFA was legally obliged under law to maintain a certain level of capital, but was finding it so hard to raise money that it couldn't pay for the national team's foreign travel or its own staff salaries. Through the Pelé event they had earned a sum equivalent to their capital in a single day, so Naganuma's relief is easy to understand. The JFA finally moved into the black in 1977, the year of the Takahashi-organised Pelé retirement match. Dentsu's role in

this shift was substantial.

A new challenge: strengthening the Japan national team

"It must have been 1976 or 1977, around the time of the Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan," reflects Noriyuki Nabeshima, the man who did so much to popularise high school football in Japan. "One night, there I was having a drink at a Ginza bar, when who shows up but Shun-ichiro Okano from the JFA. We were both working really hard on the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament so we trusted one another implicitly. Okano, who could see that the high school tournament had started developing its own momentum, came straight to the point. 'High school football is ticking over nicely. Can you start building some excitement around the national squad now?'"

Nabeshima, who was a little tipsy, sobered up when he heard this unexpected request. "What do you think we could do to increase the visibility of the national side?" he asked Okano. "Play regular matches against other countries' national teams and clubs," Okano shot back, before challenging Nabeshima to come up with some suggestions. Nabeshima

agreed that having the national squad play against foreign teams would definitely drive up interest. The Olympic Games in Tokyo (1964) and Mexico (1968) had already proved that point.

Increase interest in the Japan team by having them play against foreign teams. The Merdeka Tournament in Malaysia looked like a good model. First held in 1957, the year Malaysia gained its independence from Great Britain, it was an annual tournament in which national teams from around Asia took part on an invitation basis. Japan participated almost every year, one major reason being the opportunity the tournament afforded them to play other countries, get a sense of the rest of the world's abilities and raise their game accordingly. The JFA executives, especially Naganuma, Okano and Murata, were extremely grateful for the chance to take part and felt they owed the Malaysian football family a lot for the development of Japanese football in the 1950s and 1960s.

Can't we organise a tournament modelled on the Merdeka? This was the idea that culminated in the birth of the Japan Cup, an international friendly tournament produced by Dentsu, in 1978. The teams that took part in the first Japan

Cup were the Japan National Team, the Japan Selection Team, the Thai National Team, the South Korean National Team, plus club teams Coventry City from England, West Germany's F.C. Köln and Borussia Mönchengladbach, and Palmeiras from Brazil. It was a dream line-up for Japanese fans who had developed a taste for global football from watching "Mitsubishi Diamond Soccer," a show launched by TV Tokyo in 1968, but the response from the media, particularly television, was disappointing. "We could show it, but we wouldn't get any viewers," they all said as they turned us down. In the end, the only broadcasters to televise the Japan Cup were the two already collaborating with us on high school soccer, NTV and TV Tokyo. Even for them, Dentsu had to promise a risk-free deal, guaranteeing that they would sell all the sponsorship. The man in charge of the Japan Cup at NTV was Nobuhisa Sakata, the producer of their All Japan High School Soccer Tournament programming, who was extraordinarily passionate about promoting football in Japan. The relationship between Dentsu, NTV and Sakata continued on to the Toyota Cup and the Club World Cup.

In 1979 Dentsu managed to bring over another group of famous overseas clubs: Tottenham Hotspur from England,

Fiorentina from Italy, and San Lorenzo from Argentina. We were confident we had created the ideal arena for the Japan national side to increase its visibility and improve its performance. From the beginning, however, Nabeshima heard a depressing rumour. Some of the Japanese players were reported to have complained, "We don't want to get injured in a friendly like this. What if we end up unable to play in regular league games?" This remark, so belittling of the Japan Cup, upset Nabeshima terribly. Understandably so. The man had set up the event to benefit the Japan squad and Japanese soccer in general, and here were members of the national side, whose job it was to inspire the next generation of players, completely failing to understand the tournament's value.

Unlike the other tournaments, Dentsu actually lost money on the Japan Cup in its early days. Coming on top of a wave of red ink, the player's disparaging comment added insult to injury. With Dentsu having to make good any losses out of its own pocket, Nabeshima was finding it very difficult to come up with persuasive reasons for the tournament not to be cancelled. It was at this juncture that Takahashi proposed to Nabeshima that they eliminate any losses by finding a lead sponsor to provide the running capital for the

tournament. They lost no time in taking the idea to the JFA, the host Football Association. In those days, however, the spirit of amateurism was still deeply ingrained, and prefixing a company name to the "Japan Cup," a title which could be seen as symbolic of the nation, was considered grossly improper. Their proposal was rejected out of hand by the JFA Executive Committee.

The people who reached out a helping hand to Nabeshima and Takahashi in their moment of need were Ken Naganuma and Shun-ichiro Okano of the JFA. In its struggle to keep the Japan Cup going, Dentsu had made an independent approach to the Kirin Brewery Company, one of Japan's biggest brewers, about backing the tournament. When Dentsu told Naganuma, he took an active and positive line in the negotiations, secretly visiting Kirin together with Okano to solicit their support for the Japan Cup. Kirin were enthusiastic, but briefly unnerved the JFA pair by revealing that they had a different advertising company in mind.

Naganuma and Okano were in a bind. The JFA felt that it owed a major debt of gratitude to Dentsu. Dentsu had contributed to the growth of Japanese football through

Nabeshima's work on the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament. Similarly, Takahashi's coup with the Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan had put the JFA's finances back on a sound footing. Naganuma and Okano were acutely aware of these two things and felt that they had to reciprocate somehow. Naganuma later revealed that the conversation went something like this. "Kirin said, 'Can't we get another advertising company to do it?' But there was no way I was going to say, 'Oh, that's fine, go ahead'. So I said, 'Can't you use Dentsu?' and stuck to my guns."

Thanks to Naganuma and Okano mediating with Kirin and then winning over the JFA Executive Committee, Kirin Brewery Company became lead sponsor of the Japan Cup in 1980. Takahashi took over the job of running the tournament from Nabeshima. The tournament name was changed to the Japan Cup Kirin World Soccer in 1980, then to the Kirin Cup in 1985. The original format was mixed, featuring both national teams and professional clubs, but from 1992 (the year prior to the launch of the J.League) it switched to national teams only and was promoted to official FIFA International A match status. My colleague, Nobuyuki Hirano, was appointed tournament producer in the same year. Hirano and I had both

joined Dentsu in 1972, and his dedication and contribution to the Kirin Cup pleased me immensely.

In the 1992 tournament, the first with only national teams, Japan came last, losing 1-0 to both Argentina and Wales. In 1994, Japan also came off worse against France and Australia. But with every passing year, Japan is producing better results. It won three back-to-back tournaments from 1995 to 1997, and has done it again in recent years, winning another three in a row from 2007 to 2009. The tournament has a high profile and is seen as important by the fan community. Few people would deny the role the Kirin Cup has played in fostering the growth of the Japan national team. Together with the JFA and Kirin Brewery, Dentsu fulfilled the mission Okano gave us of "building excitement around the national squad." The key role of Kirin Brewery cannot be exaggerated in any review of the progress of the national side. The Kirin Cup, which they supported as cup sponsor since 1980, provided Japan with a crucial arena for the national team to raise their game. It was the opportunity it gave to go head to head with international powerhouse clubs and leading national sides that lay behind Japan pulling off triumphs like its first victories in the Dynasty Cup and the AFC Asian Cup, both in 1992, and

its first appearance in the World Cup finals in 1998. Kirin Brewery has been official sponsor of the Japan national team since 1995 and is providing a wide range of support. The company has made a massive contribution to the Japanese football world.

Thank you! FIFA World Youth is a Big Success

Let's take another trip back in time to 1979, a year that was important in Japanese football for a couple of reasons. First, a world tournament was held in this country for the first time ever. Better yet, explorations also began of the possibility of hosting a regular competition here to decide the world's top club team.

While the afterglow of the 1978 Argentina World Cup still lingered, Japan hosted the 2nd FIFA World Youth Championship (now the FIFA U-20 World Cup) in 1979. Dentsu was appointed to manage the overall operation of this FIFA competition. After the first World Youth was held in Tunisia in 1977, the JFA had put its hat in the ring to host the second one. As the tournament's official name, the FIFA Coca-Cola World Youth Championship, makes clear,

Coca-Cola was attached as the main event sponsor. Dentsu got to produce this tournament because of the multi-faceted marketing approach it had brought to the Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan. The people from Coca-Cola Japan who had gone to Pelé's retirement match had formed the very highest opinion of Takahashi's ability to executive produce sports events. This was why they asked Dentsu, or rather Takahashi, to run the World Youth Championship in Japan.

For FIFA and Coca-Cola, the second tournament in Japan was very much a sink-or-swim affair. To hold the World Youth Championship had been one of the campaign promises made by João Havelange before his election to FIFA president in 1974. But the first championship in Tunisia in 1977 had been far from successful either as a spectacle or in business terms. If the second competition generated similarly pitiful results, the future of the tournament would be in doubt. Havelange had established the World Youth to bolster the younger age group, extend football's reach and enhance the sport's global popularity. Now his reputation was on the line. Havelange pulled out all the stops, dispatching one of his most energetic and enterprising subordinates, Joseph Sepp Blatter, to Japan as tournament director.

Under the stewardship of Takahashi, the man who had made such a smash of the Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan, the championship was a runaway success. An issue of Soccer Magazine from that year (No. 224, 1979) featured an extensive report on the tournament under the breathless title "Youth Shock Wave Rattles Soccer Archipelago Japan." "We look at the impact this tournament—which even got people with zero interest in the sport excited—had on Japanese football," runs the lead-in, and Japan was certainly gripped by football fever. Key to the general frenzy was Diego Maradona of Argentina. The masterly displays of skill of the 18-year-old boy wonder captivated Japan, drew thousands of spectators to the stadiums, and culminated in victory for Argentina. Maradona himself dominated the competition scoring a six-goal tally, and was named MVP.

Things were rather different for the Japan U-20 team. It lost its first match against Spain 1-0, and when its next two games against Algeria and Mexico both ended in draws, Japan was knocked out.

With Japan playing at home, Ikuo Matsumoto, the head coach, had declared that his team were definitely going

to get through to the final round of the tournament, and had devoted an entire seventeen months to strengthening his team. He organised regular training camps in Japan and abroad which were reportedly so strict that several players tried to run away. But this painfully intensive training did the team little good. Knocked out in the group stage, they only managed to eke out a single goal in three matches, scored by Takashi Mizunuma in the final match against Mexico. After the tournament, captain Kazuo Ozaki and his team, which included Koichi Hashiratani, Masaaki Yanagishita, Yahiro Kazama, Yasuhito Suzuki, and Satoshi Miyauchi, not only felt burnt out—"All those training camps and all we could manage was one measly goal!" they lamented—they also had a painful sense of the yawning gap separating them from the rest of the world.

If nothing else, the 1979 World Youth Championship provided the perfect opportunity for Japanese players and Japanese fans to get exposure to the global standard of football. Back then no one paid much attention to the Japan Soccer League, the centrepiece of Japanese football, so the contribution Dentsu and Takahashi made in familiarising Japan with the sport at international level was significant.

Looking back now, it's clear that Takahashi working closely with Sepp Blatter, current FIFA president, brought Dentsu and FIFA closer together, something that was to be of pivotal importance for us. (Interestingly, the idea of an Official Draw, now a regular part of the razzmatazz of the World Cup and the Champions League, was something that Blatter and Takahashi first devised to get increased coverage for the World Youth tournament in Japan.)

The final between Argentina and the Soviet Union drew a crowd of over 50,000 to Tokyo's National Stadium. After the match, FIFA president Havelange and tournament director Blatter could not thank Takahashi enough for building up so much buzz and making the tournament such a smash. "Seeing as I've done such a good job, why don't you invite me over to the FIFA headquarters in Zurich?" responded Takahashi, half in jest. Havelange and Blatter said they'd be more than happy to oblige. No one at the time had any reason to expect anything special would come of this brief, casual exchange; but in the long run it led to a dramatic expansion in the scope of Dentsu's football business.

The championship to decide the world's No. 1 club

comes to Japan

1979 was also when explorations began into the possibility of Japan hosting a competition to decide the world champion football club. Nabeshima was one of the organisers of a get-together on the upper floor of a modest restaurant in Tsukiji, near Tokyo's central fish market, to sound out a range of influential media people on the future of the Japan Cup. Representatives from NTV, the Yomiuri Shimbun, Soccer Magazine's editing staff and Dentsu's Broadcasting Media Department were present.

Nabeshima had been disappointed to find out that some members of the Japan squad were not taking the Japan Cup seriously, but in fact he too felt it had not got off to a completely satisfying start. Perhaps because it was a friendly tournament, it had neither the wholehearted commitment of high school football nor the impact of the European games on TV Tokyo's "Mitsubishi Diamond Soccer." With the tournament losing money, Nabeshima was having serious doubts about whether it was worthwhile keeping it going and wanted to hear what other people had to say on the matter.

"The future of the tournament is not that bright,"

was the majority opinion. There were some positive comments—"Famous teams are willing to take part"; "The tournament has all the good qualities you associate with friendlies"—but the overall consensus was gloomy. The atmosphere in the room was thus heavy and awkward when, quite out of the blue, Ushiki of the Yomiuri Shimbun proposed something completely different. "What would you all think about our hosting the Intercontinental Cup, the competition to decide the club champion of the world, here in Japan?" Nabeshima's interest was piqued. His contacts at NTV were always asking him to provide football programming of international value.

When Nabeshima asked for some background, he was informed that the Intercontinental Cup was a match-up contested by the winner of the Champion Clubs' Cup in Europe (currently the UEFA Champions League) and the winner of the Copa Libertadores in South America; whoever won it was designated "Champion of the World." It was held on a home-and-away basis in Europe and South America, but emotions ran so high that fighting sometimes broke out between the rival supporters, particularly during the South American leg. In 1971, 1973, 1974 and 1977, the European champions had come up with some pretext for not taking part

and the European runners-up had gone in their stead. In 1975 and 1978 the event had been cancelled altogether. Clearly the Intercontinental Cup was in a precarious state. When the representative of Dentsu's Broadcasting Media Department chimed in with, "Now you mention it, Jack was saying exactly the same thing to me, that we should try bringing the Intercontinental Cup to Japan," Nabeshima's level of interest rose another several notches.

The Jack in question was a certain Jack Sakazaki. Sakazaki had worked for IMG and then Tele Planning before teaming up with West Nally, a British sports marketing firm, and setting up West Nally Japan. West Nally had won the contract to act as exclusive sales agent for the advertising boards at the 1978 Argentina World Cup, an important historic step in FIFA's marketing business. West Nally thus had experience of working with FIFA, and guessing that the firm would, through FIFA, have a reasonably close relationship with the confederations of Europe (UEFA) and South America (CONMEBOL) who are the co-organisers of the Intercontinental Cup, Nabeshima quickly approached it through Jack Sakazaki. The idea of the Intercontinental Cup being held in Japan was starting to make

the move from pipe dream to reality.

We all know how the story ends. With its name changed from the Intercontinental Cup to the Toyota European/South American Cup (Toyota Cup for short), the event came to the neutral venue of Japan in February 1981. Top international teams—Barcelona and Real Madrid from Spain, Liverpool and Manchester United from England, Juventus and AC Milan from Italy, São Paulo and Grêmio from Brazil, Boca Juniors and River Plate from Argentina—travelled to Japan every year to battle for the title of world champion, mesmerising Japanese football fans in the process. The Toyota Cup continued until 2004 when it expanded into the FIFA Club World Cup, in which the champions from six continents confront one another.

A cursory review like this may give the impression that bringing the Toyota Cup to Japan was not much of a struggle, but that was not the case at all. NTV and Dentsu had got the ball rolling, but staging a match-up between the European and South American champions was never going to be cheap, so we needed to find a sponsor with deep pockets. Since the event was broadcast worldwide, the search was limited to companies whose business was on a global scale. Eventually,

Takahashi decided to focus on Toyota, a major international brand. Back then, the manufacturing and sales arms of the company were split into Toyota Automobile Manufacturing and Toyota Automobile Sales, and for a sponsorship deal of this magnitude, it was necessary to convince the entire Toyota Group of the event's value. Takahashi's first step was to visit Toyota Automobile Sales with Dentsu's Toyota account team. Highlighting the value that being associated with a world championship would create, Takahashi won the agreement of Shoichiro Toyoda, president of Toyota Automobile Sales. Inquiries to West Nally revealed that neither UEFA nor CONMEBOL had any objections to the move to Japan, and that the chances of it all working out looked very good. So far discussions had advanced with no major hiccups, and all that was required was to obtain a written agreement from FIFA, UEFA, and CONMEBOL. This was when the JFA suddenly chose to throw a spanner in the works.

The JFA Executive Committee wasn't pleased when it heard about NTV and Dentsu's proposal. The JFA apparently felt that a tournament between the European and South American champions was just a "show," and that hosting it in Japan would contribute neither to Japanese football

in general nor to the development of the national team. In consequence, the proposal to hold the Intercontinental Cup in Japan was voted down at the first JFA Executive Committee meeting where it was tabled. This was a bitter pill to swallow. Takahashi, who led the JFA negotiations, thinks the JFA were uncomfortable at an advertising agency like us intruding so aggressively into the football world. Distrust of Dentsu, in other words, prompted their rejection of the plan. Having already obtained a yes from Toyota and from NTV, Dentsu was flung into a state of panic. Not only was there a FIFA rule saying that approval from the association of the host country was a prerequisite for hosting any football event; we would also have to work through the JFA to get FIFA, UEFA and CONMEBOL to agree to move the Intercontinental Cup to Japan.

Dentsu and Nippon Television had discovered a fantastic business opportunity. Not wanting it to slip through their fingers, they put everything they had into persuading the JFA of the merits of holding the world championship here in Japan. There was a series of negotiations with the JFA vice president Shizuo Fujita, the general secretary Ken Naganuma, and Shunichiro Okano, member of the Executive Committee—people

with whom we were close thanks to organising the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament together. On the Dentsu side, the key movers were Takahashi and Yuzo Irie. They eventually succeeded in converting the JFA through their relentless emphasis of the three advantages of the tournament: (1) As the championship to decide the world's top football club, it was sure to succeed as entertainment. (2) It would promote and develop football in Japan by familiarising everyone here (from the younger age groups through to soccer professionals) with the game at international standard. (3) The JFA would receive income as the hosting association.

Approval was finally forthcoming at a JFA Executive Committee meeting in autumn 1980, and the first Toyota Cup was staged just three months later. One has to admire the way everyone involved got things done from a standing start in so little time.

