

# Ethnicity and Sport: The Wapato Nippons and Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball

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## Introduction

On a spring evening in 1936, there was a father-son banquet held at the Seinen-kai Club at the Japanese Hall in the farming town of Wapato, Washington. March was the beginning of baseball season across the country and so it was in the desert towns of the Yakima Valley in Washington State. At this event, the Issei fathers, the first-generation of Japanese to settle in the United States, presented an embroidered banner to their Nisei sons, the second-generation Japanese Americans who were born in the United States, congratulating them on their championship Wapato Nippons baseball team. The banner had been ordered, stitched, and shipped from Japan, and it read, in Japanese characters, "Great rejoicing for Yakima."<sup>1</sup>

There was much to be proud of in 1936 if you were a baseball fan and Japanese American living in central Washington, because the Wapato Nippons had won the Mt. Adams Baseball League trophy for the second consecutive year. The Nippons were moving up for the 1936 season to the higher status Yakima Valley League, and a younger all-Nisei team, the Yamatos, were taking their place in the Mt. Adams League. It was an evening that represented baseball in its idealized form. Fathers and sons were taking a moment out of busy and, at times, desperate lives to consider an achievement and to speculate on future victories, to spend time effortlessly together on something as casual yet mutually understandable as baseball. At this gathering, the president of the Seinen-kai, George Honda, rose and said what was on the minds of all those there: "It is generally acknowledged

by the Japanese community that the youth sports club has contributed to the understanding between Japanese and Americans."<sup>2</sup>

This intergenerational intimacy that baseball fostered was a contradiction to a normal reading of Issei-Nisei relations, especially the types of relationships that were forged in the harsh realities of cultivation in the Yakima desert and the survival mode that Issei farmers were used to.<sup>3</sup> Yet, such an event in such a forbidding location conjured up a set of favorable life chances for this people, the possibilities of a peaceful transfer of kinship control from Issei to Nisei, and a successful evolution from the period of immigration and settlement to calmer times associated with citizenship. Instead, war with Japan and incarceration in American internment camps would soon destroy the pride of the Issei and disrupt and redirect the ascendancy of the Nisei.

This essay is about Japanese American baseball—the principal empirical universe is the historical experience of the Nisei generation of Japanese Americans in Washington State leading up to World War II. It is an essay on the construction and persistence of ethnic identity in a modern world and the complex and, sometimes, contradictory process of identification that allowed traditional ethnic boundaries to coalesce around a cultural formation like baseball.

## Ethnicity and Sport

We learn from Samuel Regalado's study of central California's Yamato Colony that sport appealed to the Japanese Americans in a variety of ways, as a medium for physical exercise, team play, and spirit, as well as a method of mainstream acculturation.<sup>4</sup> In Seattle, as early as 1928, the Japanese American *Courier* understood the emotional appeal of its all-Japanese baseball league among its playing and spectating readership, the effects of regional competitions and the excitement of the "critical game in a pennant race" (April 7, 1928).

Yet, Japanese American baseball in the pre-war era was never far removed from race and ethnicity. Anthony Smith writes that ethnicity is "a matter of myths, memories, values and symbols."<sup>5</sup> Given the charged climate of sport, the nonrational elements of regionalism and nationalism as well as ethnic referents mobilize myths and memories and effortlessly attach them to sport forming an irresistible pull on subgroups.

The way that ethnicity shaped the lives of pre-World War II Japanese Americans in Washington State through baseball operated within a set of competing social impulses and tensions summarized in the following:

1. The quest for acculturation—James Sakamoto articulated this view in his newspaper and acted upon it in establishing the *Courier* baseball leagues. Sakamoto believed that to play baseball was to engage the ethnic community in a cultural test that Japanese Americans should enthusiastically submit themselves to as a proof of readiness for citizenship.
2. Ethnic display—Baseball was a crucible for displaying pride in one's ancestry as well as integrating a greater Japanese American community within the adopted nation. Thus, we find teams sporting names like

Nippons, Fujis, and Yamatos and wearing Japanese characters on their uniforms and, in Washington's Yakima Valley, embracing a deep communal and ethnic pride in the winning ways of the Wapato Nippons.

3. The submersion of ethnic difference—The culture of amateur town and neighborhood baseball in the pre-war era militated against ethnic display or anything approaching an ideological understanding of sport. It was a moment of male leisure and a time for banter, fun, and sport, and the Japanese Americans rushed to adopt this informal code in their approach to baseball. Thus, pre-war Japanese American baseball had all of these factors—the quest for acculturation and both the display and repression of ethnicity—competing for attention and meaning as the Nisei nation plunged into the game of baseball in the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s.

## The Muted Display of Ethnicity

Gail Nomura reports that the Wapato Nippons baseball team “enhanced ethnic consciousness as the baseball diamond became the public arena testing their ability . . . with racist restriction removed.”<sup>6</sup> In this view, winning back-to-back championships against the all-white competition in the Yakima Valley was a public statement that stamped the entire Japanese American valley community as worthy. Furthermore, it was the exceptional discipline shown in the Nippons sportsmanship and control on the field that earned respect for Japanese Americans in a hostile white world.

Ernest Gellner<sup>7</sup> wrote on ethnic nationalism:

Durkheim taught that in religious worship society adores its own camouflaged image. In a nationalist age, societies worship themselves brazenly and openly, spurning the camouflage.

Yet, with the Wapato Nippons and the Seattle Japanese American teams, we see none of the self-worshipping display Gellner alludes to and none of the frenzy of nationalism associated with ethnicity in other sport settings.

In contrast, in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ireland, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) based its existence and identity on a platform of nationalism, radical political opposition, and Celtic racialism. Hurling matches “assumed all the pageantry of a nationalist rally”<sup>8</sup> complete with banners, bands playing revolutionary tunes, and players who marched to the playing field with their hurley sticks sloped in military formation. And across the Irish Sea, in Glasgow, the internecine conflict that was soccer between the Glasgow Rangers and Celtics was not an occasion for those shy about their ethnic roots.<sup>9</sup>

## The Masking of Ethnicity

When there was contact in baseball with white players and opposing teams, the self-reports and recollections of pre-World War II Nisei players speak of the ease of interaction with whites in baseball and the absence of discrimination. Rather, there seems to have been a truce imposed on conflictual racial relations

when it came to sport. Baseball had its distinct culture that set taboos against mixing sport with any specific external agenda, and the pre-war, all-Japanese American teams felt a need to reproduce the style of the typical amateur baseball teams of the times. Pre-war baseball was a location for the rites of male competition and braggadocio, a free zone in which the culture of the vernacular operated as the main form of expression.

