

Samurai Japan

We All Love to Skate!!

Eight members of samurai, including one lady, from Japan loved 4th Masters Sprint Games in Thialf (Feb 25-26, 2012), while another four members of samurai enjoyed the allround distance race in Berlin (March 3-4, 2012). What a fantastic event! Tomoko Wakazuki, the only lady skater from Japan, who has never gone to outside Japan in her life, finished 2nd overall in her age group (AG30) of Masters Sprint Games in Thialf.



Tomoko Wakazuki finished 2nd place in AG30.

She even said at award ceremony during the big banquet party. "I now became to like Speedskating." Tadashi Kondo, who has been participating in International Masters Competition since we started this tour in three years ago, with tears, said that he had the happiest moment ever in his long speedskating life. Everyone from Japan enjoyed communicating to other skaters with speedskating although they are not good at speaking. Tominaga Shibata, our oldest participant in this tour age 75, started skating 15 years ago, met with his friend from Norway, Arne Kjell Foldvik. Tominaga has believed all competitors against him were previously top skaters. Guess what. It was not. Arne was 77 year old, started his skating 13 year ago. Tominaga was really happy to get to know him. Even in Berlin, Dutch distance skater, Jim Verdurmen come close to me, asking for interpretation, because he found Japanese skaters can be much faster, changing the way of skating. Every Masters skaters want to be faster but we do not have coach. None seriously told us how to. As matter of the fact, during the



Tominaga with his friend, Arne

Masters Sprint Games, I had a chance to talk with head coach of Japan National Team at rink. He was impressed by the numbers of Masters Speedskaters in the event. He said it was really important to keep what we are doing, to keep speedskating popular. He added that it would be nice if we would have skate workshop with our top skaters like Nagashima or Kato. We arranged to stay the same hotel where Japan National team members are staying. It was also nice moment that top skaters know we are here for competition. Everyone loved it.



Instant technique lesson at rink.

This is our 3rd season that a group of samurai traveled overseas in order to challenge against all from other nations. Looking back two years ago, It was huge, huge step for Japanese Masters to have arrived in Thialf. It took a year of preparation before, and finally our 1st six men, plus me, "Seven Samurai", came to the International Masters Competition in Heerenveen in 2010. These seven samurai went back to Japan after the event, spreading out other member what happened in Thialf. Last year, 17 samurai gathered in Salt Lake City.

Our 1st Masters Speedskating Games took place in 1984 as a part of Japan's National Winter Sport Festival. In 2001, Masters Speedskating Competition was organized to continue the event of Masters Speedskating. We have about 100 members in Japan Masters Speedskating Committee. Typically 60 to 70 skaters, including a couple ladies, meet once a year at All Japan Masters Speedskating Competition in February every year, organized by Japan Skate Federation. However, the competition is not IMSSC standard in terms of age group. Currently we are in discussion to establish own association to run IMSSC style of international event near future. To do it, we want more skaters to go abroad, seeing how big international skating scene is and feel how strong Master skates from other nations.



All Japan Masters Competition in 2012

Upcoming season 2013, it will be our 30th year anniversary of Japan Master Speedskating Committees. We are already in plan to participate in both SLC for SP Games and Inzell for Allround Games in 2012-13 seasons. See you there again!!

By Japan Masters Coordinator
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