The upgrading of the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament in the late 1960s and early 1970s; the success of the Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan in 1977; the creation of the Japan Cup (now Kirin Cup Soccer) in 1978; holding the 2nd FIFA World Youth Championship in Japan in 1979;

bringing the Toyota Cup (now FIFA Club World Cup) to Japan in 1981…. The years from the sixties to the eighties marked the dawning of Japanese football. It's no coincidence that TV Tokyo's "Mitsubishi Diamond Soccer" (a never-ending source of chit-chat for nostalgic football fans) ran for the same two decades, from 1968 to 1988. These were the years when Japanese football shrunk the gap that divided it from the rest of the world, and growing awareness of the global standard of the game fostered an admiration for Europe and South America which ultimately found expression in the launch of the J.League in 1993.

The dawning of Japanese football was also accompanied by the gradual emergence of the football business. In the beginning, this was completely virgin territory. With his work on high school football, Nabeshima sowed the seeds of a wholly new line of business. His was a tremendous achievement. It should be noted that that the three companies Nabeshima originally contacted about sponsorships remain lead sponsors of a range of tournaments and big backers of football in Japan to this day. Fuji Xerox supports the All Japan High School Soccer Tournament and is also sponsor of the Fuji Xerox Super Cup, the annual match between the J.League

champions and the winners of the Emperor's Cup. Kirin Brewery, initially sponsor of the Japan Cup, now supports the Kirin Cup and the Kirin Challenge Cup, both of which help strengthen of the national team, of which Kirin is also the official sponsor. Toyota, which started out sponsoring the world championship clash between the European and South American league winners, is now the main sponsor of the FIFA Club World Cup which is truly worldwide in scope.

Nabeshima sowed the first seeds and Takahashi cultivated them, bringing them to flower. The events he produced—the Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan, the FIFA World Youth Championship, and the FIFA World All-Star Game for the Benefit of UNICEF—all helped to deepen and reinforce Dentsu's relationship with FIFA, the governing body of global football. So outstanding were the achievements of these two Dentsu men that when I look back over the evolution of the Japanese soccer business, I sometimes feel that all the rest of us are just following the trail they originally blazed.

Chapter4

ISL
The Rise and Fall of a Sports Marketing Giant

A dispute with FIFA leads to the setting-up of ISL

It looks like the headquarters of a secret society, was my first impression.

After landing at Zurich Airport, I took a train for the quiet city of Lucerne in the centre of Switzerland. The taxi I caught at the station drove for miles around Lake Lucerne as I gazed blankly at a landscape carpeted in snow. I reached my final destination an hour and a half after leaving the airport.

This was not Berne, the capital of the country, nor was it Zurich, the largest city. Although famous for its scenic beauty, Lucerne had none of the hustle and bustle of a business hub. I was in front of a discreet building that emerged from the gleaming snow in a remote suburb. Far not only from any major city but even from the local station, the stately mansion at 28A Haldenstrasse immediately conjured up thoughts of secret societies.

It was January 1983, six months after the success

of the Unicef All-Star Game in the US. My destination was the Swiss-based International Sports, Culture and Leisure Marketing AG, commonly referred to as ISL. Any history of the global football or sports business would have to acknowledge the pivotal role played by this firm. I spent about ten days in Lucerne, along with Yumi Kitamura, a fluent French and English speaker, to get intensive training in the ISL business philosophy.

Having been in charge of the ISL business for a while at the Tokyo end, I had a vague sense that the company regarded whatever concept and guidelines it drew up at the start of any business venture as absolutely sacrosanct. One got the impression that any action that deviated even slightly from the pre-agreed line was unpardonable, an attitude perhaps not unrelated to the national temperament of the Germans who formed the core of the organisation. What this meant in practice was that even when new ideas came up in the course of a job, they did not stand a chance of approval unless they dovetailed with the original concept. You can praise ISL as completely consistent, or take the negative view and criticise them as pedants with an inflexible set of rules.

Traditionally, people go to Lucerne in summer to

escape the heat, so when I was there in the winter of 1983, the place was deserted and almost eerily quiet. I spent all day during the week inside the ISL office, being lectured about the ISL philosophy and the global football business. All alone in my hotel room, I felt uneasy. Trouble on the horizon, I thought, and resolved to keep up my guard.

A fifty-fifty joint venture between the German sporting goods maker Adidas and Dentsu, ISL had been set up directly after the 1982 Spain World Cup. Its mission was sports marketing with a particular focus on football. The original idea for the firm came from Horst Dassler, president of Adidas, and son of Adolf "Adi" Dassler, the company founder. Though not by any means tall, Horst was broad-shouldered and sturdy, with sharp, bright eyes. My first impression was of a man with a very powerful presence. Horst had built close relationships with João Havelange, the president of FIFA, Juan Antonio Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and with all the various sports bodies, in particular the presidents of the football associations and confederations around the world. This extensive network of connections was behind his success in the sports marketing business. In the run-up to the Dentsu-organised Unicef

charity match held in New Jersey on August 7, 1982, Haruyuki Takahashi and Yoichi Hattori of the Business Development Division were already discreetly working with Horst to lay the groundwork for the establishment of the new company. The idea was for ISL to actually run FIFA and UEFA events while also providing services to the sponsors. Horst had originally set up a firm called SMPI in 1977 to which FIFA had assigned all its commercial marketing rights. SMPI in turn had subcontracted the operation and advertising board sales for the 1978 and 1982 World Cups to British sports marketing company West Nally.

The inception of ISL dates back to a bantering exchange immediately after the final match of the 1979 World Youth in Japan. As mentioned earlier, Takahashi had joked to FIFA president João Havelange and his right-hand man Sepp Blatter, "Seeing as I've done such a good job, why don't you invite me over to the FIFA headquarters in Zurich?" The two of them had readily agreed to his cheeky suggestion and he had not forgotten their promise. So not long after, Takahashi went off to the FIFA headquarters in Zurich with his assistant Ryoko Sunaga. Takahashi did not have an appointment, but Blatter, who had become a friend in the course of the World

Youth Championship, made his unexpected visitor very welcome. Blatter told him that he wanted to introduce him to the members of the FIFA Executive Committee who were in the middle of a meeting and led Takahashi, who was more than willing, to a seat in the conference room.

"I know we're in the middle of a meeting, but permit me to introduce a friend who has come all the way from Japan. This is Mr. Haruyuki Takahashi, the man who steered the recent World Youth Championship to such great success." After this glowing introduction, Blatter encouraged Takahashi to say a few words of his own.

"Hello everybody, I am delighted to meet you like this," said Takahashi. "Our bringing the World Youth to a safe conclusion ultimately comes down to all your support and hard work." Takahashi then made a spur-of-the-moment decision: being there in front of the FIFA Executive Committee was just too good an opportunity to waste, and he made a bold, forward-looking proposal. "There is one thing I'd like to say while I'm here. Will you appoint Dentsu your sales agent for the World Cup? We at Dentsu are marketing professionals; we transformed the fortunes of the World Youth tournament. I know we can do a good job, a job that will satisfy you all."

The FIFA Executive Committee listened in silence as Takahashi continued to make his unexpected pitch for Dentsu. "Let's say—I'm just speaking hypothetically, of course—we were responsible for the marketing of the World Cup. There is one area that concerns me: in my frank opinion, the fees you ask from the sponsors are just too high. The higher the fees, the more likely potential sponsors will stay away. If the marketing professionals here at Dentsu were in charge, we'd run a minute simulation of every aspect of the event: How many spectators can we expect at the stadiums? What viewer numbers will there be for TV broadcasts? We'd then recruit sponsors based on a logical and precise fee calculated from this data. Such would be our strategy."

This was the point at which FIFA president Havelange interrupted Takahashi's one-man show. "Look here, we're very grateful to you for making such a success of the World Youth. But if I may? What's all this you're saying about our sponsorship fees being too high?" Visibly irritated, Havelange went on: "Think about a car. When the car manufacturer sets the retail price, it doesn't have to tell the buyer the actual cost of every single component, does he? That's what your argument boils down to. I understand where you're

coming from, but we have absolutely no intention of lowering our sponsorship fees." Havelange's strong reaction, says Takahashi, came from hypersensitivity to any criticism about the fee levels.

Inevitably, the news that Takahashi had made a pitch to be sales agent for the World Cup got out, and someone on the FIFA Executive Committee warned West Nally that Dentsu of Japan was trying to muscle in on their territory. It was no less inevitable that Horst Dassler, to whom West Nally had subcontracted the business, came to hear about Dentsu. Horst was then in two minds about whether to continue his contract with West Nally, perhaps because he had different ideas about the direction of the business to Patrick Nally, an ex-advertising agency man who was one of the firm's directors. Horst was on the lookout for a new and dependable partner so could not but be interested in Dentsu, which had gone out on a limb and made its case directly to FIFA. Horst began gathering background on Dentsu through Peter Ueberroth, who was then serving as President of the Local Organising Committee for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. Dentsu was the exclusive marketing agency for Japanese companies at the Los Angeles Olympics, and Ueberroth had become friends with

Hattori and Jimmy Fukuzaki, who served as a consultant to Dentsu's Los Angeles office.

One day Horst personally called up Dentsu to say that he wanted to invite someone from the firm with soccer business experience to the French headquarters of Adidas. Takahashi was nominated with very little opposition. As the man who had ring-mastered the triumph of the 1977 Pelé Sayonara Game in Japan and the 1979 FIFA World Youth Championship, not to mention coming out with that big bold speech at the FIFA Executive Committee meeting, Takahashi was certainly the right man for the job.

A bold decision to invest several billion yen

Horst's private jet was waiting when Takahashi disembarked in Paris. After a short flight, he was chauffeured to the head office of Adidas France in Landersheim not far from the German border. Conducted to Dassler House, the guest-house beside the office, Takahashi took a sauna to get over the fatigue of his long journey. As soon as Takahashi was ready, Horst told him his plans. He wanted to set up a new company that would have exclusive marketing rights for sports events

including the World Cup. The best way for him to make it happen was to terminate his contract with West Nally after the Spain World Cup and join hands with Dentsu.

Horst had Klaus Hempel, his secretary-cum-assistant, and his lawyer with him, and the discussions went on all night. Horst stressed that he wanted to get into business with Dentsu because he believed that Japan-based multinationals would soon become important players in the world of sports sponsorship. During the meeting, Takahashi had the sense that Horst was sizing up Dentsu's financial muscle, connections and organisational capabilities. Horst later told Takahashi that three of his sisters, who together held the majority of Adidas stock, had researched the firm and advised him that Dentsu, with its long history and track record of success, would make a better partner than West Nally. Takahashi asked Horst how he felt about each side putting in 50% of the capital, if they did set up a new company. Very much in favour, Horst was keen to move ahead. "Great, I'll need you to make payment into the bank within a week." From his previous experience with the sport, Takahashi knew that playing one's cards just right was often the secret of making the football business pay. Much as he may have

wanted to shake hands on the deal right then, he couldn't arrange to pay out several billion yen in a couple of days without obtaining approval from the Dentsu Executive Board. Not committing one way or the other, Takahashi returned to Japan to relay Horst's joint venture proposal.

The news of Horst's overtures ignited a fever of anticipation within Dentsu. West Nally Japan, the local representative of FIFA's marketing subcontractor, had signed a deal with Hakuhodo, our archrival in the advertising business. Dentsu had been mortified when Hakuhodo had locked up the exclusive marketing rights for the 1982 World Cup, so it was only natural for everyone involved to get excited at the sudden news of a deal that would put us back in the game.

The problem was not just the multi-billion yen investment Dentsu was being asked to put into the new company, but also the one-week timeframe we had been presented with. Back then, about 20 people had to sign off on any expenditure greater than one million yen in cash. Dentsu had almost no experience of the large-scale global sports marketing business; the sum we were being called on to invest was considerable; and speed was also of the essence. Naturally enough, some of Dentsu's board members came out against the deal,

but others were adamant that it was a golden opportunity it would be a mistake to pass up. In the end, Dentsu president Hideharu Tamaru, who believed that the partnership had significant potential, decided that the investment should go ahead and secured the consent of the whole board, one person at a time. It was official: ISL, a joint venture between Adidas and Dentsu, was going ahead.

The company came into being in the summer of 1982. The president was Klaus Hempel, who, like me, was then in his thirties. Formerly Horst's assistant at Adidas, Klaus was appointed because of his knowledge of Horst's business philosophy. Dentsu provided the company's vice-chairman, Yoichi Hattori, and the vice president, Ippei Inoh.

24 hours a day—negotiations drag on and on and on…

August 8, 1982, the day after the Unicef All-Star game in New York, was the first time since my arrival in the US that I had a day to myself. Boarding a ferry at Battery Park at the southern tip of Manhattan, I was gazing at the Statue of Liberty and enjoying the pleasant shipboard breeze when the memories

came flooding back: the months of hard work, the cheering crowd of the day before. I felt a powerful surge of pride.

Just as I was thinking I might be able to take it easy for a while tidying up loose ends after the Unicef match, I received official notice of a new appointment. From September 1, 1982, I would be working at a new department called Intersoccer 4. I went back to Japan for the first time in three months with great hopes (and a smidgeon of anxiety) in my heart.

In the new department I was working on the most important project of the freshly established ISL. As the name suggests, our job at the Intersoccer 4 Department was to sell sponsors a single package of advertising rights for four big events: the World Cup, the European Championship, the European Champion Clubs' Cup and the Cup Winners' Cup. Since the World Cup came around every four years, we sold the rights to the four events in a four-year package. We had to find likely corporate sponsors, sign them up, and help them maximise the benefits of their sponsorship.

Dentsu had almost no experience at all in the rights business. Advertising, our traditional area of expertise, is an extremely localised business where the ability to understand

and exploit regional characteristics is key. Selling the rights to Intersoccer 4 was the complete opposite: we were dealing with football, content with universal appeal, so we had to think how to send a powerful emotional message that went beyond race, religion, language and culture. This sort of global challenge was also terra incognita for Dentsu and it wasn't going to be easy. I needed to steel myself to make sure I could turn this cultural "big bang" into a sure-fire business success.

Yutaka Narita, recently appointed to Dentsu's board, had oversight of the Intersoccer 4 Department. Hattori, ISL vice chairman, was department head, while Inoh also combined the ISL vice presidency with responsibilities at Intersoccer 4. Our immediate task was to sign up Japanese companies as sponsors of the 1986 Mexico World Cup, which formed part of the Intersoccer 4 package.

Sponsoring the Mexico World Cup offered eight benefits. We therefore tried to sign up the companies we were targeting by emphasising the following advantages.

1. Exclusivity in a given product category
2. Stadium advertising: entitlement to two pitch boards
3. The right to use the official emblem and theme song

4. Advertisement in the official programme
5. Designation rights as an official sponsor
6. Entitlement to match tickets
7. Opportunity for product placement and PR at venues
8. Opportunity to buy airtime during broadcasts in the USA

For companies weighing up sponsorship, the most attractive item on this list was the entitlement to two advertising boards on the pitch side. In those days, most sports broadcasting—particularly in Europe—was still in the hands of state broadcasters. As a result, there were no commercial breaks at all, and when football was shown, matches were generally broadcast in their entirety without a single commercial. The one thing that was guaranteed to appear frequently on television were the pitch-side advertising boards, making them the most effective medium for companies eager to boost recognition and sales. This form of exposure was producing undeniable results at football events, most notably at the 1978 and 1982 World Cups, and companies were firmly persuaded of the advantages of advertising boards. A survey later conducted by audio-equipment maker JVC showed that exposure via advertising boards at the Spain World Cup in 1982 and the

Mexico World Cup in 1986 had boosted worldwide recognition of the JVC name to around the 90% mark.

Luckily for us, almost immediately after we'd established the Intersoccer 4 Department, four Japanese companies—Canon, Fujifilm, JVC and Seiko—decided to sponsor the Mexico World Cup. All four of them were continuing their sponsorship from the 1982 World Cup in Spain. The company handling the rights had changed from SMPI to ISL and the resulting changes in the terms of the contract included a dramatic increase in the sponsorship fee, so we were fortunate that the four companies came on board so readily.

If memory serves, the sponsorship fee was around 17 million Swiss francs per company, an outrageous sum. But the fact that the companies came forward to be sponsors a second time showed how keenly they had felt the benefits of being a World Cup sponsor at the previous tournament in Spain. In addition to the four Japanese companies, Coca-Cola, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Gillette, Bata, Philips, Anheuser-Busch, Opel and Cinzano paid the enormous sponsorship fee and joined the final line-up of official sponsors for Intersoccer 4.

From the feedback of Canon, Fujifilm, JVC and Seiko, it was clear that, while recognising the significant benefits of World Cup sponsorship, the four Japanese companies had some major gripes. They complained their contracts had not been properly observed at the previous World Cup, and they had not been able to use their sponsor benefits to the full. To give one example, the contract listed the right to create TV commercials featuring World Cup match footage as one sponsor benefit. Due to problems with image rights, however, no commercials had ever got made. Since this was not an isolated instance of promised privileges failing to materialise, the Japanese companies were all determined to make sure their contracts with ISL were copper-bottomed and flawless.

Looking back, I can see that every step between getting the sponsors' provisional agreement and finalising their contracts was a real struggle. The sponsorship fee was exceptionally high, but since the advertising impact of the World Cup was equally huge, our clients were taking it all very seriously indeed. The same was true for the Dentsu account executives for each sponsor, so there was a real pressure-cooker atmosphere. The most gruelling task was coming up with contracts that best addressed the different aspirations of the

sponsor companies. At the Intersoccer 4 Department, we would take our dedicated lawyer with us to the negotiations to help sort out any problems. At the sponsor firms, the legal department would participate in the meetings alongside the person in charge of the Intersoccer 4 project, and they would go through every single clause of the contract with a fine tooth-comb, which took ages. The language for all the ISL contracts was English, but Dentsu had them translated into Japanese to avoid any misunderstandings. Cooped up in cramped meeting rooms, the negotiations ran on past midnight for days on end. These were the days without e-mail and mobile phones, and international phone calls and fax transmissions cost so much that we could only make sparing use of them. To save costs, our main means of getting in touch with ISL (excluding emergencies) was telex communication. At Dentsu you needed official authorisation to use the telex machine, and that was always quite a while coming. No sooner had we sent off a status report to ISL and begun to relax than they would send back an answer quashing whatever proposal we had made because it "didn't tally with their original business concept" (a matter of obsession for them). In the end, it took six months to finalise the sponsorship contracts with the four Japanese firms.

