

Rays of Cricket in the



Land of Rising Sun



Natarajan

Cricket, a sport steeped in tradition and history particularly of Indians, is finding new roots in the most unexpected places. One such place is the Land of the Rising Sun, a country renowned for its technological prowess, rich in culture and heritage, and traditional sports like sumo wrestling and judo. Over the past few years, cricket has been quietly evolving in Japan, capturing the hearts of interested expats and increasingly the locals.

In the early stages of 1863, cricket found its way onto Japanese soil, courtesy of the British, marking its introduction merely half a decade before the metamorphic Meiji Restoration. The pioneering cricket authority, initially named the Yokohama Cricket Club (YCC) and now known as the Yokohama Country & Athletic Club, was officially inaugurated in 1868. This momentous establishment owes its existence to the endeavors of JP Mollison, a Scottish tea merchant with a penchant for cricket. Notably, Mollison, who lived in Shanghai, brought his cricketing experience to bear in the foundation of the YCC, thereby laying the groundwork for the sport's legacy in Japan.

Now for many years, Japan Cricket Association (JCA) a progressive organisation is the torch bearer in driving the initiatives to cultivate interest of the game in Japan. Recognizing the potential for cricket to foster cultural exchanges, the JCA has emerged as a driving force behind the promotion and development of the sport within the country. Actively involved in introducing cricket to Japanese schools, the JCA has played a crucial role in cultivating a love for the game among the younger generation. JCA is affiliated to International Cricket Council (ICC) since 1995.



Natarajan Dhakshinamoorthy, a long-term resident of Japan has been a member of Pongal celebrations for the past 15 years. As a past time from his IT profession, has avid interest in Cricket. He has been officiating senior division cricket for many years.

JCA with the base in Sano, Tochigi prefecture is responsible for creating an international standard cricket venue, the Sano International Cricket Ground (SICG) also with the support of local government. SICG already has the privilege of hosting few international tournaments. There are 5 more grounds in Sano enjoyed by many professional divisional leagues, Japan Premier League etc. friendly tournaments and introductory events. JCA's initiative in the integration of the sport into school curricula and the establishment of youth leagues have significantly contributed to the evolution of cricket in Japan.

Japan's participation in regional and international tournaments has been a catalyst for cricket's expansion. The national team's involvement in the East Asia-Pacific (EAP) regional competitions and the International Cricket Council (ICC) tournaments has allowed Japanese players to show their skills against many other cricketing countries.

Cricket in Japan is capturing the interest of increasing number of Japanese besides the diaspora. The visibility created by Japan Men and Women teams performance in recent years and the initiatives aimed at nurturing a cricket culture at the roots, along with strategic partnerships and collaborations, are pivotal in shaping the ongoing transformation of the sport. The upward trajectory of cricket in Japan underscores its universal appeal and its power to transcend cultural barriers.

Looking ahead, the pitch is laid, the stumps are set and there are promising opportunities for cricket enthusiasts in Japan, as the sport is on the brink of securing a more prominent position within the nation's sports scene.



Drawing by ChatGPT (Prompt: Sumo wrestler playing cricket)

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