Thus, it is problematic to describe pre-war, Japanese American baseball as pure ethnic sport. There were strong voices from within the Japanese American intelligentsia—men like Sakamoto, Hosokawa, and Fukuda—that articulated an ethnic position through baseball that was also part of a pluralistic vision of America. Even though the teams consisted of all-Japanese Americans in segregated teams and leagues, the meaning and understanding of these ethnically derived teams may have been more in line with what Michael Banton calls a “role sign,”<sup>10</sup> simply a way of distinguishing the players within a modern division of labor. Any program of ethnic awareness and exhibition had to contend primarily with the popular culture of town baseball and would not have played well on the ballfields of Yakima or Seattle in the 1930s. It seems as though playing baseball well enough to elicit group pride and white respect, while adhering to the male code of noninstrumental action, may have been sufficient motivation for Japanese Americans to play baseball in such large numbers in the decades preceding World War II.

## The Japanese Head Start in Baseball and Western Sport

It is assumed that the Japanese, the first-generation Issei, had something of a head start when it came to baseball, emigrating from a nation in which the sport had been “planted” in the late nineteenth century by the American colony in Yokohama.<sup>11</sup> The diffusion of baseball within Japanese society was less of an external colonizing experiment than an accident historically timed with Meiji Japan’s program of modernization. As educational and social elites around the world were prepared to accept and reproduce the Eton and Rugby school models as part of a Victorian modernism, so, too, did the educational elite in Japan.

The Meiji government’s 1886 Primary School Ordinance required students to take part in exercises—not sports or games—that were more like “infantry exercises in rank and file.”<sup>12</sup> This mass program was carried out in the primary, middle, and normal schools. The elite “higher” schools and universities initially embraced a system of play days that consisted of noncompetitive games like tug-of-war, capture-the-flag, and obstacle races, a regime that failed to interest young people and also failed as a rigorous test of leadership for the nation’s aspiring elite. By the 1890s, sports were introduced, and athletic clubs were formed. The First Higher School of Tokyo (Ichiko), in a series of spectacular defeats of American teams from the Yokohama Athletic Club, was the locus of organization for baseball in Japan in the 1890s.<sup>13</sup> Yet, the sports revolution in Japan seems to have initially occurred over the heads of the masses as the higher school students who absorbed and excelled in baseball in the 1890s “showed little interest in introducing the sport to their less privileged contemporaries.”<sup>14</sup>

## Issei Immigration and Baseball

The Japanese emigrating cohort at the turn of the century was not, however, recruited from the educated elite of Japan. Rather, it was a farming strata that had high rates of literacy due to a government-imposed program of education; the Japanese arrived with an average of eight years of schooling.

Social conditions in late nineteenth century Japan, the Meiji modernization program, produced social chaos in the farming countryside. Part of the financial costs of Japanese industrialization in the late nineteenth century was a fixed tax on land that farmers were forced to endure. In addition, the home production of textiles carried on by Japanese farming families was suddenly threatened by the import of cheap cotton goods from the West.<sup>15</sup> In the 1880s, the government also enforced a deflation of the yen that severely affected the price of rice and the economic survival of farmers—300,000 Japanese farmers lost their land in these years due to forfeiture.<sup>16</sup>

Southwest Japan was hit hard by the government's radical policies of modernization; emigration rates from the southwest prefectures of Kumamoto, Hiroshima, and Yamaguchi reflected the crisis in the rural economy. Thus, a system of emigration developed in the early 1900s in which rural families dispatched sons overseas—usually not the first-born who was slated to inherit the farm, but the second or third—to earn wages as laborers to pay off the family debts. These men considered themselves sojourners—*dekasegi* laborers—and were recruited for work in the Hawaiian sugar cane fields or by Japanese labor agents for work on the railroads of the Pacific Northwest or in mines in Idaho and Colorado.<sup>17</sup> Characterizing immigration in southern California: “The great majority of Issei males came from the *heimin* or commoner class.”<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, in turn-of-the-century Japan, sport had emerged as a social marker of an educated elite. Historian Donald Roden wrote, “Participation in outdoor games was a unique status privilege in the 1890s, when working-class youth could not dream of spending five or six hours a day playing baseball.” Not unlike the social stratification of sport in the United States and Britain at the turn of the century, Roden concluded that “sport in Meiji Japan was the exclusive preserve of the higher school, the private college, and the university.”<sup>19</sup>

The immigrating cohort was a laboring minority before it became a farm-owning and shop-owning petty bourgeoisie in the years before World War II. The Issei fathers of Wapato Nippon baseball players, for example, were of this laboring class of workers. Harry Honda's father emigrated in 1903, landed in Portland, and traveled to the Yakima Valley to work as a houseboy to a merchant's family in Yakima. He eventually opened a rooming house in Yakima that proved successful and led to the establishment of others. However, the Honda family was forced out of Yakima in 1925 when they were unable to renew the lease on their hotel, so they moved into farming in Wapato. Harry recalled, “I suppose the Issei had some baseball when they were still in Japan and when they came over here there were enough of them that they could start the Yakima Valley Japanese baseball club, and they played all around the Yakima area.”<sup>20</sup> Noboru Kobayashi,

growing up in Chicago, also remembered that his Issei father was fond of baseball, although he doesn't know if this affection developed in Japan or after he immigrated to the United States. He said, "I remember once when he took a day off from work and we went to watch a team from Japan—a touring team from Waseda University—play the University of Chicago. My dad was always interested in baseball, and if he took a day off from work, then it must have been important."<sup>21</sup>

The parents of Wapato Nippon second baseman George Yamauchi—Asaichiro and Chika—emigrated first to Hawaii, landed in San Francisco in 1906, and after working on the railroads in the Pacific Northwest, settled in Pasco, Washington.<sup>22</sup> Asaichiro Yamauchi was typical of farmers in the rice-growing region of Japan's Hiroshima-ken; he was the second son and therefore ineligible for inheritance in a farming family facing declining economic prospects in the early twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> George Yamauchi remembered the crude equipment he was able to use as a child playing baseball in Pasco in the 1920s, a farming town 60 miles east of Wapato: "He [Howard, an older neighbor] would make baseballs out of pieces of leather he had sewed together and with which he covered balls of string that we helped accumulate . . . Howard also whittled bats out of old pick handles and let us use them."<sup>24</sup>