Within Dentsu's Intersoccer 4 Department, two conflicting ways of thinking about the contracts coexisted. With our Intersoccer 4 hats on, our position was to try to help the sponsors extract maximum advantage from their sponsor benefits. As far as possible, we wanted them to get whatever they asked for. However, Hattori and Inoh, the heads of Intersoccer 4, were also ISL vice chairman and vice president, respectively. They might sympathise with the sponsors' wishes, but they were obliged to toe the ISL party line. Under orders "to proceed according to ISL policy," we ended up unable to provide the sponsors with everything they had hoped for, which was truly distressing.

The Intersoccer 4 Department wanted to do all we could to meet the wishes of our four Japanese sponsors. In an effort to satisfy the sponsors, we came up with an unusual solution. We made a decision, quite independent of ISL, to draw up a separate, back-up contract between Dentsu and the sponsors. This back-up contract served to alleviate the sponsors' concerns. They trusted Dentsu based on our long-term relationship, but were extremely sceptical of ISL, a new outfit about which they knew nothing.

ISL had only just started out in the rights business,

so failure was definitely not an option. Indeed, the company finally signed up a total of twelve corporate sponsors for the Intersoccer 4 package, which included the 1986 FIFA World Cup in Mexico, and generated hefty profits. Based on its initial success with football, ISL went on to win the marketing rights for the Olympic Games from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and the IAAF World Championships in Athletics from the International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF). Establishing itself as the sole superpower of the sports marketing world, it became massively profitable.

This job taught me the basics of drawing up sports business contracts, something that was of great advantage to me when I later worked on the 2002 FIFA World Cup.

My secondment to the Intersoccer 4 Department finished at the end of June 1983 and I went back to my original job in the Planning and Project Coordination Division. To cut a long story very short, ISL went bankrupt in 2001, whereupon Dentsu began to deal with FIFA directly. A relationship of ever deepening trust was quickly established between the two organisations which lasts to this day.

Dentsu's domestic sports business expanded very rapidly during the 1970s, the years I worked in the

Broadcasting Media Department. Dentsu's deep involvement with all three parties involved—official sports bodies, corporate sponsors and broadcasters—enabled it to drive the rapid evolution of the sports business in Japan and establish its own unique business model. While Dentsu was developing muscle in the sports business, I learned a lot from my older and more experienced colleagues in the Broadcasting Media Department, and was involved in a number of sports-related projects. When I was assigned to the Intersoccer 4 Department in the autumn of 1982, I found myself brought face-to-face with the ultimate sports event, the FIFA World Cup. My first thought was: The World Cup is an opportunity for us to apply the business model and valuable experience we've garnered in the domestic market in a global context. I can see now that these hopes were premature at the time, but the hard work of people at Dentsu over the intervening three decades means that today it may be possible to make that happen. In the near future, we can take the business model that has succeeded so well in Japan—creating a win-win relationship for everybody: official sports bodies, corporate sponsors, broadcasters and consumers—and apply it to the World Cup.

ISL's over-expansion and collapse calls for crisis management

ISL, which rapidly established dominance in its field by winning the marketing rights for the FIFA World Cup, later got involved in the rights side of the Toyota Cup. To recap, the Intercontinental Cup, the contest between the European and South American club champions, was rebranded as the Toyota European/South American Cup (Toyota Cup for short) and moved to Japan from 1981, where Dentsu produced it. From the mid-eighties, ISL insisted on getting involved. We eventually signed an agreement with ISL, splitting the areas of responsibility—Dentsu was mainly in charge of the tournament operation, while ISL was in charge of the commercial rights business.

As director of the ISL Division from 1993, I helped manage the Toyota Cup in the 1990s. My main task was to liaise with UEFA and CONMEBOL and try (within reason) to give the participating clubs what they wanted. Complying with the two champions' many and varied requests was the toughest of tough jobs. Even when all their demands had been dealt with, I had to envisage every problem that could possibly

occur and devise appropriate crisis-management responses.

In 1993 the South American champion was São Paulo (Brazil), Vélez Sársfield (Argentina) in 1994, Grêmio (Brazil) in 1995 and River Plate (Argentina) in 1996. All the clubs wanted to travel to Japan in a group of up to fifty people, with the players, their families, club staff, and representatives from the local media. Travel and accommodation for that many people is already a vast expense. As our budget was not unlimited, I would negotiate with CONMEBOL every year, trying to get them to see things from our point of view and trim the number of people coming to Japan, even slightly. Ultimately they came around, but since I was also a member of the Japan Bid Committee working on the 2002 World Cup bid, I took pains not to upset them and risk derailing our bid.

UEFA, for their part, asked us to change the match schedule in 1994. Kickoff was originally set for 12 noon on Sunday, but UEFA wanted it to be switched to a Thursday night. Italy's Serie A matches were held on Saturdays and Sundays. The longer the interval between the Toyota Cup and their regular league games, the better chance an Italian team stood of being crowned world champion in Japan. Presumably the subtext was that AC Milan, in the Toyota Cup for a second

year in succession after suffering a 3-2 defeat at the hands of São Paolo in 1993, wanted to come into the match in tip-top condition. We agreed to their request and set kickoff for Thursday, December 1, 1994, at 9:10 p.m. AC Milan ended up losing 2-0 to Vélez Sársfield despite the change, meaning they had had a bitter pill to swallow two years on the trot. From 1995, the next year, to 2002 the Toyota Cup was moved to Tuesday night, a decision reflecting the strong influence of UEFA.

Talking of the Toyota Cup reminds me of the time someone from Juventus invited me to drop into their hotel while they were in Japan. On November 26, 1996, I went across to the Imperial Hotel in Ginza where they were staying. Since they had just beaten River Plate 1-0 to be crowned world champions, I assumed they would be holding some fabulous party to celebrate. The sight that greeted me at the hotel completely threw me: Zinedine Zidane, Didier Dechamps, Alessandro Del Piero, Vladimir Jugović and Alen Bokšić were all dressed in tracksuits as if lounging around at home. Far from dancing for joy, the superstar players were all sitting slumped in the hotel corridor, woozy with drink. I'll never forget the contrast between the heroes who had battled so

boldly on the pitch to win the world championship and this scene, which was like something from a drunken company outing. There was no less of a contrast between this unexpectedly prosaic scene and Gianni Agnelli, honorary chairman of Juventus. Known affectionately as "l'avogato" (the lawyer) because he had graduated in law from Turin University, Agnelli was also honorary chairman of FIAT and a captain of Italian industry. Fifteen years have passed, but his aura was so powerful that my memory of meeting him remains vivid to this day.

ISL managed to achieve sole superpower status in the sports marketing world from the mid-80s to the mid-90s, only later to lose its bearings for some years prior to collapsing in 2001. The start of the company's decline can be dated to April 1987 when Horst, the originator of the firm, passed away. With Horst's death, ISL lost his personal connections and experience in one fell swoop. The central pillar that supported the whole edifice had suddenly been taken away.

Horst's shares passed to the Dassler family. They installed Cristoph Malms, Horst's brother-in-law, to run the company. Though Malms was a qualified lawyer who had

worked at the consulting firm McKinsey & Co., he had little experience with the sports marketing business. With the expectations of the whole Dassler clan riding on his shoulders, Malms was quite unable to see eye to eye with Klaus Hempel who, as president, had been running the business up to that point. Hempel objected to the direction in which Malms was taking the company and quit after the 1990 Italy World Cup. In what can be seen as an expression of hostile rivalry, he founded a similar sports marketing company, Television Event and Marketing (TEAM), based very close to ISL's headquarters in Lucerne. TEAM then signed a marketing contract with UEFA and took over the Champions Cup rights from ISL. In the 1992-93 season, Hempel expanded the Champions Cup to the current Champions League format, from the marketing of which TEAM continues to earn bumper profits today. The commercial success of this defector shows just how much ISL had lost. It is worth pointing out that although ISL maintained a good relationship with FIFA, TEAM's sudden rapprochement with UEFA sparked hostility between FIFA and UEFA. The antagonism created at this time went on to cause serious disruptions to the 2002 World Cup.

Takahashi, who was appointed ISL vice chairman in 1992, was also sceptical about Malms' policies. Malms expanded ISL's business beyond its traditional field of marketing FIFA, IOC, and IAFF events, and announced his intention to take the company public. Takahashi disagreed with Malms, pointing out that while the rights business of ISL's three original clients—FIFA, the IOC, and the IAAF—had enormous profit margins, similar success in any new business areas was far from guaranteed. But Takahashi's objections were always swept aside at board meetings. The ratio of share ownership had started out with Dentsu and Adidas each owning 50%, but after a few years it was mutually agreed to change it to Adidas (i.e. the Dassler family) having 51% and Dentsu 49%. Now a minority shareholder, Dentsu was unable to take a leadership role.

Malms' expansion plans made the IOC uneasy and they terminated their contract with ISL. Dick Pound, who had been the right hand of Antonio Samaranch, IOC president, and was in charge of marketing there, assigned the business of the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan, directly to Dentsu. This must have been a body blow to ISL, but the company continued with Malm's policy of reckless expansion. In 1999 it signed a ten-year contract with the Association of Tennis

Professionals (ATP), paying the colossal sum of $1.2 billion to acquire overall rights. ISL also took over the management of two Brazilian football clubs, Flamengo and Corinthians. Once again, vast sums changed hands. While ISL was still generating steady profits from the World Cup, all these extravagant investments proved fatal, and ISL collapsed into inevitable bankruptcy in May 2001.

Chaper5

Japan and Korea Co-Host
The Long Road to the 2002 FIFA World Cup

A Japanese bid—a quixotic idea?

First-ever wins at the Dynasty Cup and the Asia Cup in 1992; the 1993 launch of the J.League, followed by the "Doha Tragedy" in October of the same year, when Japan just missed qualifying for 1994 FIFA World Cup USA; Kazuyoshi Miura, Japan's new football superstar, moving from J.League's Verdy Kawasaki to Genoa, Italy, in 1994; Japan making it through to the quarterfinals of the 1995 and 1997 FIFA World Youth Championships; Japan winning a place at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996, and going on to defeat soccer superpower Brazil 1-0 in the "Miami Miracle." 1998 then saw the national squad clinch its first-ever berth in the World Cup finals, and Japan was runner-up at the World Youth, another historic achievement, in 1999.

If one were to compile a history of Japanese football, the 1990s would undoubtedly take up a significant chunk of it. Japanese football may have been firing on all cylinders at

this time, but from an economic perspective Japan was going through an unusually sharp contraction. In the aftermath of the bubble economy, the price of land and housing fell, companies collapsed, banks were reluctant to make loans, and there was a rash of personal bankruptcies. Financial chaos cast a dark shadow the length and breadth of Japan. Amidst the general gloom inspired by the economic crisis, the sight of the Japan national team giving their all in the quest for victory and drawing level with the rest of the world gave hope to a people sunk in despair.

The history of Japanese football should also record the story of another group of men who embarked on a bold quest to spread the hope and the joy that football inspires, albeit in a different fashion to the players themselves. Their dream was to bring the great global football festival of the World Cup to Japan. Japanese football was shining brightly in the 1990s when these men took on the heavy task of writing a new chapter in Japanese history. I played only a small part in this venture, joining the great project when it was already underway, and I experienced all sorts of emotional highs and lows in consequence.

I had left Dentsu's Intersoccer 4 Division at the

end of June 1983 and was transferred, finally, to Dentsu New York in October 1984. In New York, my chief responsibilities were buying and selling special programmes on the three big networks as well as entertainment and sports content such as Broadway musicals. In 1988, Dentsu and Burson-Marsteller, then the biggest PR company in the US, established a joint venture called Dentsu Burson-Marsteller. A PR company specialising in servicing Japanese companies, it had offices in New York and Los Angeles. I was appointed executive vice president and worked out of the New York office. Overall I spent six-and-a-half years in New York, but aside from going to watch the 1986 Mexico World Cup, my work had nothing to do with football.

In spring of 1991, I was sent back to Japan to work in the Overseas Department of the Sales Promotion Division. There I was to encounter the World Cup—an experience that would change my life. In July 1992 Kuniomi Sakai, deputy director of the World Cup Japan Bidding Committee, asked my advice on handling international PR for the bid. Then in January 1993 I was appointed senior manager of the football department under Haruyuki Takahashi, who had just been appointed director of the ISL Division. (The unit which had

started life as Intersoccer 4 in September 1982 changed its name to the ISL Division in 1993.) I was in charge of the international football business and my responsibilities included the business side of the 1994 FIFA World Cup USA and Japan's 2002 World Cup bid.

The person who first conceived the grand design of bringing the World Cup to Japan was the JFA's general secretary in the mid-1980s, Tadao Murata. A former player of the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries amateur football team, Murata had initially hoped that the Japan national team's attacking power would win it a place in the 1986 Mexico World Cup. With Hisashi Kato, Kazushi Kimura, Hiromi Hara and Koichi Hashiratani, the team finished the first round of the World Cup Asia Preliminary Competition in first place. In the final round of the qualifiers, after pulling off two back-to-back wins over Hong Kong, the longed-for berth at the World Cup looked within the team's grasp, only for the dream to evaporate after two losses in a row against South Korea. It was a bitter disappointment for Murata, but after thinking long and hard about the problem, it occurred to him that flipping the equation was one possible solution: How about if Japan hosted the World

Cup instead of waiting until it made it through to the finals. Japan would then qualify automatically as host country. It was a crazy idea, but not one to reject out of hand either. After all, FIFA president João Havelange never tired of announcing that in the 21st century he wanted to hold the World Cup in Asia. Although the JFA did not take Murata seriously at first, they slowly came round to his way of thinking, and in 1989 announced that they were putting Japan forward as a candidate to host the 2002 World Cup.

In October 1990, Murata visited the Dentsu head office together with the JFA president Shizuo Fujita. There they met with company president Gohei Kogure, managing director Yuzo Irie, and Sports Business Division director Kenzo Okamura. The JFA executives presumably felt that Dentsu's involvement was essential to their dream of hosting the World Cup. Not only had Dentsu built up a good relationship with FIFA through its work on the 1979 World Youth and the 1982 Unicef All-Star Game in the US, we were directly involved in the business side of the World Cup as a major shareholder of sports marketing company ISL. We were the go-to people when it came to FIFA and the World Cup. For the JFA to contact us was the most natural thing in the world.

Soon after, the JFA started moving aggressively to raise the global profile of Japanese football. In June 1991, the 2002 World Cup Japan Bidding Committee was established with Murata as director. A dramatic boost was given to the visibility of Japanese football when Japan won the Asian Cup in Hiroshima in 1992, then launched the J.League, a genuine professional league, on May 15, 1993. Japan also hosted the FIFA U-17 World Championship throughout the country between August and September of 1993. Murata got into the habit of saying, "The World Cup bid and the J.League are like two sets of wheels on the car of Japanese football. Provided they both succeed, football here will become enduringly popular. I'm sure of it."

Murata worked hard to make his own prophecy come true. Under his energetic leadership, the Bidding Committee members fought to build a strong case for hosting. To compensate for the handicap of never having made it through to the World Cup finals, Japan, they argued, was now really getting to grips with football; plus the country had top-of-the-line event management skills. So far, so good. But despite its enthusiasm for hosting the World Cup for the first

time, the JFA had to recognise the fact that one element crucial to winning the support of FIFA and the global football family for its historic bid was missing: the Japan national team had never taken part in the World Cup finals.

There was no precedent for a country that had never made it through to the World Cup finals getting to host the event. If the JFA were really so committed to Japan's 2002 bid, then their immediate task was to pull out all the stops and make sure the national team won a place at the 1994 World Cup in the United States. Under Dutch head coach Hans Ooft, the Japan team's performance answered all their prayers—except for the last, fateful seconds of their final game. In the first round of the World Cup Asia Preliminary Competition, Japan found itself in Group F with Thailand, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the UAE. The team was undefeated, making it through to the final round on top of its group with seven wins and one draw. The six countries that made it through the preliminaries were to play one another in a round-robin format in the final round. Only two of them would get to go to the World Cup finals in the US. All the final round matches were to be played in a single location—Doha, the capital of Qatar—with no home and away alternation.

The final round got underway in October 1993. Japan's first game against Saudi Arabia ended in a scoreless draw; the second, against Iran, in a 2-1 defeat. After two games, Japan was at the bottom of the table with one draw, one loss, and no wins. Things looked dire, but the team managed to pull a victory out of the hat, crushing North Korea 3-0 in its third game, and beating South Korea 1-0 in its fourth, doggedly defending the lead that Kazuyoshi Miura's single goal had given them. With only the final match against Iraq to go, Japan found itself in top place. A berth at the World Cup finals seemed close enough to touch. No sooner had the referee blown the starting whistle than ace Miura scored to put Japan ahead. Iraq equalised in the second half, but a through pass from Ruy Ramos enabled Masashi Nakayama to slot in a second goal. The score was unchanged at 2-1 as the clock ticked on. Japan's first appearance in the World Cup should have been a sure thing…. But everybody (at least in Japan) knows the sting in the tail of this particular story. Japan ended up conceding a goal from a short corner in extra time, something that by rights should never have happened. Japan had scored the same number of goals as South Korea, but the Koreans had the advantage in goal difference, pushing the

Japanese down to third place. The last minute was almost unbearably painful as Japan's World Cup dream literally slipped through their fingers. In Japan this match is known as the "Doha Tragedy."

I was there. The corner taken just seconds before the final whistle; the header; the ball travelling in a merciless arc into the net. The final scene is seared in slow motion onto my brain. At the moment when Iraq's final shot shook the side net, the stadium—many Japanese fans had made the journey over—was literally swallowed up in silence. There followed the sound of the female fans sniffling. This draw was a cruel, cruel blow and the players, the fans in the stands, and I myself felt as though we had been plunged into the lowest circle of hell. I had never experienced such a strong feeling of prostration and despair. After the game, J.League chairman Saburo Kawabuchi, also head of the JFA Development Committee, put on a brave face for the media, despite his bitter disappointment. "It was a magnificent dream," he said. Murata and I had dinner together that night. Normally we would have been chatting away, but we sat in complete silence throughout the meal. The "Doha Tragedy" robbed the food of taste. I have never had so tasteless a meal before or since.

TV Tokyo, the station which broadcast Japan's final game at Doha, achieved viewing ratings of 48.1%—the highest figure in the company's history. Put simply, one out of every two Japanese watched the close-fought contest. Even now I am sure that there are thousands of fans unable to forget how Ramos went pale and Nakayama literally crumpled off the bench when the Iraqi header went in, and how, after the final whistle had gone, the players sat on the pitch, shellshocked, incapable of getting to their feet. The JFA shared the despondency of the players and fans about this last-minute calamity. After all, Japan winning a place at the 1994 World Cup in the US was out-and-away the most important ingredient the country needed to promote its bid to host the tournament.

The soccer business in Asia kicks off

It was the spring of 1993 when AFC Marketing Ltd. (AML), a young company, secured a package deal to handle the sponsorship and broadcasting rights for all the Asia Football Confederation (AFC) competitions. Seamus O'Brien established AML in his late twenties after leaving CSI, a Hong Kong-based broadcasting rights company, and he had negotiated the

deal with Peter Velappan, the AFC general secretary. It's no exaggeration to describe this as the genesis of present-day Asian football. Seamus' instincts and speed of execution were equally impressive. In Japan AML was represented by Jack Sakazaki Marketing (JSM), and naturally company president Jack Sakazaki was leading the sales drive. The popularity of the Japan national team had surged after its 1992 Asian Cup victory in Hiroshima, and with the launch of the J.League in May 1993, the general level of interest in Japanese football and the national side was on the rise. The AFC package Seamus had been awarded covered the four years from 1993 to 1996. It included nearly all the AFC competitions for all age groups, but there were three plums: the final round of the1994 FIFA World Cup Asia Preliminary Competition (1993), the Asia Cup (1996) and the final round of the Asian qualifying competition for the Atlanta Olympics (1996). Hakuhodo, our Japanese archrival, showed strong interest in the rights and we ended up duking it out. I was in something of a frenzy. Through ISL, Dentsu was already the exclusive agent for selling the marketing rights for the World Cup finals to Japanese companies. If we could also get the rights to the Asian qualifiers, we would be able to offer the World Cup sponsorships as a

single package going all the way through from the start to the finish of the tournament. Getting the rights would also give us a position of overwhelming leadership in Asia, a region where the football business was expected to grow by leaps and bounds. Both companies fought hard, but in the end it was Dentsu that managed to reach an agreement with JSM and buy the rights in the summer of 1993. As the final round of the World Cup preliminary competition was due to get underway in Doha that October, we had no time to bask in the glow of success, but got straight down to the business of selling. The JFA was concerned about which broadcasters would get the broadcasting rights. Junji Ogura, JFA general secretary, told me that he very much hoped we would "treat all broadcasters the same." I therefore sold the terrestrial broadcasting rights for the first match to NTV; the second to TV Asahi; the third to TBS; the fourth to Fuji TV; and the fifth to TV Tokyo. In the past, we had to sometimes beg broadcasters to televise Japan national team matches. Since 1992, however, the popularity of the national team had skyrocketed and value of the broadcasting rights had soared as well. As I was selling the rights to the individual matches for an unheard of sum—more than three times the usual fee for national team matches—the

broadcasters were none too happy. Back in those days, there was also concern about the technical capabilities of the local host broadcaster in Doha, and although AML hired experts from the UK, the Japanese broadcasters had reason to feel that there were multiple risks. They teamed up and confronted me, insisting that Dentsu be responsible for arranging the satellite uplink/downlink and all other technical aspects of the broadcast. The final round of the preliminary competition was to run from October 10-28, and as the man in charge I had plenty to worry about; but just days before the first match, Yasuhisa Fukuda, a producer at NTV, convinced the other broadcasters to work together to ensure that the broadcasting went smoothly and saved the day. All in all, I was in Doha for about a month to run things, hence my presence at the historic Doha Tragedy.

Working for the national good. Seconded to the Bidding Committee

One day during my stint in Doha, Junji Ogura, JFA general secretary, summoned me to his room. After a certain amount of chitchat, Ogura spoke in the most heartfelt way about how important it was for Japan to host the World Cup. I was moved

by Ogura's passion and commitment, and although I was already working on the bid inside Dentsu as senior manager of the ISL Division, I promised to devote more of my time and effort to contribute to the cause.

As it turned out, Japan was not the only nation bidding for 2002. Hearing of Japan's candidacy, Korea threw its hat into the ring in October 1993, soon after the Doha Tragedy and on the very day it had clinched its fourth appearance in the World Cup finals.

During World Cup USA 94 the following year, I went to the US both to help the Japanese corporate sponsors and to work on our 2002 World Cup bid. Shaking hands with President Bill Clinton just before the opening match between Germany and Bolivia in Chicago was the highlight of my hectic month during the World Cup. Returning to Japan, I heard rumours that changes to the line-up of Japan's World Cup Bidding Committee were in the offing. In May that year, Murata had been defeated in the election for FIFA vice president at the AFC Congress and thereby lost his seat on the FIFA Executive Committee, which came with the all-important right to vote on the selection of the World Cup host country. The rumour was that Murata would accept responsibility for

having ceded the position to Dr. Chung Mong Joon, president of the Korea Football Association (KFA), and resign as JFA vice president and Bidding Committee director, with Ogura replacing him on the Bid Committee. Word was also going about that I would be assigned to the committee too.

I tried getting more information from the higher-ups including Haruyuki Takahashi, ISL Division director, and my friends and fellow ISL senior managers Tomoharu Tsuruda and Soichi Akiyama. "Don't worry about it. You're not going to be seconded," Takahashi, my direct superior, assured me. But before I even had the time to feel relieved, I was informed that I was to join the Bidding Committee after all. "The president of the company has authorised this. There's absolutely no way you can back out," Takahashi informed me. To tell the truth, I had cold feet. As I had told Ogura in Doha, I was keen to do what I could, but the sense that I was not that good at international lobbying sapped my confidence. Memories of the fierce rivalry between Nagoya and Seoul in the bid for the 1988 Olympics—a battle which the Korean city had won—further deepened my pessimism. Convinced that political-style lobbying was work to which I was totally unsuited, the idea of resigning flashed through my mind. "I

don't want to be assigned to the Bidding Committee. I won't go," I declared to Takahashi.

Still, there was next to no chance of overturning a decision on personnel made by the Dentsu president himself. I tried to think positively and cast my mind back to the final round of the World Cup Asian qualifiers in Doha. In their determination to make it through to the finals, the teams had fought heart and soul, giving everything they had. Only the survivors got to strut their stuff on the glorious stage of the World Cup. That was why it was such a special event. That was why every country that took part battled so hard and with so much dignity. The Doha Tragedy may have put off Japan's first appearance in the finals a while, but it had certainly made everyone here aware of just how magnificent a competition the World Cup was. Nothing would bring as much joy to the world of Japanese football as Japan getting to host the World Cup. The World Cup would be an opportunity for Japan to deepen its links with other nations, and the world's media focusing on Japan might act as a catalyst for change, either immediate or in the future. I should be grateful to have the chance to do a job that would simultaneously contribute to the development of football and of my country. For the first

time in my life, I felt I understood what the phrase “national interest” really meant.

The fact that Japan had never qualified for the World Cup finals was a major setback, so it was easy to imagine the Japanese side being subjected to enormous pressure as the bid progressed. To cope with that pressure, I first needed to put my own thoughts and feelings in order and check that I was properly motivated. I eventually concluded that if I was going to do this at all, I had to make a success of it. I received an unofficial announcement in August 1994 and was formally assigned to the Japan Bidding Committee on October 1. The Bidding Committee comprised not only members of the JFA but also professionals from a range of top-class Japanese businesses all with different skillsets. Hiroshi Nishimura from Mitsubishi Corporation had joined the committee a while back, but Masaomi Kondoh, deputy general secretary, and Ichiro Hirose, head of PR, both Dentsu men, were newcomers like me. Soon after, we were joined by Toshiaki Koyama from Kyodo News Agency, a Japanese newswire service.

My job title was general manager of the International Relations Department. People no doubt expected I could get plenty of mileage from all the connections I had built up

working on FIFA competitions and ISL's marketing business. At least I had lost the allergy to English which had made my life so difficult at the time of the Unicef benefit game. During the six or so years I had lived in New York from 1984 on, I had learned to speak English well enough.

And so it was that I embarked on a new chapter in my life in October 1994, determined to play my part in the history of Japanese football and of Japan.

Japan and Korea clash over their first bid

There was a little over a year remaining until the selection of the host country in June 1996. It was going to be a dizzyingly busy time for us. Ken Naganuma, the late former JFA President, later said, "I felt like we'd gone around the world fifteen times in that single year." The Japanese bid committee members were on a never-ending world tour. We were so busy that we weren't always clear exactly which country we were in. We would go somewhere, bounce back to Japan, then freshen up briefly at Tokyo's Narita Airport before flying off somewhere else. This kind of intense schedule was standard. When it all kicked off, I had tried to give some consideration

to my health, but with no let-up, the fatigue from jet lag and general physical exhaustion eventually became so excruciating that I couldn't eat or sleep properly. I began to suffer from chronic pain in my lower back, but not wanting to distract my hard-working colleagues, I maintained an easy-going façade and kept working without telling anyone.

What led us to risk our health like this? What sustained and drove us on this endless march? It was our commitment to bringing the World Cup to Japan. A second incentive was provided by the presence of Korea, which was also in the bidding. Dr. Chung, president of the KFA, had considerable influence in his role as a vice president of FIFA, a job that came with the right to cast a vote for the host country. Furthermore, as the sixth son of the founder of Hyundai Group, the vast Korean conglomerate, and head of Hyundai Heavy Industries, he was a captain of Korean industry with access to colossal funds. Educated in the United States, he spoke excellent English. He was also a master of political horse-trading with strong political ambitions, and went on to win a seat on the National Assembly in 1998, a position he holds to this day. This was clearly someone to fear. On the Japanese side, while the political and business worlds were supporting the bid, it

was the JFA that was in the vanguard. By comparison, Korea was mobilising its entire resources as a nation for the bid, with the Hyundai Group leading the charge. JFA was against the entire nation of the Republic of Korea. How could we not feel trepidation in so unequal a contest?

On top of that, Korea had got through to three successive World Cups since 1986. As we lagged them in football, we decided that the best bid strategy would be to promote the quality of Japan's economy and infrastructure—areas we could be confident that we were ahead. We therefore provided a lot of detail on these strengths in our bid document (one of the key elements in FIFA's selection of the host country).

Five members of the JFA and the Bidding Committee—Naganuma, Okano, Kawabuchi, Ogura and Murata—devised a strategy to ensure we did not come off second best to our Korean rivals. The FIFA Executive Committee, the body whose votes decide the host country, then had 21 members—three from Asia, three from Africa, three from North and Central America and the Caribbean, three from South America, eight from Europe and finally the FIFA president himself. We needed to get 11 of these 21 votes—a majority—to secure

the World Cup for Japan. Since Havelange, the president of FIFA, was signalling his support for Japan through the media, the most important thing for us was to consolidate our existing friendly relationships with the South American FIFA Executive Committee members and the football associations and confederations of South America, who tended to move in lockstep with Havelange, who was himself from Brazil. Japan and South America were on the best of terms thanks to events like the Toyota Cup and the Kirin Cup, and when it came to negotiating with South America, Murata, who had many personal friendships in the region, was our man. The broad outline was this: Murata was in charge of Africa as well as South America, while Okano and Ogura were responsible for Europe and FIFA itself. As JFA president, Naganuma visited all the Executive Committee members, all the confederation headquarters, and everywhere there was an international football event being held. Schedule permitting, Kawabuchi, JFA vice president and J.League chairman, accompanied the various members of the Bidding Committee on their arduous, globe-spanning pilgrimages. Kawabuchi was a major factor in reducing our handicap in never having made it through to a World Cup finals. The presence of the man who had led the

J.League to such great success from its very first year gave everyone we met confidence that Japanese football was set on the road to development. Another JFA executive, Kunishige Kamamoto, former ace striker from Japan's 1968 Mexico Olympics bronze medal team who had become a member of the House of Councillors, also joined us in our lobbying efforts and everyone felt honoured to meet a big name from Japanese football history. I always remember how in the midst of our schleps around the world, Naganuma would grin ruefully and say, "I'd always left the overseas side of things to Okano and Murata before. God knows, I'm getting my comeuppance now."

In addition to lobbying, I was also in charge of overseas PR. My experience in PR in New York was invaluable here. During the Toyota Cup in December 1994, Stephen Dixon of ISL encouraged me to hire a seasoned American PR man named Jim Trecker to help. I trusted Stephen so lost no time in setting up a meeting with Jim, who had done a great job as vice president and head of communications during World Cup USA 94. We met in Tokyo in February 1995 and I signed him up about six weeks later. At around the same time, I also hired Fleishman-Hillard, a global PR firm with an excellent

sports division. Our international PR organisation was now in place. Meeting Jim was a stroke of great good luck for me. He is highly educated, very capable and knows a great deal about Japan too. With him on the team, we were able to change our way of working. Instead of translating Japanese into English, which sometimes led to awkwardness, we started giving out information in English from the get-go. We then used that English as the basis for translations into other languages like French, Spanish, German, and Italian. Ryoko Sugio and Yoko Fukushima, who worked with Jim, did a marvellous job. They helped provide Jim with material put together by Toshiaki Koyama, Hiroki Murakami and Ryo Nishimura of the Bidding Committee's PR team, getting information out in a timely way to better shape public opinion.

Jetting around the world, we met with FIFA Executive Committee members, the heads of the continental confederations, and influential people from the national associations and the global football community to ask them to support Japan's bid to host the World Cup. Basically we were collecting votes. It may all sound a bit shady when expressed in those terms, but the Japan Bidding Committee, under the leadership of

Naganuma, concentrated on promoting Japan's capabilities. We never tried to sweet talk, browbeat or bulldoze anyone. The business of bidding necessarily contains a political element and staying on the straight and narrow was by no means easy, but everyone recognised and respected our integrity. Everyone called Naganuma, whose character invited trust, by his first name, Ken. So impressed were some journalists by his honesty and sincerity that they affectionately nicknamed him "Samurai."

Korea's approach to their bid was somewhat different. Their dominance in Asian football was already proven and widely recognised. An episode from 1995 neatly encapsulates Korea's determination and national pride. The FIFA World Youth Championship was held in Doha, capital of Qatar, in April that year. A strong U-20 Japan team with Hidetoshi Nakata, Naoki Matsuda and Nobuhisa Yamada took part. Korea had been knocked out in the Asian qualifiers, but whether a country had secured a place in the World Youth had no relation to hosting a World Cup. It was obvious that an event that brought together members of the various football confederations and the world's media would become a battleground for the two bidders, so FIFA took the precautionary

step of forbidding the putting up of signs, posters or booths at the hotel that housed the FIFA headquarters. We were staying in the hotel FIFA were using and dutifully followed their ruling. We used one room in the hotel as a meeting room where we met with influential people and solicited their backing for Japan's bid.

Korea took the notice issued by FIFA somewhat less seriously. I heard that they promoted the Korean bid in a big way—building a booth, putting up signs and sticking up posters—not at the hotel that housed FIFA's headquarters, but at another hotel where the press centre was located. This to me was the most striking difference between the approaches of the Japanese and Korean bidding committees. On the one hand, Japan did everything by the book, always worried how their actions would be taken by FIFA. Korea, meanwhile, respected FIFA, but their dynamic and straightforward style was the direct opposite of Japan's. For my part, I admire their initiative. They were putting their hearts and souls into their World Cup bid and the actions that elicited a stern warning from FIFA were no more than an expression of their passion.

Of course, the Japanese side was no less passionate about their bid. I am sure that both nations were aware

that "The JFA vs. The Nation of Korea" was a fundamentally unequal contest. We tried to compensate for any weakness by working on our bid as a solid and tight-knit team under the direction of Ken Naganuma, the charismatic JFA president. Our motivation to bring the World Cup to Japan was high, and like me, everyone involved was prepared to compete long and hard for the national good.

The competition between the two countries was fierce. But at the same time the bidding teams on both sides were getting to know one another. As the head of the Bidding Committee's international affairs, I travelled to all the major football competitions and conferences and my Korean counterparts did the same. Continually bumping into one another all around the world, a sense of kinship started to develop. Just to name a few, there were people like Oh Wan Kon, KFA vice president and a leading figure in Korean football; KFA vice president Kim San Jin, a former journalist and fluent Japanese and English speaker who later worked tirelessly to help establish the East Asian Football Federation; Lee Bok-hyung, an officer in the foreign service who had served as an ambassador in several central and south American countries; and finally there was Kim Dong Dae, who had the same job as

me on the Korean side. To him I felt especially close: he was reliable, likeable, and we were of a similar age with similar families. We agreed that we should go out for a drink when the bid contest was over and have remained good friends to this day.

UEFA president refuses any contact with Japan

In the end, we could not avoid being sucked into a political dispute. The two factions involved were Havelange and his loyal supporters and the mainly European anti-Havelange faction led by UEFA president Lennart Johansson, which was unhappy with Havelange's long reign at the top of FIFA.

Klaus Hempel, who took over the sports marketing company ISL after founder Horst Dassler's death, had quit in the early 1990s to found his own firm, Television Event and Marketing AG (TEAM). TEAM's success with marketing the revamped UEFA Champion's League boosted UEFA's stature dramatically. UEFA's rise was accompanied by antagonism between UEFA and FIFA under Havelange. Since his election to the FIFA presidency in 1974, Havelange had been the leader of

global football. Critical of the length of time he had been in office and the way he ran things, UEFA wanted to bolster Europe's say in the international football world. As far as UEFA were concerned, a 2002 World Cup in Japan would represent the continuation of the sometimes autocratic Havelange regime. If UEFA wanted to bring the Havelange era to an end, they simply had to obstruct a Japanese hosting of the World Cup.

Couldn't Japan and Korea co-host the tournament? As 1996 came around, the chorus in favour of co-hosting suddenly began to grow louder. As we pressed on with our bid, all of us from JFA president Naganuma on down were worried about being manoeuvred into accepting such a compromise. At the same time, we were all aware that FIFA's statutes included a clause about the World Cup having to be hosted by a single nation, and Havelange had frequently declared that co-hosting was out of the question.

None of this was enough to put a complete end to our anxieties. Originally due out at the start of 1996, the inspection team's report remained unpublished in March. That was when Sultan Ahmad Shah, president of the AFC, summoned JFA president Naganuma and KFA president Chung to ask if

they might be interested in co-hosting the event. The precise exchange of words is not known to me, though I can confirm that Naganuma firmly expressed no interest and I suspect Chung did the same; but after the meeting the AFC sent a letter proposing a joint hosting to FIFA and to the six Confederation presidents.

Clutching at semantic straws

The date was May 22, 1996. I had flown into Zurich together with JFA president Ken Naganuma. Zurich was the home of FIFA. Each bidder had to make a bid presentation after which, at a June 1 meeting of the Executive Committee, the final decision on whether Korea or Japan would get to host the 2002 World Cup would be announced.

The ten days we spent between my arrival and the final decision was a strange time. It felt like a single day. We worked late every day making our final appeals to the 21 members of the FIFA Executive Committee whose votes would decide the outcome.