Even though historian Paul Spickard states that by the 1880s, baseball "had become a standard high school sport"<sup>25</sup> in Japan, given the remote rural location and agricultural roots of the immigrating Japanese, the emigrating Issei cohort was just as likely to have been bypassed by the emergence of Japanese baseball.<sup>26</sup> In 1905, Japan's Waseda University took a baseball tour of the United States in which 13 university students and their teacher-coach, Isoo Abe, formed the traveling party, The Waseda team arrived aboard the steamship *Korea* in San Francisco in April for their games with Stanford and the University of California; they were greeted at the docks by San Francisco Bay Area reporters and cameramen. The *Korea* also carried Japanese immigrant workers, as reported by the San Francisco Chronicle:

"Swarming on the the lower decks of the liner *Korea*. . . were 717 Japanese immigrants, whose destination is anywhere in the United States. Only twenty-six of the brown men came directly from Japan . . . This latest batch of embryo American[s] . . . are as devoid of Americanism as Hottentots."<sup>27</sup>

The contrast between the privileged university baseball players from Waseda and the mass of Japanese dekesai workers on the lower decks of the *Korea* helps us understand the stark difference in life and leisure chances of these distinctly different traveling groups from the same nation.

Regalado also believed that Japanese "immigrants . . . carried the game with them to the land of its origins,"<sup>28</sup> yet since the sport was still lodged within the urban, educated elite when the Issei departed from Japan, it was more probable that they were first exposed to the game when they settled in Hawaii or the West Coast of the United States. In Heart Mountain Internment Camp, there were softball leagues composed of Issei, men who "had never played before."<sup>29</sup>

## Seattle Baseball—The Precursor to Ethnic Baseball

The story of the diffusion of Japanese American baseball in the Pacific Northwest begins in the years before World War I in Seattle. In 1908, a Japanese league in Seattle was organized in which the Mikado team excelled.<sup>30</sup> By 1910, the Issei clubs, the Nippons and the Mikados, played baseball games with whomever they could, usually white amateur teams. A game between Seattle's Mikados and Tacoma's Columbias attracted 500 spectators in 1910.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, Frank Fukuda, having played on the Mikado team, organized a Seattle youth team of Japanese Americans he called Cherry, which played with Caucasian youth teams.<sup>32</sup> The Cherry expanded and became the Asahi Club in 1912, the original Japanese American voluntary association devoted to baseball and a prototype for the Japanese American clubs that followed.

By 1912, the Asahi Club team joined the B level of the Star League, which was organized by the Seattle Star.<sup>33</sup> In 1924, the Nippon Athletic Club was formed and soon after, the Taiyo Club. In the 1920s, the Nippons played in the City League of Seattle and the Taiyos played inter-city league with teams like Everett, Port of Seattle, and the Colored Giants.

## James Sakamoto's Courier League

The Courier Leagues became the locus of organization for the surge in Japanese American baseball in the Puget Sound area in the late 1920s through the 1930s and early 1940s. Organized in 1928 by James Sakamoto, publisher and editor of Seattle's *Japanese American Courier*, Sakamoto believed that athletics was a vehicle of education and integration for the Nisei within American society. In one of his early editorials he wrote, "Fostering athletics . . . among the second generation is one of the fundamental policies of this paper" (April 21, 1928).

Sakamoto was one of the founders of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) in 1930 in Seattle; he was also an outstanding football player at Seattle's Franklin High and, before he lost his sight in an accident, a promising boxer with several recorded bouts in Madison Square Garden. He believed in strong Nisei identification with American culture. Sakamoto wrote in his newspaper in 1929, "The second generation are American citizens and through them will be reaped the harvests of tomorrow. Home, institutions, and inalienable rights to live the life of an American, is the cry of the second generation."<sup>34</sup> Sakamoto was eventually interned in Minidoka where he labored tirelessly to make conditions tolerable for the incarcerated Japanese Americans.<sup>35</sup> In 1944 in Minidoka, he led the camp memorial service for nine Nisei soldiers killed in the fighting in Italy.<sup>36</sup>

The Courier League expanded all through the 1930s to include more teams from as far away as Tacoma as well as new divisions of play. To begin the 1941 Courier baseball season, the last full season before internment would disrupt Japanese American baseball, league organizer Kay Takayoshi<sup>37</sup> held three separate meetings to handle the AA, A, and B divisions of Courier League baseball. The Courier Leagues had a system in which players could "shop around" for a team, and managers could scout talent. After three games, players had to commit to a

team and could switch teams only after a 14-day notice.<sup>38</sup> There were league bylaws and official *Courier* score sheets, belying a level of organization and a commitment to controlling and planning commensurate with modern sport.

## Sakamoto's Proselytization of Sport

Sakamoto was part of a Nisei intelligentsia that proselytized through sport the possibility of improved life chances for Japanese Americans. His approach, and the ideology of the JAACL up to and including internment, was a quest for assimilation in which the American-born generation was put to various trials of cultural readiness. One of the most important tests was baseball. Sakamoto wrote in his newspaper: "Only if the second generation as a whole works to inculcate in all its members the true spirit of American patriotism can the group escape the unhappy fate of being a clan apart from the rest of American life" (July 1, 1933).

At times, Sakamoto's *Courier* seemed like a propaganda sheet for radical assimilation and sports involvement; as Regalado states, it was "created for the sole purpose of involvement; and its most notable involvement was in the athletic league."<sup>39</sup> In sponsoring baseball leagues, Sakamoto provided in one stroke a forum for active participation in his concept of assertive acculturation while at the same time creating and supplying the demand for news coverage of Nisei sport in his newspaper.