On May 30, two days before the final decision was scheduled to be announced, the JFA received a phone call from

FIFA. "Is Japan likely to accept a co-hosting of the event?" they inquired. "We want to get Japan's opinion before the Executive Committee meeting gets underway." A heated discussion began among the executives of Japan's Bidding Committee. Some people argued that we should risk the vote without signalling any acceptance of the idea of co-hosting. Others were worried that if our projections of how the FIFA committee members were going to vote were wrong, there was a real danger of the worst case scenario—a Korea-hosted World Cup—coming to pass. It was then that Kiichi Miyazawa, the former prime minister of Japan who chaired the Diet Members Association to Promote the 2002 FIFA World Cup Japan Bid, coolly stepped in. "Before anything else, we need FIFA to send us their inquiry about our willingness to accept a co-hosting in writing," he declared level-headedly. "Getting things properly written down is the basis of international diplomacy." He meant that if we made our case based on a phone call without any documentary evidence to back it up, we ran the risk of the counterparty later denying any recollection of the proposal they themselves made. Miyazawa, it should be pointed out, had participated in some important negotiations in his career. In September 1951, when Shigeru Yoshida,

the Japanese prime minister, signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty which officially ended World War II, Miyazawa had been his plenipotentiary. Following the wise counsel of the veteran diplomat, we requested FIFA to immediately produce a written version of the inquiry about co-hosting.

We then got in touch with FIFA Executive Committee members with whom we had good relationships to sound them out, trying to figure out what the likely impact of our rejecting the co-hosting idea might be. As we were busily contacting all sorts of people, the official letter of inquiry from FIFA arrived. We also finally got our hands on the delayed FIFA Inspection Team report. Japan and Korea had been evaluated equally. Contrary to rumour, not only was Japan not placed ahead of Korea, but the report even included the phrase, "The Inspection Team proposes that Japan and Korea co-host the event."

After looking over the letter from FIFA, Miyazawa declared that the final decision on co-hosting should lie with the Japan Football Association. By this stage, Japan was boxed in and only one choice was left. The JFA therefore drew up a response stating that they were open to FIFA's proposal of co-hosting. In drafting the letter, the JFA avoided using

unequivocal verbs like “agree” or “accept,” instead opting for “consider,” which seemed to offer more wriggle room. We were hoping that with our letter FIFA would postpone the decision on the host country for a few months while we could gain time to rethink our strategy. The majority of our team still believed, rather naively, that FIFA would never do anything that went against their own statutes. At the final critical phase, we were clutching at semantic straws in the effort to keep our hopes for a Japan-only World Cup alive. The letter was sealed and Okano delivered it to FIFA.

The cruel denouement came the following day, May 31, one day ahead of the scheduled date of the host country selection. On the first day of the two-day Executive Committee meeting, Havelange, who had been so consistent in his support for Japan, proposed that the 2002 World Cup be co-hosted by Japan and Korea. The motion was passed unanimously. I later heard that on his birthday, May 8, Havelange had dined with Antonio Samaranch, the president of the IOC. “You must not underestimate the strength of the anti-Havelange faction,” the Spaniard reportedly advised him. “It’s too risky for you to push the Japan-only bid.” Settling on the compromise of

a Japan-Korea joint hosting, Havelange then worked to persuade both countries indirectly. Political struggles inside FIFA had an enormous influence on the final decision.

A World Cup co-hosted by Japan and Korea…. It had been the dream of a World Cup in Japan that had inspired us to work so hard for six years. For us this was an answer that was no answer. The evening of the decision everyone on the Japan Bidding Committee cried tears of vexation. The fact that we'd been manoeuvred into accepting a co-hosting situation after having worked so hard to be sole hosts only made the shock of the joint hosting decision worse. We had secured a draw, but what we felt was an overwhelming sense of defeat.

For my part, I could not bring myself to accept the decision. I felt that it showed disrespect for Asia. I was convinced that somewhere behind the co-hosting plan lurked contempt for what was seen as a backward football region. While promoting our bid around the world, we had encountered plenty of people who knew nothing about Asia. Some thought that Japan and Korea were both part of China; others thought that we spoke the same language. Many people did not realise that the 2002 World Cup was going to have to be held in two countries separated by sea that had different cultures and

different languages. I found the joint hosting decision almost impossible to swallow.

The members of the Bidding Committee were sunk in gloom when Ken Naganuma spoke. "It's frustrating, I know, but let's channel that frustration into making a success of this event. Let's stage the best World Cup ever and amaze the world. I can't wait to see young Japanese footballers out there on the great stage of the World Cup." Kunishige Kamamoto chimed in, "Listen, they may call it a joint hosting, but the Japanese part alone will be the same size as the Argentina World Cup. Co-hosting or not doesn't matter; we'll make a wonderful occasion of it." Kamamoto's comment immediately brightened the mood. (Until the 1978 Argentina tournament, 16 teams had participated in the World Cup. This had risen to 24 in 1982, and would be raised again to 32—double the old total—at France in 1998.) At this stage, the Japan national team had not yet qualified for the finals in France. We had no option but to accept the co-hosting arrangement to ensure that Japan would get to play in the World Cup finals for the first time. The antagonism between FIFA and UEFA had produced a result that had blindsided us, but we had to be optimistic and look for any glimmer of hope.

Soon after the decision, Havelange invited Naganuma and Murata together with their wives to have dinner with him and Mrs. Havelange at the Savoy Hotel, which was where he always stayed when in Zurich. Havelange took the opportunity to say he was sorry. "I caused you all a lot of trouble," he said. "Please accept my sincere apologies for the way things turned out." While this may not have been enough to cure Naganuma's and Murata's chagrin and enervation at the time, on reflection they did feel that Havelange's frankness and sincerity acted as something of a morale booster. "For the mighty Havelange to apologise like that, he must have felt he'd done something unforgivable," the two men agreed.

Creating a Japan-Korea relationship by focusing on individual friendships

The result may have been ambiguous, but the efforts of the Japan Bidding Committee had culminated in a conclusion of sorts. I assumed that my secondment to the Bidding Committee would now end and I would be going back to Dentsu. But soon after we all returned to Japan from Zurich in mid-June, Naganuma, Okano, Kawabuchi and Ogura of the JFA visited

Dentsu to express their thanks for its support for the bid, and Naganuma asked Dentsu's president, Yutaka Narita, if he could not spare Kondoh and me to help with preparations for the tournament proper. Narita agreed on the spot, so I ended up segueing straight into the business of setting things up for the 2002 World Cup without a break of any kind.

My ability to concentrate on the World Cup project had snapped when Japan failed to achieve its goal of solo-hosting the tournament. My back was in agony and my overall level of physical exhaustion extreme. It was at this point that I dropped by the studio of the painter, Hiroshi Mikami. I had not seen Mikami for a while, but he had been my art teacher since I was about seven years old. "When you're really tired, the best thing is to go and relax deep in the countryside," he advised me. Taking his suggestion to heart, my wife and I headed straight off to a hot spring in northeastern Japan for a week of mental and physical recuperation. June is the rainy season in Japan and my eyes were drawn to the mountains visible from our room window. The mist moved over them like a living thing. One minute all you could see was a blanket of white, a moment later the mist would clear and the long jagged contours of the mountains stretched before your eyes

like a sumie ink and wash painting. As I gazed absent-mindedly at this scene, I felt miraculously better. I also recalled all the encouragement and support people had given me during the bid process and felt a wave of gratitude. As the tension drained away, I gradually started wanting to keep working on the World Cup. Japan and Korea would co-host the event: that decision was a fait accompli. Now when I thought about the importance of the relationship between our two nations, I felt not only that it would be very worthwhile but also that something like karma was involved.

In July 1996, the Bidding Committee changed its name to the 2002 FIFA World Cup Japan Preparatory Committee and started drafting Japan's proposals for the co-hosted World Cup. We were aiming to submit our suggestions to FIFA by late September. Though the punishing work we had done on the bid had taken a physical toll on us all, the head of the committee, Ogura, was an inspiring leader who led very much from the front. The first decision we took was that the "joint" event should be split and run separately in each of the host countries. Each country had its own way of doing things—not to mention its own language. Each side also had its pride. If the people in charge in Japan and Korea worked

side by side on the task, the only result would be extreme inefficiency. If everyone involved were forced to shuttle from one country to the other, the costs would be huge. That was the reasoning behind our plan for separate hosting, with things in Japan run by the Japanese and things in Korea by the Koreans. This stage of our work proved horribly gruelling. Not only were people physically exhausted, we were also short-handed since many of our colleagues from the Bidding Committee had returned to their regular jobs in the companies they worked for. My new life was the polar opposite of the old one. Instead of trips overseas, I spent all every day till midnight cooped up in meeting rooms. Getting used to the change was quite a struggle and I drew on my reserves of patience. Still, everyone's efforts paid off at the end of September, when we were able to put forward the Japanese co-hosting proposals on schedule.

Immediately afterwards, bad health forced Ogura to withdraw from frontline work for a while. Driven by his passion for a World Cup in Japan, he had performed Herculean feats and worn himself out. I was informed that I would take his place at the negotiations with the Korean side in September. Confronted with this important task, I was determined to do a good job and grateful to have a major part to play. Making the

event successful enough to effect an improvement in the relationship of our countries—that would be a priceless benefit. We worked with the sense that we were involved in something historic. My sense of commitment intensified and I made great efforts to expand my knowledge about our co-hosting partner. As October came around, initial contacts between the key people on each side gradually got underway and the framework for a co-hosted World Cup slowly began to take shape. I am sure that Japan's proposals played a useful part when FIFA drew up its first co-hosting plan.

In this "getting to know you" period, I made one business trip I won't forget in a hurry. On December 4 I flew to Seoul for the day with the JFA's Tokuaki Suzuki for our first meeting with the Korean side. I had complete trust in Suzuki with whom I'd been working on the World Cup since the bidding stage. It was a small meeting with only two people from each country. Both Korean participants were civil servants. Right from the start, the atmosphere was oppressively tense with long silences as though each side was trying to read the other's thoughts. The first decision we took was to make English—a language generally agreed not to admit of vagueness and obfuscation—the working language for meetings

between Japan and Korea. After that, each side listed their own particular concerns and the discussion bogged down somewhat. This nerve-wracking meeting lasted about two hours and by the time Suzuki and I boarded the return plane, we were quite drained.

Four days later, the basic framework of the 2002 World Cup was formally approved at the December 8 meeting of the FIFA Executive Committee in Barcelona. Momentum was building on the road to 2002. Meanwhile the co-hosting decision meant that we had to deal with the difficult task of cutting the number of Japanese host venues from 15 to 10 by year-end.

Around this time, several key members of the Preparatory Committee were replaced. Among the new arrivals was Hiroshi Ushijima of Sumitomo Metal Industries who came in to replace Junji Ogura as general secretary. Work began to go full swing. One of the first things I proposed was to establish a regular meeting between the general secretaries of the local organising committees (LOCs) of Japan and Korea, Hiroshi Ushijima and Choi Chang Shin. They met every month, switching venue between Japan and Korea. I then set up a range of committees for the key people from each

department to deal with international issues, PR, operations, and so on. This helped establish a robust cooperative framework between Japan and Korea. Ushijima and Choi becoming friends also helped various joint operations proceed smoothly. For my own part, I felt it would do more to make this historic co-hosting project a success if I engaged with the Koreans not as a member of an organisation, but as an individual. I am not actually that good a drinker, but I always made sure to put in an appearance at parties and dutifully joined in the chuga-lugging. The Japanese and Koreans have a lot in common so when the drink flowed both sides would get pretty animated. We would sing together, discuss our families, sometimes even share our difficulties. Revealing our true selves brought us closer together. By the time the 1998 World Cup in France came around, a relationship of trust had been formed.

To get this far had taken two years. At the start, when nothing seemed to be going well, I did sometimes panic. Then I had my eureka moment. "I want Japanese and Korean people who look back at our shared history in a few hundred years' time to see the 2002 co-hosting as the point when our relationship began to improve," I thought. Hearing that there were people with a similar philosophy on the Korean side

made me confident we could do a good job together. Ever since then, I've been convinced that the basic minimum unit of time in international relations is 100 years.

November 16, 1997, was the day that the Japan national team managed to secure a berth—its first ever—in the World Cup finals at the Asian qualifiers in Johor Bahru. It was also the day that the relationship between Japan and Korea became a relationship of equals. At the ninth match of the final round of the Asian World Cup qualifiers, Japan had to hold its ground against Korea, who had already qualified. The attitude of the Korean supporters was very much: "Let's go to the France World Cup together." It was very moving and I felt that all my work so far had been validated. When Japan secured its first berth in the finals, all the JFA members heaved a sign of relief. Japan had managed to preserve a clean sheet when it came to the convention of no country that had failed to qualify for the World Cup getting to host the event.

The 2002 FIFA World Cup Japan Organising Committee (JAWOC) was established on December 12, 1998, about six months after Japan had played in its first-ever World Cup. The chairman was Shoh Nasu, vice president of the Japan Business

Federation. Yasuhiko Endoh, a former vice minister in the Ministry of Home Affairs, was brought in as general secretary. As head of the international relations department, my job was to coordinate with FIFA and with the 2002 FIFA World Cup Korean Organising Committee (KOWOC). At the same time, I had also been appointed director of JAWOC's marketing department, so I worked hard selling local sponsorship packages to Japanese companies. The JFA's Tokuaki Suzuki and Dentsu's Tetsuya Murakami were an enormous help in the International Relations Department. After the France World Cup, two young FIFA staff were assigned to work with us on the 2002 World Cup, Daniel Rupf and Urs Kneubühler, who were both in their early thirties and tremendously committed to their jobs. Daniel was responsible for Japan and Urs for Korea. The ultimate success of the 2002 World Cup owed a lot to them. JAWOC's sponsorship sales were supported by Dentsu's new Football Marketing Division headed by Kazuhiko Iwamoto. With the expansion of its commitment to the football business, Dentsu had bulked up, establishing this new, football-dedicated team after Japan secured its place in the World Cup in France in October 1997.

The business side of the 2002 World Cup was

handled in a completely new manner. The marketing policy FIFA explained to us at a meeting in February 1998 differed markedly from the system in place until the 1998 World Cup in France where the LOC had considerable autonomy and control when it came to marketing matters. From now on FIFA was to be the party on all marketing contracts, even those signed with local sponsors, and would have exclusive management control. I protested energetically about this new arrangement to Flavio Battaini, FIFA's new marketing director, and to Philippe Margraff, in charge of marketing at ISL. But since the last two competitions in 1994 and 1998 had actually seen conflicts between FIFA partners and local sponsors end up in court, FIFA would not give an inch and after six months I stopped fighting back. Their decision remains in force today.

The broadcasting rights arrangements also changed in a big way. In 1996 FIFA announced that it had sold the broadcasting rights for the 2002 and 2006 World Cups to ISL and the Kirch Group for an enormous sum. Somewhat ironically, this change was prompted by UEFA president Johannson's criticism that Havelange is selling the World Cup broadcasting rights way too cheaply. (Havelange's strategy was to sell the broadcasting rights cheaply so that poorer

countries could also watch the World Cup, so promoting the spread of football.) The end result was that the World Cup TV broadcasting rights business grew to the same huge scale as the Olympic Games.

In March 2001, with the historic tournament little more than a year away, news came of some very disappointing personnel changes. JAWOC had decided to end the JFA secondment of a number of Dentsu staff, including me. I was mortified. Not only had I worked incredibly hard on behalf of the Japan Bidding Committee, I simply could not fathom the reasoning behind the decision. I was told that many key figures in the JFA—Naganuma, Okano, Kawabuchi and Ogura—had confronted the JAWOC executive committee about my being drafted out. Many of the staff were crying as I left JAWOC after my farewell speech there. The emotion was almost too much when I realised the extent to which people trusted me and relied on me.

The long and the short of it was that I returned full time to my post as deputy director of the Football Business Division in Dentsu. Thanks, however, to the heroic efforts of some of the people at the JFA, I was able to continue working with them in a different capacity. Given the title of JAWOC

advisor, I was put in charge of protocol—basically welcoming JFA guests and escorting them during the World Cup. I can never thank the people at the JFA—people with genuine love and passion for football—who enabled me to extend my involvement right through the historic co-hosting of the World Cup, even after my secondment had been terminated.

To the relief of many, the collapse of ISL, the marketing firm that handled all the FIFA marketing rights, had hardly any effect on the 2002 World Cup. Insolvency forced ISL to declare bankruptcy in May 2001, just over a year before the tournament. Fifteen companies had already signed up as FIFA Official Partners for the 2002 World Cup. To avoid any interruption in the services provided them, FIFA's Blatter hurriedly set up FIFA Marketing AG with himself as president. The employees of ISL's football division, around 70 people, made up the core of the new firm and managed to continue with the business of marketing, barely missing a beat in the run-up to the competition.

Despite various birth pangs, the first-ever co-hosted World Cup kicked off at Seoul World Cup Stadium in the Korean capital on May 31, 2002. Opening with a huge upset when champions France were toppled by Senegal, the

month-long competition drew not just Japan and Korea, but the whole world into a maelstrom of excitement. Twenty years had passed since the Unicef All-Star Game in the US, but my feelings of that time were only reconfirmed: football is not just a sport and a business that involves millions of dollars but a platform that brings people together, moving and inspiring them.

Japan's own 2002 baptism of fire took place on June 4 with its match against Belgium. Standing in Saitama Stadium 2002, I was no longer deputy director of Dentsu's Football Business Division or a JAWOC advisor. All the highs and lows I had experienced in the lead up to the event as a member of the Japan Bidding Committee and director of JAWOC's international relations and marketing departments went clean out of my head. I was just an ordinary football fan. The sight of the Japanese revelling in the great global festival of the World Cup made me completely happy.

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The Culmination of the Rights Business The FIFA Club World Cup

FIFA's first attempt at a club world cup tournament ends in failure

In January 2000, while I was working hard to make a success of the first-ever joint World Cup as director of JAWOC's International Relations and Marketing Departments, a new competition was launched to determine the world champion football club. The phrase "world champion" may bring the Toyota European/South American Cup to mind, but this was something different. A new event, it was being held in Brazil rather than Japan, and the man behind it was Sepp Blatter. Appointed FIFA president just prior to the opening of the 1998 France World Cup, Blatter's focus was on the ascent of football nations from outside Europe and South America. Proposing to determine the "real" world club champion with a World-Cup-like tournament featuring the champions of the six confederations at club level, he organised the FIFA Club World Championship in a format quite different to the Toyota

Cup. FIFA must have been keen to roll out a new business model at the club level.