Samuel Regalado believes that Sakamoto accomplished a kind of integration; he states that the "Courier League . . . was a vital component in the unification of the Pacific Northwest Japanese" [and] "the *Japanese American Courier* . . . helped to forge the bond between sport, community, and culture."<sup>40</sup>

All of these assumptions about Americanization and baseball were thoroughly tested later in the internment camps. While the faith in a baseball creed was consistently strong during the concentration camp years in which much of what passed for Japanese American public discourse was a self-censored embrace of America at war, there were cracks in the fundamental trust in baseball as the exemplary American experience. At Heart Mountain Internment Camp, the *Sentinel* commented that "baseball has been the most discriminatory of sports, especially against the colored people."<sup>41</sup>

## The Nomenclature of Ethnic Baseball

If the Japanese teams like the Nippons, Taiyos, Asahis, Buddhists, Ginsai, and the Fujis identified with an ethnic and geographic team nomenclature, they were only following a pattern established by the white teams in Seattle that formed around occupation and urban location and sometimes ethnic—teams like Collins Laundry, American Mail Line, Hahn's Sporting Goods, Lang Stove, University Auto Row, and Commercial Tire. In the inner-city league were teams like Broome's Hamburgers, Georgetown, and Napier & Son. Ethnic pride also produced the Italian Society baseball team, while the Suquamish Indian team made a baseball trip to Japan in 1921.<sup>42</sup> There was the Pike Place Market, a popular team with a boisterous Japanese American following: "If the number of

rooters and the amount of jeering had anything to do with it—Market should have won yesterday,” the *Japanese American Courier* reported (May 18, 1936).

In the Puget Sound League the Teamsters, the Ballard Boaters, Aeor Mechanics, and Pacific Oil all fielded teams. Baseball teams of the era—like the Monroe Lumberjacks and the Ballard Merchants—could also identify the type of labor its members engaged in. The Cascade Lumber Co. of Yakima was a contender in the Yakima Valley League; the local CCC camp working out of Coulee Dam fielded a team.<sup>43</sup> In the 1920s, the Seattle police formed a team and played Frank Fukuda’s Asahis with the gate proceeds going to the Red Cross.<sup>44</sup>

Japanese American teams also substituted business markings for baseball identity and so we find teams from the steamship lines like the Nippon Yusen, Osaka Shosen, Mitsui-Bussan, and Mitsubishi all fielding baseball teams. Blending occupation, location, and ethnicity in a web of regional identity was the style of the times when forming a baseball team was a relatively simple act. This informal nexus of communal association, whether it was work or culture, more than anything else gave us ethnic baseball in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

## The Culture of Baseball Vernacular

Baseball had its own form of communication that was a code language for a form of casual interaction, an instant bonding medium constructed of the banter between male friends and bound by the shared world of baseball terms. With this language, one demonstrated a belief in baseball’s function as a “supportive ritual”<sup>45</sup> and was immediately accepted into the fraternity of ballplayers in which assumptions about fairness, “hustle,” courage, and the heroism of the lone pitcher facing down a batter were all accepted as emblems of a decent society.

The ritualized language of baseball in the 1930s penetrated the popular pages of the *Japanese American Courier*. Here one read about the “batteries” of home runs, the hurler standing tall in the late innings, about the Wapato Nippons—“the mighty men from o’er the mountains” [who] “play good, fast, hard and clean baseball.”<sup>46</sup>

Teams were made up of “boys”—the “vegetable boys” from the Pike Place Market, the “White River boys,” the “boys from Fife”; there were the “East Side boys” [from Bellevue] and the “boys from Lake Washington.”<sup>47</sup> Winslow loses a game, and it is reported, “There is no joy in Bainbridge Island, for the mighty Winslow team has been taken down.”<sup>48</sup>

There were nicknames that contributed to the relaxed pace and male association of baseball, names like “Lefty” Yamaguchi, “Choppy” Umemoto, “Sparky” Kono, and “Nag” Frank Nagamine of the Seattle Nippons, “Porgie” Okada of the Seattle Taiyos, “Spud” Yamamoto of the Yamato Independents, “Soapy” Sagami of Fife, as well as Kiyoshi “Susie” Matsumura of the Wapato Nippons and “Kaz” Nishimura of the Waseda Hornets. Baseball nicknames also penetrated the baseball culture in the internment camps where we find “Babe” Nomura, “Chesty” Okagaki, and “Gabby” Yamaoka playing for the Heart Mountain Zebras.<sup>49</sup>

The following poem about the pitcher Clarence Arai, president of Seattle Progressive Citizens League, speaks of the self-effacing attitude expected of baseball

players, the humor that went along with practice, games, and the baseball gathering of males:

Arai, of the big league smile,  
Was a slabman rated high,  
He tossed his curve to break a mile,  
Hurling was his pie.

Yet in Sunday it was truly sad,  
They hit him for a mile,  
No form had he, but all he had,  
Was just a big league smile<sup>50</sup>

The metaphors of daily expression can also support racial stereotyping and, at times, sports slang could also slip into a discourse of exclusion. Non-Japanese teams were identified as American—"last year the Wapato Nippons won the championship of the Mt. Adams League, which is composed entirely of American teams."<sup>51</sup> When the Wapato town team, an all-white squad playing in the Yakima Valley League, played the Wapato Nippons, the Nippons became the "Japanese team" opposed to the "Wapato team."<sup>52</sup> And the Japanese American players of Frank Fukuda's proud Asahi club are described by the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* as "the little fellows."<sup>53</sup> Yet, baseball was primarily a vernacular language of inclusion; its use by the Japanese American community in the 1930s and early 1940s was a way of belonging to the greater nation outside the ethnic enclave.

## The Kind of Game It Was

Baseball in Seattle's Japanese American Leagues could be a raucous affair. Japanese American fans seemed to feel that voicing an opinion about the umpire's rulings was part of their right and responsibility. Game attendance was high for amateur baseball—3,000 attended the semifinal games of the 1935 July 4 tournament.<sup>54</sup>

Feelings within the Japanese American community between rivals could also run high, especially when the two prestigious and tradition-bound clubs from Seattle—the Nippon Athletic Club and the Taiyos—met on the baseball diamond. In 1928, tensions were already ignited between these two clubs—the *Courier* worried about the possibility of a post-season game between the two clubs since the rivalry had "come to a hatred among individual members" (August 25, 1928). In the 1938 July 4 tournament between the Taiyos and the Nippons (Seattle), after a home run by the Taiyos' Hashimoto, a row ensued and the umpire took action against the NAC pitcher. The *Courier* reported that "an argument arose and Yamaguchi was chased from the game by Umpire Takayoshi" (July 8, 1934).

If the Wapato Nippons were known as quiet sportsmen, the Seattle Japanese American teams were more combative and seemed to take liberties with codes of sportsmanship. In the 1938 July 4 tournament at the B level, "Lefty" Yamaguchi was tossed out of the game for arguing about an umpire's call on a home run ball he had just served up to Hashimoto.<sup>55</sup> There were plenty of on-the-field rows. In a 1939 game between the Fife Nippons and Tacoma, the batter, Paul Hayashi,

was hit by a pitch that then hit his bat, a series of events that the umpire misinterpreted. Play devolved into argument and shouts. Bill Hosokawa's *Courier* sports column later focused on this incident:

The A league reps of those neighboring communities Tacoma and Fife almost forgot for a moment last Sunday afternoon that the post office clerk stamps their letters with the same "Tacoma mark," when the two teams clashed in a friendly baseball game... peace and quiet was eventually restored and a fine time was had by all. (May 13, 1939).

A 1935 Hosokawa *Courier* editorial pleaded for fan understanding and sportsman-ship in the pending July 4 tournament and an end to "squabbles, charges of 'dirty playing,' quarrels over petty misunderstandings, officiating scandals and the like." Hosokawa reported that "umpire-baiting was the game within the game for the spectators" (June 29, 1939).

Japanese American baseball, like much of amateur baseball, could also be a game of errors. In the 1935 play-off series with the Yakima Ship-by-Truckers, "the [Wapato] Nippons blasted out 22 hits, but almost nullified their batting strength by going to pieces on defense and committing 11 errors."<sup>56</sup> In the famous 1935 match-up between the Wapato town and the Wapato Nippons, there were a combined 15 errors recorded.<sup>57</sup> And in the best that Japanese American baseball offered in the Northwest, the A match-up in 1935 between the Wapato Nippons and Puget Sound's top team from Fife, "in all, the official scorer chalked up 11 little black marks against Fife, while Wapato contributed seven more to the orgy."<sup>58</sup>

Fielding skill was naturally hard to develop given the demands of work and occupation that dominated the lives of Japanese Americans in the pre-World War II years. In the 1930s, there was limited time for practice, and baseball norms sanctioned against lengthy practice schedules. In such a vacuum of baseball skill, a powerful and gifted individual could exert tremendous influence in amateur baseball.

George Honda of the Wapato Nippons was such a player, and he was a pitcher. In the 1933 July 4 tournament, Honda pitched the entire tournament: "This was George Honda's third game in two days, and a stellar performance, perhaps he having eaten a lot of spinach before dropping in on the low land lads" [from Fife].<sup>59</sup> In 1939 Fife won the July 4 tournament on the shoulders of "Big Ben" Yoshida, "Fife's portsider [who] hurled three hit ball and hit a homer in the ninth inning, which proved to be the winning margin."<sup>60</sup> The previous year, "husky" Nob Yeshiba led Fife to the *Courier* League championship with similar physical dominance. Individuals like Honda, Yeshiba, and "Big Ben" Yoshida, all associated with teams from farming regions, dominated through strength, size, endurance, and sheer physical presence; where systematic preparation and play was lacking, the influence of a singularly talented and charismatic player was magnified.

## The Rural Influence in Japanese American Baseball

The best Japanese American teams in Seattle's *Courier* League were rural teams. In 1938, the Class AA *Courier* League baseball standings were posted as follows:<sup>61</sup>

	wins	losses	percent
Fife	12	2	.857
White River	11	3	.787
Bellevue	7	6	.538
Nippon Athletic Club	6	7	.461 (Seattle team)
Waseda	6	8	.420 (Seattle team)
Auburn	5	7	.417
Cadets	5	8	.384
Trojans	1	11	.083 (Seattle team)

The “valley” teams, made up of the sons of Issei farmers, dominated the Seattle Courier League, teams from Fife, White River, and Auburn in the farming districts southeast of Seattle and from Bellevue, a farming area in the 1930s. Any question of competition between city teams and farming teams was usually solved in favor of the rural influence.

The Wapato Nippons of the Yakima Valley farming belt only added to this imbalance. Harry Honda, when asked why the Nippons were so good, said, “Well, I think we knew each other real well—we were all farmers.”<sup>62</sup> Farm work, like the shared experience of ethnic exclusion, was a social bond among the Nippon players, a leveling fact of occupation that connected the world of the Nisei ballplayers.

Farm labor had the residual benefit of providing Japanese Americans with a physical stature on the baseball diamond. The *North American Times* described the Wapato Nippons in 1935 as “a rip-roaring sunburned, lean muscled, eleven-man squad of diamond luminaries.”<sup>63</sup> The 1939 July 4 tournament was won by a team from Fife, a farming area south of Seattle. This was yet another dominant squad from a rural region, described as “the husky boys from Puyallup Valley.”<sup>64</sup> To explain Wapato’s success in the 1935 July 4 tournament, the *Courier’s* Bill Hosokawa distinguished between rural and urban baseball:

The Yakima Valley nine carries a squad of only 12 players . . . The team practices once a week under the fatherly eye of Frank Fukuda, dean of Northwest diamond mentors.

Practically all of the youths keep in condition by plenty of good hard work Most of them help their parents run farms that are real farms and not garden patches. That means work from daylight until dark. Oyama runs a laundry. He went back home after Thursday’s game and is due in Seattle again tonight. Yamauchi works all night in the folks’ restaurant. And that is the dope on the team which finds time to play real baseball and not the pseudo brand found so often around these parts. (July 6, 1935)

Herb Iseri knew that the Wapato Nippons were as good as any town team in the Yakima Valley, but it wasn’t due to a system or training regimen. “It’s amazing, you know. . . you follow a horse around in the fields all day and you practice one day a week and then play next Sunday, That’s all we had time for and we did pretty well!”<sup>65</sup>

## The Origins of the Wapato Nippons

Yakima Valley Japanese American baseball emerged from a voluntary organization, the Yakima Bare Nihonjin Seinen-kai (Yakima Japanese Club), a youth club originally devoted to understanding literature.<sup>66</sup> The early meetings were organized around literature; afterwards, time was made for sports such as fencing, wrestling, and eventually baseball. The Yakima Valley Japanese Athletic Club eventually formed a baseball team.<sup>67</sup> Harry Honda was one of the first Nisei to play for the Issei-dominated ball club: “Baseball was something I started taking up when I was 8 years old in Yakima.”<sup>68</sup> Many of the Nisei who eventually found their way onto the Wapato Nippons got their start playing baseball for their high schools on integrated teams.<sup>69</sup>

In Wapato, the Japanese American community formed a town baseball team and took the name Nippons. In 1925, it was an eclectic group, as Honda recalled: “There weren’t that many Issei playing . . . so we had some Caucasians, some blacks, and an Indian fellow play for us.”<sup>70</sup> Eventually the Nippons would be an exclusively Japanese American team.