Eight clubs participated in the first FIFA Club World Championship in 2000. The champions of the six confederations, they were England's Manchester United (European champion); Brazil's Vasco da Gama (South American champion); Saudi Arabia's Al-Nassr (Asian champion); Morocco's Raja Casablanca (African champion); Mexico's Necaxa (champion of North and Central America and the Caribbean); Australia's South Melbourne (Oceanian champion) plus host country Brazil's Corinthians and guest club Real Madrid of Spain. The teams were organised into two groups of four for the group round, with the winners of each group meeting in the final. European superstars Real Madrid contented themselves with second place in Group A, and Manchester United, the other European powerhouse, with third place in Group B, meaning that neither team came close to the chance of victory.

The final ended up as an all-Brazilian contest between Vasco da Gama and Corinthians. Since the event was being held in Brazil, this made for a very exciting showdown. Ultimately, Corinthians beat the South American champions Vasco da Gama in a penalty shoot-out and won the

championship in splendid style.

With two Brazilian teams participating and an all-Brazil final, the competition got plenty of coverage in the host country and attracted large crowds for matches featuring either local team. But for matches involving only non-Brazilian teams, attendance was uniformly poor. It undermined the grand concept of a true world championship, that Corinthians, the eventual winner, was not one of the six confederation champions but had just lucked into taking part via the host country category. Meanwhile the early exit of European teams Real Madrid and Manchester United prompted questions as to whether they had been able to play their best under so tough a schedule. The teams had to fly all the way to South America in the middle of their national league season and play their first match within just two or three days of getting there.

The first FIFA Club World Championship seems to have been less than successful on the marketing front too. Sales of sponsorships and broadcasting rights were dire. There was simply not enough preparation time to market the event. FIFA responded by announcing that in 2001 the number of participating teams would go up from eight to twelve and Madrid would be the venue for the second edition. Ultimately,

however, the second Club World Championship never took place. Fallout from the bankruptcy of ISL, FIFA's marketing agency, prevented them from assembling the sponsors they wanted. Finding themselves short of funds for the tournament, FIFA were forced to cancel it two months before it was due to kick off.

The Toyota Cup runs out of road

I was so busy working on preparations for the 2002 World Cup at the time of the first FIFA Club World Championship that I was only dimly aware of it. Still, it was impossible for anyone connected with the Toyota Cup not to feel perturbed. A second competition packaged as a contest to be world champion had materialised out of the blue. Worse still, it was an official FIFA event, and it trumped the Toyota Cup, being on a grander scale with the participation of all six confederation champion clubs, rather than just two. There were plenty of people who felt the Toyota Cup was in crisis with its whole raison d'être undermined.

The Toyota Cup had started to feel like something of a dead-end from the late 1990s. The main reason was the

cracks that had begun appearing in the traditional "Europe vs. South America" structure of the football world. This was primarily the result of the European Champions Cup having been expanded into the Champions League in the 1992-1993 season by UEFA and TEAM's Klaus Hempel. The tournament was far bigger than before: more teams took part and a round-robin group phase was added to the original knockout format. The increased scale boosted the tournament's popularity and commercial value, with the broadcasting rights, sponsorship income, ticket sales, and merchandising sales giving a massive boost to UEFA's profits. UEFA was not only able to distribute more money to the clubs that took part, but they also created a system where the better the teams performed, the more they earned. Teams could win an additional bonus for each draw or win, and there was a lucrative prize for the champion. And while the World Cup was held only once every four years, the Champions League was held annually. Strong clubs able to get through to the final on a regular basis could boost their annual revenues very substantially indeed. The powerhouse European clubs used this financial windfall to further beef up their player rosters so that the top teams became able to field two line-ups of first-team quality.

The December 1995 Bosman ruling of the European Court of Justice strengthened the clubs' position even further. This decision stated that any EU player who had reached the end of his contract with his club was free to transfer to any other EU club. A law was also passed to the effect that clubs within the EU could not treat players with EU nationality as foreigners. The EU clubs lost no time in cleverly turning this law to their advantage. They scrutinised the lineage of South American players—South America is, of course, a continent of immigrants—established their European origins, and secured dual nationality for them. The result was a surge of South American players with freshly acquired EU nationalities in EU clubs. This definitely contributed to the widening of the gap between European and South American clubs.

With the big European clubs taking advantage of the newly liberalised transfer market to reinforce their line-ups on a serious scale almost annually, the traditional "Europe vs. South America" model that had characterised football back when the Toyota Cup was founded in 1981 had collapsed and was replaced by a new "World All-Stars vs. South America" structure. With all the players of national-team standard transferring to Europe, the South American clubs suffered a decline

in popularity and skill levels. Naturally enough, Japanese football fans tended to support the star-studded European clubs. By the late 1990s, the original idea behind the Toyota Cup—Europe and South America battling it out for the world championship—was losing its lustre.

Nonetheless, our job at Dentsu was to make sure the Toyota Cup succeeded both as a spectacle and a business. From the late 1990s, worrying about which teams would make it through when the UEFA Champions League reached the quarterfinal stage became an annual ritual for us. It was the participation of the world-famous big European clubs that generated big crowds and revenues for us. The Champions League itself might have been more exciting had there been frequent upsets, but from the Toyota Cup perspective the ideal was for one of the powerhouse clubs of Spain, England, Germany, or Italy to carry off the trophy.

I digress a little, but the freedom of movement for workers guaranteed in Article 39 of the EC Treaty has also played a part in driving the multinationalisation of modern European football. For instance, Barcelona's starting line-up in the 2008-2009 Champions League final consisted of six "true" Spaniards and five non-Spanish players. Manchester

United, their opponents whose 2-0 defeat deprived them of the chance to win back-to-back championships, had just three English players on the team to eight foreigners. Fielding so small a proportion of home country players was not a phenomenon unique to Manchester United or Barcelona; the multinationalisation of football had spread throughout Europe. Sepp Blatter was so concerned about the undermining of clubs' national identities that he proposed the 6+5 rule in May 2008, about two and a half years after the Bosman ruling. Restricting the number of foreign players to a maximum of five, the rule stipulated that the other six players fielded at the start of the match should be of the same nationality as the club. The rule aimed to safeguard the local identity of the clubs and promote the education and training of young players from the country.

The disintegration of the old "Europe vs. South America" dichotomy was not the only problem assailing the Toyota Cup. The May 2001 collapse of ISL—who had the exclusive marketing rights to the event—also had a serious impact. ISL had contracts with UEFA and CONMEBOL as co-organisers of the Toyota Cup. Not long after ISL's bankruptcy, however, UEFA general secretary Gerhard Aigner declared to us that the

bankruptcy of the rightsholder ISL invalidated any contracts between the three parties. Dentsu had taken over the rights from the defunct ISL, so made repeated attempts to persuade UEFA, but Aigner would not give an inch.

Dentsu was in a tight spot, but we couldn't just let ourselves be walked all over. Everyone in the Football Business Division directly involved in the Toyota Cup felt we could not let the flame of this wonderful event, which so motivated and inspired Japanese footballers, go out. I was under pressure and felt an enormous sense of responsibility. We got in touch with CONMEBOL, with whom we had long been friendly. Dr. Nicholás Léoz, the president, and Eduardo Deluca, the general secretary, assured us they would never do anything to make life difficult for an old friend of CONMEBOL like Dentsu, and readily agreed to work with us on continuing the Toyota Cup. At the same time, Shunichiro Okano, JFA president, went straight to UEFA president Lennart Johannson to explain why the Toyota Cup was in danger of being cancelled and to beg him to persuade others in UEFA to let the event continue.

Negotiations were resumed, but Aigner's insistence that all contracts were void was unshaken. At our wit's end,

we had to come up with another way to sort the problem out. The 2001 European champion was Bayern München. It happened that Shuji Komori, the Dentsu general manager in charge of the Toyota Cup, was a good friend of Karl Heinz Rummenigge, Bayern's vice president. We got Komori to talk to Rummenigge, who assured us that Bayern would take part in the Toyota Cup in December 2001 and were looking forward to their shot at the world championship. Ultimately, we managed to get Bayern to talk Aigner round, extricating the Toyota Cup from the worst crisis in its history.

The JFA and Dentsu worked frantically throughout most of 2001 to keep the flame of the long-running Toyota Cup alive in the face of all these difficulties. It was in late September that we finally hit on the solution described above, so it was November that I went to visit Eduardo Deluca in CONMEBOL's Buenos Aires offices to sort out a few final matters of procedure. I remember my anxiety when I arrived at the eerily empty airport at JFK and boarding the American Airlines flight from New York to Buenos Aires soon after 9.11. However, it was only when I was chatting with Deluca in his office that I truly felt the challenge confronting the Toyota Cup had been seen off for one and for all.

In fact it had not. As Aigner's response had shown, UEFA's stance was hawkish: far from feeling any sort of commitment to keeping the Toyota Cup going, they seemed to regard its possible cancellation with indifference. Though our relationship with Rummenigge and Bayern München saved us in 2001, we had to come up with some kind of strategy to continue the event longer term. Eventually, the only way we could secure UEFA's longer-term cooperation was to pay them a higher contract fee and agree to one-off, single-year contracts which left the event's future up in the air and gave us little in the way of peace of mind.

To continue or to merge? That is the question

The old "Europe vs. South America" structure of the Toyota Cup had broken down to be replaced by a new—and fundamentally unfair—structure of the "World All-Stars vs. South America." The introduction of one-off contracts and higher contract fees were unsettling changes. Then in 2002 the event moved from its traditional venue at the National Stadium in central Tokyo to International Stadium Yokohama. The Toyota Cup had changed almost out of recognition over the

two decades since November 1981 when it was launched. Its original value as a world championship had been eroded. To be brutally frank, the early 21st century saw the Toyota Cup heading down a dead-end street.

All this was happening just when FIFA, in sharp contrast to UEFA, were desperately eager to succeed with a club level championship of their own. The FIFA Club World Championship in Brazil in 2000 had been poorly received, while the 2001 competition had suffered the ignominy of being abruptly cancelled when it failed to attract enough sponsors. None of this, however, had been enough to persuade Sepp Blatter to give up on his plan to write a new chapter in FIFA's history. Indeed, Blatter had made resurrecting the FIFA Club World Championship one of his manifesto pledges in the 2002 FIFA presidential election. After his reelection, he took the decision to relaunch the tournament at the FIFA Club World Championship Organising Committee meeting in December 2003. He followed this up in January 2004 with a unilateral announcement. "We will terminate the Toyota Cup this year," he declared. "FIFA will absorb the Toyota Cup and relaunch the FIFA Club World Championship."

This hit us like a bolt from the blue. The shock

was all the greater because in the previous month, December 2003, we had managed to sign a contract with UEFA and CONMEBOL for a four-year Toyota Cup contract covering the years 2003 to 2006, instead of a one-year contract. We immediately contacted FIFA for assurances, and found out they were not aware of the newly signed four-year Toyota Cup contract. We also got in touch with UEFA and CONMEBOL and they both agreed that Dentsu had right on its side and that the new four-year Toyota Cup contract should be respected. As the person who had finalised the new four-year contracts, I appointed Tetsuya Murakami to talk to FIFA. He met with Jérôme Valcke, FIFA marketing director, and confronted him with the facts of the four-year contracts and UEFA's and CONMEBOL's support for Dentsu. Surprisingly, FIFA conceded that they had overstepped the mark. At a press conference at the FIFA Executive Committee meeting in London in March 2004, Sepp Blatter and Urs Linsi, FIFA general secretary, made a statement: "We wish to modify our announcement about FIFA absorbing the Toyota Cup. The Toyota Cup is an event managed by Toyota and Dentsu. We therefore intend to have sincere discussions with them about how the event will develop in the future and to work with them to make those

developments happen." The situation reverted safely back to what it was before all the rumpus started.

FIFA then officially communicated to Dentsu its hope of absorbing the Toyota Cup and expanding it into a competition with a club-based World Cup format. FIFA stressed that the wishes of the event sponsor, Toyota, and Dentsu would determine what would happen. If the Japanese parties agreed to the merger, then additional clubs would be added to the competition. Were we to refuse, however, the Toyota Cup would continue exactly as it was. For those of us on the Japanese side who had the sense that the Toyota Cup was, to some degree, stuck in a cul-de-sac, FIFA's proposal was no frivolous suggestion to be dismissed with contempt. But within Dentsu, there were people (of whom I was one) who instinctively rejected the idea of letting the event be absorbed and FIFA getting to hold all control and rights. Personally, I thought our priority should be to ensure that this world-class event, which had been run by a Japanese company for decades and had built up its own history and status, should continue. In the end, Takehiro Usami, the director of the Football Business Division, and the Dentsu team in charge of the Toyota account decided the best thing would be to explore the possibilities of

developing and expanding the event while the option to do so was open.

Of course, the first thing Dentsu had to do was find out what Toyota, the main sponsor, wanted to do. I went along with Dentsu's Toyota account executives to meet with Toyota's advertising department. We gave an objective explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of either continuing the Toyota Cup in its original format or developing it together with FIFA. When talking about FIFA's proposal to take over the event and expand it, we emphasised the positive: that FIFA's involvement could help the event Toyota had spent so many years building up develop in a new and interesting way. We left the final decision on which way to go to Toyota. But Toyota made no effort to conceal their dissatisfaction with our presentation. "We pay for your services," they complained. "Your job as our agent is to recommend a clear course of action. There was no clear direction in anything you said just now."

We had to go back to square one. We started gathering information from FIFA, UEFA, and CONMEBOL to provide Toyota with more detailed advice. FIFA told us that since Dentsu held the rights to organise the event until

2006, they would entrust all aspects of the Toyota Cup's future development to us. In the busy schedule of world football, December, the month when the Toyota Cup was always held, is the only mutually convenient time slot for European and South American clubs. That meant that the only way to resume the FIFA Club World Championship was to build it on the foundations of the Toyota Cup. UEFA was often at loggerheads with FIFA on rights matters, and some UEFA people were apparently opposed to the Toyota Cup being folded into a FIFA competition. But the new UEFA general secretary Lars-Christer Olsson, Aigner's successor, was known for his dovishness. He acted as conciliator between FIFA and UEFA and won round anyone with objections. The upshot was that we advised Toyota to take what looked liked a once-in-a-lifetime chance and go for the merge-and-expand option with FIFA. Opinion was divided inside Toyota and considerable time passed with no response forthcoming. Finally, in early autumn 2003, Toyota decided to make a go of it.

Once Toyota had decided to bring down the curtain on the Toyota Cup's twenty-four-year history, Dentsu told FIFA that there was one precondition for the merger and expansion of the

competition to go ahead: the club-level World Cup they were planning to launch had to be held in Japan for the time being. From the start, Toyota as well as JFA president Kawabuchi were adamant on this point, and Blatter agreed to their request. Their insistence was only natural. Japan had experience in running the event while an expansion meant enhanced marketing opportunities to look forward to.

Further to this, FIFA also allowed the Toyota brand name to be incorporated into the event name. As I mentioned earlier, normal practice with FIFA competitions is for multiple companies to be listed as official partners on a "one company per one business category" basis. Competitors in the auto business being excluded from sponsorship was par for the course, but for Toyota to became part of the event name was an extraordinary exception to the rule. I think this was FIFA's way of showing their respect for Toyota, which had done so much for them as main sponsor over the Toyota Cup's 24-year history, and of signalling that they wanted the collaboration to continue in the same vein.

But it was too early to relax and congratulate ourselves on a job well done. The expansion of the Toyota Cup involved FIFA absorbing an event that had previously

belonged to UEFA and CONMEBOL. Since both confederations stood to lose a good source of revenue, Murakami and I visited both their headquarters to make a formal apology. We afterwards invited FIFA general secretary Urs Linsi, UEFA general secretary Lars-Christer Olsson, and CONMEBOL general secretary Eduardo Deluca to come over to Japan at the same time so we could get the message across that Toyota, the JFA, and Dentsu intended to collaborate closely to make sure the new FIFA club competition was a success. Although they were only here for a single day, the general secretaries of the world's three most powerful football bodies returned home secure in the knowledge that they were dealing with people they could trust.

Big crowds for little-known clubs

I am delighted to once again return to Japan to hold a FIFA competition here following the incredible experience we had with the very successful 2002 FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan™. With their gracious hospitality, professional organisation and enthusiastic support of the beautiful game, FIFA is pleased to know that both this and next year's FIFA Club

World Championship Toyota Cup will take place in this lovely country.

So began the message of FIFA President Sepp Blatter in the official programme of the 2005 edition of the FIFA Club World Championship. The strengths that the Japanese side brought to the table were clearly recognised, as FIFA actually delegated all the operation to the JFA and Dentsu. Not only was Toyota there as presenting partner with its name incorporated into the event name, but Nippon Television (NTV), who had broadcast the Toyota Cup over the years, was designated the host broadcaster. I imagine that Blatter had considerable respect for what the two firms had achieved over the Toyota Cup's twenty-four-year history. After all, where else can you find a single company that has backed the same tournament for almost a quarter of a century? Blatter's reference to "professional organisation" is evidence, I believe, of the high degree of trust he had in the event management skills of the JFA and Dentsu, who had successfully hosted FIFA competitions like the 1979 World Youth Championship, the 1993 U-17 and the 2002 World Cup.

Called the "FIFA Club World Championship Toyota Cup Japan" in 2005, the name of the tournament was changed to the "FIFA Club World Cup presented by Toyota" in 2006. The format of the competition was almost the same as the short-lived first edition of the FIFA Club World Championship in 2000. In the relaunched Club World Cup, the six champions representing the confederations of Europe (UEFA), South America (CONMEBOL), Asia (AFC), Africa (CAF), North & Central America and the Caribbean (CONCACAF), and Oceania (OFC) contested the world championship in Japan. I'm not against describing the competition as the club version of the World Cup, but the Club World Cup differs in three fundamental ways from its big brother: there's no host country category; there is a wide gap in the skill and popularity levels of the participating clubs; and the number of teams taking part is much smaller.

These three points have a major impact on the ability of the event to attract spectators. Generally with events held in Japan, it's difficult to maintain a high profile for tournaments when no Japanese team is playing. Nor are there many Japanese people eager to schlep all the way to the stadium to watch a game featuring an unknown team. Plus with just

six teams to the World Cup's thirty-two, fewer teams means a smaller overall scale with lower spectator numbers inevitable. The Club World Cup was thus a tough challenge, but as executive event producer, Dentsu needed to pull a rabbit out of the hat to make it a success. A policy of stressing the expanded competition as an official FIFA event to boost interest was adopted. We knew ahead of time that the star-studded European clubs would generate good attendance figures, but we needed to come up with a game-changer of a strategy to pull in the crowds for the lesser-known champion teams, particularly from OFC and CONCACAF.