Wapato was the locus of the farming community that had gathered in the Yakima Valley to take advantage of opportunities to lease land on the Yakima Indian Reservation. With the reality of the Alien Land Laws in full force in Washington State in the 1930s, land leasing arrangements were more easily made with federal reservation agencies freed from the burden of restrictive state alien land laws.

## The Normalization of Wapato Nippons Baseball

The farming life was hard in the Yakima Valley. Most of the Nisei baseball-playing generation worked on their parents’ farms 6 days a week, 12 hours a day. Wapato was the economic center of this community of farmers with feed stores, hotels, and restaurants, and it passed for a cultural center with the Japanese Methodist Church, Buddhist temple, and the Japanese language school.

Herb Iseri, star infielder for the Nippons, arrived in the Yakima Valley in 1934 from Hawaii and immediately made the team. To learn baseball in those days was more a product of male socialization than formal training. Iseri recalls, “I started playing baseball in grammar school. I just picked it up, you know. My father played all the time—there was nothing else to do.”<sup>71</sup>

Living in Pasco 70 miles from Yakima, George Yamauchi was good enough to play on the all-white Pasco town team and did so. But he gave up the local team, choosing instead to drive the 140 round-trip miles to be with the Nippons for Sunday afternoon games. George stated, “Well, you know, when you’re Nisei you kind of like to play with Niseis.”<sup>72</sup>

The Nippons traveled by automobile, players squeezed into a team member’s car “about four or five guys in a car, about four cars in all,” according to Harry Honda.<sup>73</sup> Distances in the Mt. Adams League were not that great, but the Nippons also played in Seattle and arranged games at different towns outside of their league commitments. The home locker room was the general store in Wapato, as Harry

Honda recalled: “Herb Iseri’s brother married a girl whose father owned the store. We would suit up there and after the game we’d shower right there at the store.”<sup>74</sup>

All the team’s equipment was purchased at the Yakima Hardware Store, whose owner was both the treasurer and the secretary of the Yakima and Mt. Adams leagues. When the team played in the July 4 tournament in Seattle, it stayed in a hotel owned by a Japanese American. Town baseball in the 1930s was informal, yet the Wapato Nippons were required to sign and honor the “Yakima Valley and Mt. Adams Baseball League” contract. The 1932 contract stipulated that the Nippons were “not to play with any other team” and were to “conform to all rules and regulations.” Even though the players assumed responsibility for injury, they were required to “appear at each and every scheduled game.”<sup>75</sup>

The Nippons also stretched to include as many Niseis as they could on the team; people weren’t cut from the team so much as “they stayed on the bench.”<sup>76</sup> And Honda recalls of the early days that “we had a lot of young Issei who were not real good ball players but who liked to play and we filled in our roster with these guys.”<sup>77</sup>

## The Umpire as Ethnic Arbitor

Attitudes of the Nippon players toward the umpire reveal some of the careful distance Japanese Americans kept in the company of Caucasians and the caution necessary for such interaction. Umpire favoritism was a potentially sensitive subject that the Nippons wanted to avoid. Shigeru Osawa, who played in Seattle with white teams, remembered the problematic nature of baseball officiating with interethnic teams: “On occasions when the white umpires favored white teams, the white audience became our friends and didn’t hesitate to cheer us on.”<sup>78</sup>

In the Yakima Valley, each town team supplied its own umpire, a unique arrangement that could give new meaning to a home field advantage. Yet the Nippons’ umpire, Harry Masto, was popular with the visiting white teams, as Harry Honda explained: “Opposing teams never quibbled about our umpire because if there was ever a close decision, why, Harry would give it to the other team.”<sup>79</sup>

There were arguments over calls—riding the umpire a bit was part of the entertainment in the Mt. Adams League—but, as Honda said, “You figure a close decision would go the other way, but we didn’t care—we were just glad to be playing ball and to have an umpire. All the teams liked our man the best—he was fair and honest.”<sup>80</sup>

The Nippons were noted for their sportsmanship and restraint, a matter of control and discipline when constantly facing sport competition in white society. The 1934 Wapato town game became a morality contest in which it was reported that the all-white town team unfairly recruited talent from outside its team jurisdiction in order to gain a competitive advantage over the Nippons. There were even reports that the home team had “sunk to the level of bribing the umpire.”<sup>81</sup> The chaos culminated in the ninth inning when the Wapato pitcher broke his leg stealing a base. The Wapato home team refused to play on, thus forfeiting the game, while the Nippon players refused to accept the forfeit and offered the gate

money for the injured pitcher as well as a benefit game the following weekend. The *Wapato Independent* wrote of the “white team’s shameful manner” in this game while extolling the Nippons’ “clean sportsmanship.”<sup>82</sup>

## The 1934-1935 Wapato Nippons—The Glory Years

There were championship years for the Wapato Nippons playing in the Mt. Adams League of central Washington. The Mt. Adams League was a natural fit for the Nippons because it catered to the smaller farm town teams like Mabton, Moxee, and Brownstone, as well as the Reservation Athletic Club of the nearby Yakima Indian reservation. At first there was one Mt. Adams League; later, it evolved into upper and lower valleys and the championship game was between the winners of the upper and lower sections.

The 1934 season put the Nippons on the baseball map when they captured the Mt. Adams League for the first time. The 1934 Nippons won against the 12-team Mt. Adams League, defeating Wiley City in a 3-0 shutout in which George Yamauchi earned two runs, one a home run over center field. The *Wapato Independent* boasted, “Wapato wins a pennant! Yes, sir, after all these years of patient waiting the Nippons went out and won a pennant for Wapato . . . Wapato is getting considerable advertising due to . . . this year’s Nippon team” (August 2, 1934).

The Nippons had an even better year in 1935. They won the Mt. Adams title again with a thrilling 5-3 win in the tenth inning over rival Moxee in the third and final game of the championship series. Harry Honda drove in two runs in the tenth inning with a “perfect squeeze play.”<sup>83</sup> The 1935 Nippons went on to challenge the champions of the Valley League, the Yakima Ship-by-Truckers in a best of three series showdown.