In 2005, while we were mulling over what to do, an interesting piece of news came our way. Pierre Littbarski, who had both played and worked as a technical director in the J.League, was then coaching Australia's Sydney FC, the OFC champions. Littbarski apparently wanted to get his hands on the Japanese striker Kazuyoshi "Kaz" Miura for the duration of the Club World Cup. With our concerns about attendance, this was a godsend. So a short-term transfer agreement between Sydney FC and Miura's club was concluded. When all the arrangements had been safely made, the news that Japan's own "King Kaz" would be playing in a FIFA world championship

generated plenty of media buzz and nearly 30,000 people went to watch Sydney FC's first game against the Costa Rican CONCACAF champions Deportivo Saprissa. In 2006 New Zealand's Auckland City, an amateur club that had fought its way onto the world stage as OFC champions, took a page from Sydney FC's playbook. They were eager to get a supplementary Japanese player, and the addition of former Japan midfielder Teruo Iwamoto boosted interest, garnering them a crowd of around 30,000 for their first game against Egypt's Al Ahly, the African champions. In the absence of Japanese clubs in the competition, the participation of Japanese players greatly assisted us in our goal of getting large and stable attendance figures.

Things went as expected in the later phases of the tournament. The European champions, with their global all-star line-ups, duly made it through to the final—Liverpool in 2005, Barcelona in 2006—providing us with good crowd numbers. A crowd of 66,821 turned out for the 2005 final in which Brazil's São Paolo beat Liverpool 1-0 to become the first-ever Club World Cup champions. When Internacional, another South American champion from Brazil, defeated Barcelona 1-0 in the 2006 final, there was a 67,128-strong

crowd at International Stadium Yokohama. As these figures are just a whisker below those of World Cup finals when countries are going head to head, it's fair to say that the 2005 and 2006 Club World Cups did very well.

FIFA gives high marks to Dentsu's business know-how

As the executive producer of the Club World Cup, Dentsu needed to make it even more of a hit. The best strategy to develop the Club World Cup into an event worthy to rank alongside the World Cup with all its history and tradition was to emulate the older tournament. All FIFA's competitions, the World Cup included, have a host country category to whip up excitement and get local soccer fans involved. This fact, plus the positive impact that the appearance of Japanese players had had in the two previous Club World Cups, prompted the JFA and Dentsu to propose the creation of a new host country category to FIFA. Concerned that this might result in two clubs from the same country taking part, FIFA created a regulation to deal with that eventuality. "If a J.League Club wins the AFC Champions League (ACL) in the year the Club World Cup is held in Japan, then the host country slot will instead be

transferred to the ACL runners-up," it states, thus ensuring that two teams from Japan could not take part at the same time. The motion was approved at a FIFA Executive Committee meeting on March 23, 2007. Since that year's competition, the J.League champion club has been allowed to take part in the Club World Cup in the host country category. Obviously, the presence of a local team boosts attendance, giving a positive effect to the overall economics of the event.

But the host country category did not need to be used for the first two years after its introduction. In 2007 the Urawa Red Diamonds, then Gamba Osaka in 2008 fought their way to victory in the ACL to become Asian champions. My memories of Urawa and Gamba confronting top clubs are still vivid. After trouncing Iran's Sepahan, ACL runners-up, in the quarterfinals, Urawa Reds faced AC Milan, the eventual trophy winners, in the 2007 semifinals. Before an impassioned crowd of 67,005—almost equal to the gate for the previous year's final—the two teams, both rock-solid in defence, fought an evenly matched contest. Urawa Reds ended conceding a goal in the 68th minute to lose by a narrow 1-0 margin, but the play was of so high a level that Adriano Galliani, the AC Milan vice president, declared, "Urawa were perfect in the first half."

They certainly proved that they could give the world's best a run for their money. In 2008 it was the turn of Gamba Osaka to dazzle the world. Beating ACL runners-up Adelaide United in the quarterfinals 1-0 put them in the semifinals, where they confronted Manchester United. Gamba were two goals down by half time, but remained uncowed before the Red Devils, playing relentlessly attacking football to score three goals in the second half. Ultimately, Gamba lost 5-3 to Manchester United, who went on to win the trophy, but the Japanese club impressed not just the 67,618 people in the stadium, but football fans the world over.

In 2009, the Club World Cup was held in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. Barcelona ended up being crowned world champions for (surprisingly!) the first time. Hosting the competition in the UAE threw the positive and negative aspects of the event into sharp relief. Since there's only a couple of hours' time difference between the Middle East and Europe, many European football fans followed the UAE tournament on TV. They thrilled to watch live footage of Lionel Messi, who had just been awarded the Ballon d'Or as the best European footballer of the year by French magazine France

Football, score the dramatic winning goal in the second half of extra time in the final against Argentina's Estudiantes. On the negative side, with no Japanese club taking part and most matches including the final starting at 1 a.m. in Japan, NTV had a hard time getting viewers.

In the UAE too, we were at our wit's end when it came to increasing attendance at matches not involving the star-studded European clubs or the host country team. After host country club Al Ahly was knocked out in its first match in 2009, crowds were poor: the match between African champion Mazembe (Republic of Congo) and Asian champion Pohang Steelers (Korea Rep.) had a gate of 9,627; meanwhile the clash between OFC champion Auckland City (New Zealand) and CONCACAF champion Atlante (Mexico) attracted only 7,222 spectators. It's no great surprise that interest falls for matches between clubs with few, or no, world-famous players and with profiles and skill-levels that clearly lag the European and South American champions. Still, as executive event producer, Dentsu can hardly stand idly by when confronted with stadiums full of empty seats. We needed to figure out a new strategy to address this issue. The 2010 tournament was once again held in the UAE, but the 2011 and 2012 Club World

Cups will be staged in Japan again.

My take on the Club World Cup is very positive. I see its creation as marking a turning point for Dentsu. Until then we had operated as a marketing partner to ISL. ISL watched out for us. But their May 2001 bankruptcy forced us to stand on our own two feet. The Club World Cup then helped us further strengthen our links to FIFA, already strong thanks to the 2002 World Cup. Dentsu people now sit alongside leading figures from the world's football associations on the FIFA Club World Cup Organising Committee. As mentioned earlier, FIFA assigned all the marketing rights of the event to Dentsu. It all shows how Dentsu's business model now extends beyond advertising to encompass content. The launch of the Club World Cup not only won Dentsu FIFA's broad-based trust, it was also a catalyst for us to start acting independently on the global stage.

Almost 30 years have passed since the first Toyota Cup. As seen with the expanded event, for which Dentsu is responsible in its role of executive event producer, Dentsu's football business has so far achieved success on a global scale. FIFA have given us high marks for everything we have achieved so far, but another turning point is approaching. We

must reevaluate our strategy to make sure that we can continue to contribute to the development of global football.

Chapter7

Believing in Asia's Potential Setting up the East Asian Football Federation

Turning pain into gain: setbacks just make us try harder

I first felt intensely conscious of Asia as a region on May 31, 1996, that unforgettable day when it was announced that Japan and Korea would co-host the FIFA World Cup. The joint hosting decision was the result of our two countries having been turned into a political football (if you'll excuse the pun) in the squabbles between FIFA and UEFA. FIFA even rode roughshod over their own statute about the World Cup having to be hosted by a single country. How could I not feel that Asia had been openly slighted? The South American football family had always been sympathetic towards Japan. By contrast, UEFA, in particular the Western European nations who are the undisputed leaders of the football world, didn't seem to take Japan or Asia seriously. Surely the best way to overcome the hurt was to win back our pride? We needed to make the world sit up and recognise our worth as a region, and Japan teaming up with its 2002 World Cup partner Korea to enhance

the solidarity and cohesion of the East Asian region was a great place to start. I wanted the people of Asia to turn their slighted dignity into a source of strength. Were we content just to be grateful at being awarded a co-hosted World Cup, that would not bode well for Asia's future. On the evening in May 1996, while I was seething at the compromise solution of a co-hosting, another more cool-blooded side of me was already making plans for the future of Asian football.

The JFA also felt that Asia, particularly East Asia, should become more closely integrated. The fact is that had Japan's Tadao Murata come out on top at the 1994 FIFA vice presidential election at the AFC, Japan's solo bid for the World Cup might well have been a shoo-in. The final results though were as follows: KFA president Chung Mong Joon got eleven votes; Kuwait Football Association president Sheikh Ahmed Al-Fahad Al-Ahmed Al-sabah got ten; while Murata ended up with only two. With an overwhelming margin of victory against his Japanese rival, Chung Mong Joon became a FIFA vice president representing Asia, and I have already told the story of how effectively he used his position to help Korea's bid for the World Cup.

In the AFC election for the FIFA Executive

Committee, Japan suffered three defeats in a row. Murata's 1994 loss was followed by defeats for Saburo Kawabuchi in 1997 and Junji Ogura in 1998. Japan may be one of the world's biggest economies and have a level of football that makes it a leader in Asia, but our political influence at the AFC is extremely precarious. Why was our influence so weak, and why were we so frequently defeated in these elections? Clearly the inability to secure bloc votes was our biggest handicap. While there were regional organisations like the Asean Football Federation (AFF), the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) and the West Asian Football Federation (WAFF), there was no East Asian Football Federation, something that deprived us of bloc votes in AFC elections. A fraught and painful history explains why there is a tradition of enmity between the various East Asian football associations—Japan and South Korea, Japan and China, South Korea and North Korea, China and Chinese Taipei (Taiwan)—and why they all tended to go their own way.

If Japan wanted to reinforce its influence in Asia and the rest of the world, it needed to transcend all such historical and political enmities and establish a football federation for the East Asia region. All the key figures in the

JFA enthusiastically propounded the importance of solidarity among the East Asian countries. So on that May evening in 1996 when the World Cup co-hosting was more or less forced on us, my conviction that Asia needed to integrate more to restore its own dignity and put itself on an equal footing to Western Europe only intensified. I told the JFA that I was keen to work with them. My involvement in the project had begun.

The current members of the East Asian Football Federation (EAFF) are associations from ten countries and regions. They are Japan, Korea Rep. (South Korea), PR China, DPR Korea (North Korea), Hong Kong, Chinese Taipei, Guam, Macau, Mongolia and the Northern Mariana Islands. A federation of this size is not easy to run. Although the EAFF lists the altruistic goal of "developing football in the region" as one of its key objectives, plenty of the member countries have a far narrower view. Given the state of the overall economy and of football in the member countries that's no surprise, but some of the associations are more focused on improving things for themselves than on the overall development of East Asia. Trying to bring ten countries, each with its own agenda, into line is a challenge, as you can well imagine.

The road leading to the founding of the federation was hardly a smooth ride. It was around 2000 that the movement for East Asian countries to unite into a federation really started to gain traction. As JAWOC director of international relations, I was then busy negotiating with KOWOC. In parallel, however, I also started exploring the possibility of setting up a regional federation through discussions with representatives of all the East Asian football associations. I felt a strong sense of duty, but I also felt that the moment was right. Japan and Korea had a fraught history, but as the two countries worked on preparing a co-hosted World Cup, they were trying to use the energy of football to rebuild their relationship. Kim Sang Jin and Sam H. Ka of the KFA played a crucial role in this respect. The wisdom and experience of Kim Sang Jin, then vice president of the KFA, was especially helpful in bringing our two nations together to pursue a common goal. The sight of Japan and Korea overcoming suspicion and hostility, collaborating to make the co-hosted event a success and working together for the future of East Asia must have been an inspiration to the other East Asian nations.

Every time there was an AFC Congress or some other committee meeting at which representatives of member

associations gathered, I started courting the representatives of the East Asian countries that were under the AFC umbrella but not in the South East Asia Football Federation. I did large amounts of drinking at quite shabby street hawkers' stalls. There might be Ichiro Fujita and Takeo Okada of the JFA and myself, together with Alexandre Rego of the Macao FA and Richard Lai of the Guam FA, all enthusiastically talking about founding an East Asian federation.

At the beginning, the other East Asian nations did not support the concept wholeheartedly. While the football associations of Japan, South Korea and China, countries with economic clout and a higher level of football, recognised the importance of coming together as a federation, the other associations felt differently. Quite a few examined the positives and negatives only to conclude that the disadvantages of uniting outweighed the advantages.

In our efforts to persuade the less enthusiastic associations, we did a great deal of this street stall diplomacy. We worked hard to bridge any gaps and convince them of the importance of establishing the federation. In Japan, our favoured venue in Tokyo was under the railway tracks in the Yurakucho district, and we also knew similarly ramshackle

places in Seoul, Beijing and Hong Kong. I used the same techniques I had used in the run-up to the 2002 World Cup: pouring people drinks (and having them poured for me!), getting to know people as individuals to build relationships of mutual trust. I won over the representatives of the less well-off associations by declaring that I would be in charge of the marketing side with full responsibility for finding sponsors. As I expanded my campaign of street stall diplomacy, gradually more and more people began to buy in to the idea.

The Chinese national team secured their first-ever berth in the World Cup in October 2001. This historic achievement gave a big boost to the establishment of the federation. However fraught their historical background, the three nations of Japan, South Korea and China together formed the central axis of East Asia, and all of them would be appearing in the 2002 World Cup hosted in Asia. In a way, the historical challenges that confronted us only made the idea of forming a union more attractive. With the 2002 World Cup looming, at last all the East Asian associations began to face the same way.

East Asian Football Federation deep in the red from the get-go

Japan, South Korea and China formed the core of the new federation. Agreement was reached that a biennial pan-regional competition should be held to increase the penetration of football and boost the skill level of East Asia. The chances of setting the federation up were certainly rising, but there were plenty of twists and turns before we got around to creating the organisation chart and making any official announcement. Who would be federation president? Where would we site the secretariat? Who would be appointed general secretary? Japan's having originated the idea of launching the federation worked to our advantage. The first president and the general secretary were Japanese; the secretariat was also provisionally sited in Japan; and the first East Asian Football Championship was also scheduled to be held here. The Japanese side proposed that every two years thereafter the federation presidency, the hosting of the East Asian Football Championship, and the location of the secretariat should be rotated between Japan, South Korea and China, and the member associations all agreed.

The EAFF was officially established on May 28, 2002. As on-the-ball football fans will probably notice, that

was just three days prior to the opening of the 2002 World Cup. Our plan was for the announcement of the establishment of the federation to make a big splash while journalists and football insiders from around the world were in Seoul for the opening match. A meeting was held in the early morning from 7 a.m. followed by a press conference. The leaders of the football associations from the initial eight member countries (DPR Korea joined a year later in 2003, and the Northern Mariana Islands in 2008) reconfirmed and approved everything that had been agreed on so far: that the two-year presidency would rotate between Japan, South Korea and China; that the East Asian Football Championship would be held biennially in the country of the serving president; and that exclusive marketing rights would be assigned to Dentsu. Amidst the glare of media attention, the EAFF was officially announced.

On August 14, soon after the World Cup, the AFC Congress held an election for the FIFA Executive Committee, and JFA vice president Junji Ogura became the first Japanese to be elected for 33 years. There is no doubt that the solidarity of the freshly established EAFF and Fujita's and Okada's experience with elections played a significant part in Ogura's success. Coming soon after Kawabuchi's appointment to the

JFA presidency, this was more good news for the Japanese football world.

We had launched Ogura's election campaign a week after the 2002 World Cup ended on June 30. Ogura and I visited more than fifteen countries in roughly five weeks. One of our more memorable experiences was travelling through Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, crossing from one country to another, all by car. During this peak summer season, the Lebanon border was unusually crowded with cars full of Arab families on their way to vacation in Beirut. At the time, the border zones were on high military alert in the aftermath of 9.11 the previous year, so we were forbidden from using cell phones. This made finding the car assigned to us by the FA of the country we were crossing into very difficult and we had our share of dangerous experiences.

In broad terms, the EAFF has four objectives: the spread and development of football in the East Asian region; further raising the skill level of the stronger countries; building the skills of the weaker countries; and boosting the influence of East Asia not just in Asia but globally. JFA honorary president Okano was appointed first EAFF president, with Okada as

general secretary. An interim secretariat was initially set up in a room in the Cerulean Tower, a hotel near Shibuya Station in west Tokyo, but it was later moved to JFA House. Originally, the rule had been that the secretariat and the post of secretary general would also rotate, but on reflection uprooting the headquarters every couple of years seemed to offer little in the way of advantage. When we counterproposed siting the secretariat in Japan, with a Japanese—Okada—necessarily serving as general secretary, our plan secured a majority of votes and the federation's code was revised. It was Okano who decided on the EAFF slogan, "Creating New Football."

With the objective of "developing football in the region by promoting an active interchange within East Asia, strengthening unity and solidarity among its members, and making contributions to peace through football," the EAFF is running smoothly in a region where similar organisations have yet to be formed in the political and economic worlds. Having announced that I would take responsibility for the federation's finances prior to its founding, I am battling to increase its earning power by making use of my experience and my network of relationships.

The biennial East Asian Football Championship is

the major competition from which the EAFF can generate revenue. It replaced the Dynasty Cup, which was launched in 1990 (and was last held in 1998) in order to raise the standard of East Asian football. The participants are the three East Asian countries with the highest FIFA ranking plus a fourth that makes it through the qualifiers. The four teams compete in a round-robin league. The tournament was originally only for men's teams, but with the addition of the EAFF Women's Cup 2005 to the 2005 Korea championship, and then the EAFF Women's Football Championship in 2008, the East Asian Football Championship has become one of the very few events in the world to feature international A teams of both sexes.

The EAFF, however, started out deep in the red. The first East Asian Football Championship was due to be held at the International Stadium Yokohama from May 28 to June 3, 2003. Since Dentsu had the exclusive marketing rights, we were keen to make a success of this special event. We recruited corporate sponsors, did a big promotion campaign with heavy newspaper advertising and organised the sale of match tickets. We were just waiting for the curtain to rise when we were blindsided by events. An epidemic of Severe

Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) was raging in Hong Kong and China, and as the number of deaths rose to several hundred, East Asia and much of the rest of the world went onto alert.

It was May 14, exactly two weeks before the first East Asian Football Championship was scheduled to begin. Okano, Okada and I were all in a room in a hotel not far from Tokyo's Haneda Airport, waiting for Hiroshi Nakata, the mayor of Yokohama, the venue for the championship. The news made it easy enough to guess what Mayor Nakata was likely to tell us. The meeting the mayor was in ran over, and he finally appeared at 10 p.m. He conveyed a formal request from the city of Yokohama to postpone the competition because of the life-threatening nature of SARS. Under the circumstances, the EAFF had no choice but to accept. We announced the postponement of the competition on May 15, the next day, as soon as we could.