In that series, the Nippons lost the first game, but in a wild second game in which they collected 22 hits and made 11 errors they managed to win. The Nippons rallied late in the game: “Wapato staged a brilliant rally in the last of the ninth . . . Herb Iseri walked, Oyama singled, Yamauchi walked and then George Honda singled down third to win the contest as Iseri scored.”<sup>84</sup>

The series now tied, the final game moved to Yakima for a night game. The Japanese Americans came from all over the Valley to support the Nippons, “a record crowd of about 800 fans, about half of them Japanese who came in from outlying districts, were on hand to see the game.”<sup>85</sup> The game was close early on as the Nippons led 4-3 going into the fourth inning. A misjudged fly ball, lost in the lights, opened the fourth for Yakima and led to a flood of hits and runs. The Truckers won 11-4. The Nippons brought along their experienced umpire, Harry Masto, who “called a good game.”<sup>86</sup> This was a crucial moment for the upstart Nippons, their chance to lay claim to baseball ascendancy in the Yakima Valley. The night lights at Yakima stadium hurt the Nippons, and even now, 60 years later, it still rankles those who played that game. Herb Iseri recently recalled, “It was our first time under lights and we just couldn’t see the ball!”<sup>87</sup>

In the season’s final game, the Nippons played and defeated the Wapato town team, a team that played in the more competitive and all-white Yakima

Valley League by a convincing 10-5. The *Wapato Independent* reported, “The Nippon team outplayed the Wapato team. They out fielded them and out-hit them” (August 29, 1935). This was the first direct victory over the town team, and, given the legacy of social conflict in the 1920s over the Japanese American presence within that community, the peaceful passing of the game in 1935 and the acceptance of the Nippons’ win was a marker of social peace. After their game with the Wapato town team in August 1935, the Japanese Americans put on something of a show:

The Nippons have the strongest team in their history this year—and what’s more—they will continue to get stronger in future years. Immediately after the Nippons-Wapato game Sunday, two younger Japanese teams took the field for a practice game and they were all in uniform. There were about 40 to 45 Japanese players in uniform . . . The Japanese baseball management has the right idea and the ambition to put it over. . . When the Japanese have a turnout—it is generally 100 percent.<sup>88</sup>

The younger Yakima Yamatos had 30 boys try out for the team in 1936, the year they entered the Mt. Adams League.<sup>89</sup> Their coach was George Honda.

## July 4 Tournament

In addition to winning the Courier League championship, available only to Japanese American baseball clubs in the greater Puget Sound area, the July 4 tournament was an event that included teams from all over the Pacific Northwest and whose winner could lay de facto claim upon the Japanese American Northwest baseball crown. Inaugurated in 1931 by Seattle’s Japanese Association, the event’s official name was the “Northwest District Japanese Baseball Conference.” Games were played in Seattle on the two fields of Columbia Park as well as Garfield’s two fields—there were 16 teams, eight in the A division and eight in the B division (the Wapato Yamatos played B level). It was a tightly scheduled event that packed as many teams and baseball games as a weekend could handle, as the following schedule<sup>90</sup> from the 1933 July 4 tournament indicates:



Harry Honda (1938)  
Source: George Yamauchi

**JULY 3, 1933 CLASS A JULY 4 TOURNAMENT**

**GAME**

1 Taiyo-Fife Nippons	Columbia #1	10:00 a.m.
2 Waseda-White River	Columbia #1	noon
3 Green Lake-Wapato	Columbia #1	2:00 p.m.
4 Auburn-Portland Fujis	Columbia #1	4:00 p.m.

**JULY 4, 1933**

5 loser Taiyo-Fife vs. loser Waseda-White River	Garfield #1	9:30 am.
6 loser Green Lake vs. loser Auburn-Portland	Garfield #1	11:30 am.
7 winner Taiyo-Fife vs. winner Waseda-White River	Columbia #1	10 a.m.
8 winner Green Lake-Wapato vs. winner Auburn-Portland	Columbia #1	noon
9 third place game (winners game 5 and 6)	Columbia #1	2:00 pm.
10 championship game (winners 7 and 8)	Columbia #1	4:00 pm.

The July 4 Japanese American Baseball Tournament was also something of a festival for the Japanese community. The 1935 event featured an opening ceremony in which the Japanese counsel, Issaku Okamoto, K. Maeno of the Japanese Association,<sup>91</sup> M. Shiraishi of the Chamber of Commerce, and other dignitaries presided.<sup>92</sup>



Wapato Nippons with their championship trophies (1936): Front row (left to right): Joe Inaba, George Honda, Arthur Kikuchi, Johnson Shimizu, Geoge Yamauchi, Kiyoshi Matsumura. Back row (left to right): Harry Honda, Herb Iseri, Joe Honda (manager), Frank Fukuda (coach), Ichiro Yamamoto, Ned Osumi, Jimmy Umemoto. Not shown: Jimmy Oyama, Kendo Yasuda, Toru Omori. Source: Herb and Omi Iseri

The cross-fertilization of baseball with Japanese cultural functions was a normal part of Japanese American communal life in the 1930s. A game in August 1935 between Wapato and Fife was the “athletic attraction to the JAACL convention,” held in Auburn that year.<sup>93</sup> Yet, much of the attraction was the joy of attending the games and the chance to meet friends and be counted in a gathering of Pacific Northwest Japanese Americans as well as another opportunity to cheer and jeer the umpire: “Plenty of hoots and howls up on Beacon Hill” were anticipated in 1938’s tournament.<sup>94</sup>

Like the Courier League and White River and Wapato, the rural teams in the July 4 tournament found their way to the championship rounds more often than the urban squads did. The following identifies tournament winners and finalists from 1931 to 1938:<sup>95</sup>

YEAR	WINNER	SECOND PLACE
1931	White River	Portland Fujis
1932	White River	Wapato Nippons
1933	Wapato Nippons	Waseda Hornets
1934	Green Lake	Wapato Nippons
1935	Green Lake	Portland Giants
1936	Portland Giants	Wapato Nippons
1937	White River	Courier All-Stars
1938	White River	Wapato Nippons

The Wapato Nippons came out of nowhere in the 1930s to stun the Puget Sound baseball world—they won the July 4 tournament in 1933. This event did not escape the sports staff at the *Japanese American Courier* who wrote: “Frank Fukuda’s blue-capped Wapato cohorts stole down on the Western Washington and Oregon nines and from before their astonished noses appropriated the Northwest Japanese



Columbia Park, Seattle, Wash., July 4, 1933. Source: George Yamauchi

Class A trophy, taking back across the Cascades their first silver cup in the three years of the Association's annual Fourth tournaments" (July 8, 1933).