The postponement caused Dentsu losses of about US$2 million. All the advance promotion like newspaper advertisements was rendered meaningless, and any printed materials like posters, guidebooks, and programmes were reduced to so much waste paper. Since the championship

was postponed, not cancelled, we would have to print them all again when the tournament was finally held, meaning we had to shoulder double costs. We also had to reimburse people who had bought tickets, an operation that cost a great deal to manage. The upshot was that EAFF was saddled with liabilities while it was still taking mere baby steps.

The postponed first championship was finally held in December 2003. Japan ended up equal to South Korea on points and goal difference, but losing out on goals for, had to cede victory. In the 2005 tournament in South Korea, Japan was edged out by China who won their first-ever title. History repeated itself in the 2008 edition in China. Just as in the first tournament, Japan and South Korea were level for points and goals difference, but the Koreans opened up a lead in the goals for category, forcing Japan to content itself with the position of runner-up for a third time. In the most recent tournament in 2010, Japan managed only a scoreless draw against a Chinese team which had failed to book a place in the World Cup in South Africa, got a 3-0 win against Hong Kong (whom South Korea had thrashed 5-0) and was roundly beaten 3-1 by a South Korean team without any of its players from the

European leagues. Japan ended with its worst results so far: third place. And there was I, dreaming that beautiful, winning Japanese football was going to mesmerise the world….

Failing to win even one of four championships was extremely regrettable for Japan, but from the perspective of East Asia as a whole, the results prove that the championship is leading to a rise in the general standard of play. In the qualifiers of the fourth championship held in February 2010, Hong Kong outperformed North Korea, who had just earned their first berth in the World Cup finals for 44 years. In the final competition China trounced South Korea, who were hoping for a second successive trophy, 3-0. China had joined FIFA in 1978, thirty-three years earlier, and its victory over South Korea in their 26th encounter generated plenty of comment. About a month before the finals, a number of the executives of the Chinese FA had been arrested on charges of gambling and match fixing. This excellent result coming so soon after the Chinese FA had tried to make a fresh start caused a surge in awareness of the East Asian Football Championship and the EAFF. It was the opposite story in South Korea where this historic first defeat to China provoked such a flood of access to the KFA website that their server almost crashed. These

examples definitively prove that the gap in ability is narrowing, and that the resulting closely fought matches and upsets only increase the popularity of football. It may not be happening at breakneck speed, but the EAFF is making steady progress in its overarching objective: "to develop and strengthen the game of football in the region." My dream would be to see East Asian teams enjoying exclusive dominance of the places allotted to Asia at the World Cup. That achievement will prove to the world the real value of the EAFF.

The EAFF has also produced solid results when it comes to raising the standard of the game of football. FIFA publishes a monthly world ranking based on points from teams' results over the previous four years. A comparison of the rankings of May 2002, when the EAFF was established, and March 2010 (the time of writing), testifies to the fighting spirit of the East Asians. North Korea, ranked 126 in 2002 has secured a berth in its first World Cup since England in 1966, and risen to 105. Guam has advanced from 199 to 196, Mongolia from 188 to 172, Chinese Taipei from 172 to 163, and Hong Kong from 143 to 140. These numbers show that all the teams are gradually pushing their way up the ranking and that the activities of the EAFF are producing real results.

European clubs see promise in Asia

Now let's broaden the perspective to encompass all of Asia. Dentsu is intimately connected with the AFC Champions League. The AFC Champions League started in the 2002-2003 season and is the result of the merger of three preexisting tournaments: the AFC Club Championship, the AFC Cup Winners' Cup and the AFC Super Cup. AFC Marketing Ltd., a company established in 1993, had originally acquired all AFC-related rights. Dentsu had acquired the rights to the final round of the 1994 World Cup Asia Preliminary Competition and had been building a closer relationship with the AFC. Dentsu took a stake in AFC Marketing in 2003, which changed its name to World Sport Group (WSG), positioning itself as a sports marketing company focused on developing sports business, not just football, in Asia. In 2004, Dentsu took a 30% stake in the holding company of WSG, World Sport Group Holdings. Dentsu regularly sends its own people to WSG, which is run by Seamus O'Brien, who headed up AFC Marketing, and has maintained a solid relationship with the AFC.

Since the 2005 inauguration of the FIFA Club World

Cup, the AFC Champions League is definitely generating more interest because the Asian champion gets the chance to go up against the strongest clubs from the rest of the world. In addition, the further they progress in the Club World Cup, the higher the prize money, giving clubs every reason to be motivated. That explains why the matches between teams in the AFC Champions League are so hard-fought, and why public interest is rising steadily in all the countries involved.

In Japan, TV Asahi acquired the terrestrial broadcasting rights for the AFC, including the AFC Champions League, and their broadcasting of the official AFC competitions is contributing to boost the popularity of Asian football in Japan. It's worth pointing out that an extremely high proportion of the AFC's total income comes from the sale of broadcasting rights: something over 60%, a level similar to FIFA and UEFA. Clearly the desire to watch matches on TV when you can't make it to the stadium is common to fans everywhere.

Another striking trend in the Asian football business is the way that many European clubs have started to look east. Some of the most famous clubs like Barcelona, Real Madrid, Manchester United, Juventus and Bayern München now take

advantage of the off season to make tours of Japan and the rest of Asia. Dentsu has arranged a number of these friendlies.

One reason these teams are actively visiting the region is that fast-growing Asian countries have been falling over themselves to acquire the broadcasting rights for the European leagues which are now televised all around the region. Even countries like Vietnam or Malaysia, which previously had little in the way of spare cash, are snapping up television rights for the European leagues, the European Championship and the World Cup, bringing Asian fans closer to global football and boosting interest in the European leagues. A couple of other factors lie behind football's rising popularity in the region. First, the televising of the 2002 World Cup familiarised people in Asia with the sport. Second, Asian players trying their luck in Europe (I'm thinking of Hidetoshi Nakata, Shunsuke Nakamura, and Park Ji Sung) stimulated interest in the leagues they were in.

The key reason that the European clubs want to establish a firm fan base here is their awareness of how large a market Asia will be for them in the future. The global population is about 6.8 billion, with Asia accounting for some 60% of the total. Roughly 4 billion increasingly football-crazy people

clearly constitute a promising market—and one you would be crazy to overlook.

Europe sees Asia as a market. Asia, meanwhile, adores European football and loves to watch it on TV. It is only a matter of time before this balance of needs inspires new business developments. That is why Dentsu regards the Asian football business as an absolute top priority.

Chapter8

Passion and Determination Who Dares, Wins

The globalisation of the football business

Almost thirty years have passed since I first stumbled into the football business through my involvement in the World All-Star Game for the Benefit of Unicef in August 1982. While I confess to a degree of nostalgia for the age of innocence I was lucky enough to experience as a young man, the last three decades have seen football and the football business undergo a complete transformation. Having spent almost half my life working in the sport, one prediction I can confidently make is that football and the business that supports it will continue to change and evolve in the years ahead.

Currently there are 208 countries and regions that belong to FIFA. According to the "FIFA Big Count 2006," there are some 265 million footballers of both sexes world-wide, meaning that almost 4% of the world's total population of 6.8 billion people play the game. For the 2006 World Cup in Germany, the total number of spectators in the stadiums was

just under 3.4 million people, while the cumulative television audience slightly surpassed the 26 billion mark. These numbers show that football has captivated the whole planet.

A careful look at the big picture nonetheless reveals that quite a few territories still remain to be opened up. The international popularity of football has grown by leaps and bounds since 1974, when João Havelange was elected president of FIFA. While the intrinsic attractions of the game doubtlessly drove its expansion, the background contribution of the firms and individuals that figured out how to turn Havelange's concept of football as a "sport with global reach" into a reality is a factor we should not overlook. In regions outside Europe and South America, attention and interest in football have increased tremendously in the past decade, thanks to the power of television. The profile of the sport has expanded in Asia due to the 2002 World Cup held in Korea and Japan, and to the spectacular achievements of the host country teams.

Trends that have been in place since I first entered the world of football make me confident that the number of FIFA-affiliated countries, the global playing population, and the global TV audience will all continue to grow. Not only

do there exist "emerging football nations" (countries where football's popularity is just taking off), but FIFA itself is working hard to increase its own member numbers, as well as the audiences for live and televised games. In addition to providing financial support to its member associations and confederations, FIFA is also actively implementing the Goal Project, which provides tailor-made projects like the construction of association headquarters, training centres, and football pitches. FIFA deserves kudos for its campaigns in the different regions where soccer needs development. The selection of South Africa as host for the 2010 World Cup prompted FIFA to invest $70 million in their "Win in Africa with Africa" project. Setting themselves goals like maintaining artificial turf pitches in every African country, training coaches and club managers to improve the African leagues, boosting the TV audience for football by improving the television and overall communications network, and supporting the education of African football media, they are trying to spread soccer to every corner of the continent. That FIFA and Africa have built up so close a connection in recent years is significant. As recently as the mid-1990s, when I was working on Japan's bid for the 2002 World Cup, it was hard enough for us or even FIFA to contact

the African countries. Since many of the African nations had poor communications infrastructure, Japan took the occasion of the 2002 World Cup to present fax machines to CAF and all the African associations, making it easier for them to stay in touch with FIFA and other football organisations.

In the last year or two while I was jetting around the world to promote Japan's bid for the 2022 World Cup, I was forced to acknowledge an uncomfortable truth: Japan's status in the international community has changed enormously compared to the 1990s when I worked on our previous bid—and not for the better. Wherever you go, Japan and Japanese companies are less in evidence than they used to be. On the other hand, Korean companies—Hyundai, Samsung, and LG, to name a few—have become very prominent, while Chinese and Indian firms are also venturing out into overseas markets. Japanese companies, whether world famous brands or smaller enterprises, appear happy with the status quo—and unlikely to have a very bright future as a result.

How will the ever-fainter presence of Japan and Japanese companies affect the World Cup? Traditionally, World Cup sponsorships were monopolised by Western and

Japanese firms. Korea's Hyundai was a sponsor for 2002, UAE's Emirate Airlines came on board for 2006, and in 2010 India's Mahindra Satyam, an IT service company, and China's Yingli Solar, a renewable energy firm, came on board as the first-ever World Cup sponsors from their respective countries. The World Cup definitely raised the recognition levels of these sponsors dramatically. History has shown that aggressive investment in advertising of this kind not only boosts the power of your brand, but also gives a boost to your bottom line. In the future, I expect to see more advertisers from emerging economies.

With a history of handling World Cup marketing rights and as the executive event producer of the Club World Cup, Dentsu must respond nimbly to changing trends. The South Africa World Cup showed conclusively that the days when Dentsu could rely exclusively on Japanese companies for business are over. We have already established affiliates like Dentsu Sports Europe, Dentsu Sports America and Dentsu Sports Asia, and we are developing a global network to actively court Korean, Chinese, Indian and Western companies and convince them of the benefits of sponsoring global sports events like the World Cup and the Club World Cup. To

be a serious player in the football business, Dentsu must have a global mindset and skillset, able to communicate the universal appeal of football to companies all around the world.

Cultivating the grassroots is what drives market expansion

FIFA are not alone in investing in the future of the game. Dentsu, along with other firms, is actively exploring new possibilities for football and the football business. In 2007 we established Dentsu Sports Europe in London, followed by Dentsu Sports America in New York in 2009, and Dentsu Sports Asia in Singapore in 2010. I am sure that a similar initiative in South America will be put in place in the near future. Dentsu started out in the football business with the domestic market as its sole theatre of operations, selling marketing and broadcasting rights to Japanese advertisers and Japanese broadcasters. Now the stronger links we have formed with FIFA, the football confederations, and various national associations mean that the demand for our services has risen outside Japan too. The bases we have set up in Europe and the US are focusing on the acquisition and sale of content and rights

for football and other sports, on expanding our range of services and on acquiring new clients. The overarching aim is to expand the football business and increase the popularity of the sport overall.

Since we see Asia as the most important market, we have started to build up our sports business there too. In addition to Dentsu Sports Asia, Dentsu has invested in two sports marketing companies active in the region. These are World Sport Group (WSG) and Singapore-based Football Media Services (FMS), a joint venture we set up with the Swiss company Infront Sports & Media AG.

World Sport Group (whose origins date back to AFC Marketing) is the exclusive sports marketing company for the AFC and is responsible for all AFC competitions. Football Media Services is the exclusive sales representative for TV, radio, broadband Internet and mobile broadcasting rights for all FIFA competitions until 2014 (including the 2010 and 2014 World Cups) in the key Asian territories.

Although it varies country by country, the Dentsu offices around Asia are also increasing their involvement in sports, particularly football. One that has performed particularly well recently is Dentsu Alpha in Vietnam. The firm

developed a good relationship with the Vietnam Football Federation and is contributing to the development of Vietnamese football as the marketing partner of their national squad. We believe that the know-how, the experience and the business models we developed in Japan—things like the national high school football championship and the national team's Gambare Nippon ("Go Japan") slogan—can be applied to the Asian market as well. As this example shows, it is crucial for Dentsu affiliates in Asia to develop strong links with the local football associations.

As I said earlier, FIFA is striving to increase the number of FIFA member countries, the number of people who play football, and the number of people who watch the sport. That growth, combined with youth education and the work of Dentsu and other companies to expand the football business, will result in the expansion of the overall market. The efforts made by companies like Dentsu to increase the number of young players of both sexes through CSR initiatives deserve special notice. In Japan as everywhere else, holding regular soccer clinics is one failsafe way to boost the player population and interest in the game. Increased interest in football translates into bigger

crowds in stadiums and larger TV audiences, which inevitably lead to greater interest in the sport from sponsors. The mechanism works like this: companies get to boost their image; the purchase rate of their products or services increases; and any investment made as part of their CSR efforts ends up generating corresponding profits. It is certainly not the sort of business model that delivers instant results, but the fact that more and more companies are focused on fostering the grassroots through football-based CSR without obsessing over immediate financial returns is a phenomenon worth thinking about.

Japanese football still has a long way to go

Football in Japan right now is going through a difficult patch. Clouds have started to gather over the sport's popularity.

I prefer to see the challenge in a different light. Now is the time when those of us working in the football business have to prove our mettle. For a decade or more after the 1993 launch of the J.League, everything went nice and smoothly. Now it behoves us all (myself included) to come up with a strategy to get Japanese football out of the doldrums. After all, the sport here is still young compared to Europe where football

has a 100-year-plus history. The fact that we are behind some other parts of the world should mean there's still room left for development in many areas.

In a situation like now when popular interest in football is dipping, we need to increase the number of businesses that help support the sport in different ways. Japan can make a positive contribution to the world through sports. As I discovered from the overwhelming impact of the Unicef All-Star Game I worked on thirty years ago, football is all about emotion. It can mesmerise, touch and enthuse people the world over. I hope that the people in charge of Japanese football and the football business in coming years will grasp this crucial fact.

Having the courage to take on a challenge is the wellspring of action

The Japan national team's performance in the 2006 World Cup in Germany was disappointing. Four years later, in the lead up to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, Japan was struggling to find their game, unable to win on the international stage. Expectations were extremely low for head coach Okada and

his men, so imagine the surprise when Japan made it through to the knockout stage. I saw it as a victory for teamwork. "Okada Japan," as the media referred to the Japanese squad that played in South Africa, were a tight-knit team, and I attribute their success to the way the players trusted and complemented each other, putting the group before the individual. The number of players playing for clubs outside of Japan indicates how eager Japanese footballers are to take on the challenge of going abroad to better their skills, not only at the big, famous clubs in Europe but also in lesser known Asian leagues. I hope that the spirit of these footballers and other athletes like them will inspire Japanese youth to take more risks and go abroad to build up their experience. After all, having the guts to take on a challenge is an essential part of maturing and developing into a stronger human being.

In nature, the competition for survival never stops. Simply doing nothing is not a valid survival strategy, and that holds for the football business too. If we, Dentsu, want to survive in competition with the other firms out there, we need to be bold, even reckless. There are times when taking a risk is the right thing to do. "You'll never get your hands on the tiger cubs if you don't venture into the tiger's lair," says the

proverb. In an age like the present, when Japan seems to have exhausted all options with little to show for it, genuine business opportunities will always be accompanied by risk. If you want to succeed beyond your expectations, you need a strategy of audacity. I learned the importance of bold, aggressive action from my older colleagues at Dentsu, men like Noriyuki Nabeshima, who made the high school football tournament into an national institution, and Haruyuki Takahashi, whose management of the Pelé Sayonara Match in Japan and the 1979 FIFA World Youth Championship cemented Dentsu's relationship with FIFA and helped build the foundations of our football business. Their example shows how important it is to have the moral fibre to not fear risk and to go all out to achieve the goals you set yourself.

The path we walk is never easy. We do not know whether light or darkness lie ahead. But having the courage to take on new, tough challenges is the wellspring of all human action. Sadly, that sort of can-do spirit is in short supply in present-day Japan. Perhaps it's a side effect of the complacency we feel now that we're one of the world's largest economies. But modern Japan has become a nation of disengaged spectators content just to sit on the sidelines and watch. No

one feels any sense of urgency. Too many of us are happy to wait for someone else to stand up, take responsibility, and deal with problems. Perhaps I'm being harsh, but the business community here—advertising included—is no exception. If football taught me anything, it's that you do your best work when you feel you're doing something worthwhile and making a contribution to society. Everyone, whatever business they are in, needs a grand goal to inspire, support and sustain them.

END

AFTERWORD

I have mentioned a number of people in the course of this book, but there are many others whose names there wasn't room to include despite the crucial role they played in developing Dentsu's football business. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank everyone, both inside and outside the firm, whose support helped build our reputation in global sports marketing. We would never have achieved so much in

this competitive field without your dedication and hard work. I count myself lucky to have met you and am grateful for your friendship over the years.

END

About the Author

Hiroyuki Hamaguchi joined Dentsu Inc. in 1972. He first worked in the Media Broadcasting Division before being assigned to the football business in 1982. After heading the Intersoccer 4 Department, he worked in New York as Executive Vice President of Dentsu Inc. New York and Dentsu Burson-Marsteller. After returning to Japan, he worked as Director of the ISL Business Division and the Football Business Division. He was a core member of the Bidding Committee and the Japan Organising Committee for the 2002 FIFA World Cup (1994-2002), and is also a member of the East Asian Football Federation (since 2002), the JFA International Committee and the JFA Asian Relations Committee (since 1993).

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