It was a momentous achievement for Wapato's Japanese Americans, one that was celebrated at a banquet held at the Seinen Hall in Wapato the following Sunday. The highlight of the evening was Frank Fukuda, the Nippons' mentor and coach, who "gave a play-by-play resume of the recent games played in the Fourth tournament."<sup>96</sup> Not only had the Nippons arrived, but so had baseball in the Japanese American community. If the Seinen-kai had its roots in literature, calisthenics, and non-competitive activities, it was now baseball that captured the imagination of the Nippons' followers, as well as the cadres of young Japanese Americans practicing to become Nippons some day.

In 1934, the Wapato Nippons were defending champions and came in second in the July 4 tournament. The *Courier* reported that "the mighty men from o'er the mountains, Frank Fukuda's haughty Wapato Nippons bit the dust for the first time in thirteen starts this season to lose out in the class A finals of the Northwest tourney" (July 8, 1934).

## Frank Fukuda and the Moral Message of Baseball

If James Sakamoto was part of an urban athletic intelligentsia, then Frank Fukuda was the the wandering equivalent for rural Japanese American society. Frank Fukuda, Japanese language school teacher and baseball coach of the Wapato Nippons, transported his brand of the disciplining spirit of athletics and education to the Yakima Valley. Already a legend for his coaching exploits in Seattle and Portland and his baseball tours of Japan, Fukuda came to Wapato in 1931 to assume control of the Wapato Language School, and it was in that farming town that he performed his best work with the baseball Nippons.

Fukuda was born in 1889 in Shimonoseki in southern Japan. He graduated from Shimonoseki Commercial School and emigrated to the United States in 1906.<sup>97</sup> He first worked in a laundry and then moved on to a position as a teller in a Japanese bank in Seattle (eventually taking over as assistant manager of the Seattle Shokin Ginko), but his heart was in education and in baseball. In 1908, Fukuda joined the Mikado baseball team, an all-Japanese team in the Japanese baseball league of Seattle.<sup>98</sup> By 1909, he had searched out a group of trouble-making boys in Seattle and shaped them into a baseball team, the Cherry Boys Baseball Club. He also helped organize and develop the Seattle Asahis in their early years from 1912 to 1917, the original Japanese American baseball club in Seattle.<sup>99</sup>

When his bank collapsed in 1927, he moved on to Portland where he taught at the Portland Japanese Language School from 1927 to 1931 and coached the Portland baseball Fujis into one of the Northwest's successful Japanese American baseball teams. Fukuda relocated once again in 1930, this time briefly to Japan,<sup>100</sup> where he transported his family to become a teacher at the Yamaguchi Prefectorial Hofu High School and, not suprisingly, its baseball coach.<sup>101</sup>

Fukuda made three trips to Japan with Seattle's Asahi baseball team—in 1914, 1918, and 1921. He purposely molded his trips to Japan into cultural and

educational exchanges as much as baseball tours. He was convinced that Japanese culture was necessary for the growing Japanese American immigrant community. Fukuda stated that these tours were to “make our young players understand their mother country. . . and to introduce Seattle to Japan.”<sup>102</sup>

Thus, we find among those traveling on his 1918 trip, five high school students, four recent high school graduates, a University of Washington student, and a business school student.<sup>103</sup> Fukuda’s teams were distinct in character; the Tokyo *Nichinichi* newspaper reported that Fukuda recruited “only superior scholar-athletes” also known for their “gentlemanlike manners” from the 100 Asahi members available for the trip to Japan.<sup>104</sup> Fukuda took his 1921 team to smaller towns and to his hometown Shimonoseki, in the south of Japan, where team members were treated to small-town Japanese hospitality from the local Asahi booster club established in honor of its wandering son.<sup>105</sup>

Frank Fukuda was always the classicist. In Pasco in the spring of 1940, he performed a “classical Japanese dance” at the double wedding of Charles and George Yamauchi.<sup>106</sup> We also find him playing on the Wapato tennis team in a match with the Yakima tennis club in 1933. Fukuda lost his singles badly but teamed with a Mr. Coleman to defeat Yakima’s Nelson and Keeney 6-4, 6-1.<sup>107</sup>

Fukuda’s energy and commitments to Japanese American culture were boundless. He taught a Japanese history class during the summer in Seattle as part of a program sponsored by the Taiyo Tigers baseball club, another example of the integration of sport and culture in the Japanese communities of the 1930s.<sup>108</sup> On another Seattle visit in which Mrs. Fukuda needed dental work, Frank Fukuda spent the two weeks coaching the Seattle Taiyos for their annual grudge match with the Seattle Nippons.<sup>109</sup>

A fierce competitor and an accomplished second baseman for the Asahis, Fukuda pushed the Japanese American baseball community to schedule and compete with white teams. He was legendary for his demanding on-the-field



Japan’s Waseda University plays Seattle’s Taiyo Athletic Club, Seattle, Wash., 1936.  
Source: George Yamauchi

coaching style and adherence to sportsmanship and emotional control; he preached *yamato damashii* as the essence of a Nisei approach to baseball.<sup>110</sup> The Asahi reunion of 1936 recalled that Fukuda exhorted them “to play American teams to get better competition [which was] a model for early development.” The Asahis also remembered their coach as “sharp in giving orders, but once off the diamond he was just a grand old man.”<sup>111</sup>

In Fukuda we find an ethos similar to that promoted by the nationalistic baseball enthusiasts of Japan’s Meiji era, although the elevated message of an elite sport ethos would have been difficult to reproduce in the dust and heat of Yakima Valley baseball games, with farmers eager for leisure and less patient for hidden moral messages. Fukuda could also have been operating within the tradition of Methodist reformers, posing baseball and sport to Issei distractions such as gambling.<sup>112</sup> Ryoichi Shibazaki traces the origins of Japanese American Seattle baseball in the early 1900s to fears about youth in a dangerous urban environment. Baseball was part of a strategy to “solve the existing social problems and to save youngsters from juvenile delinquency by urging them to concentrate on . . . baseball.”<sup>113</sup> Fukuda’s early socialization into Japanese America was in the urban ethnic enclave, Seattle’s Nihongo, where he would have been exposed to this kind of athletic missionizing.

Frank Fukuda also seems to have won wherever he went. In fact, when he wasn’t there on the sidelines, his teams lost. In the vital play-off series in 1935 with Moxee, Fukuda was missing from the Nippons’ sidelines during a loss in the second game. He came over the mountains from his summer history school in Seattle for the final game, which the Nippons won. The *Japanese American Courier*



Frank Fukuda Memorial Tournament, Wapato, Wash., fall 1941. Source: George Yamauchi

wrote, "Every team he has brought out to Seattle for the tourneys [the July 4 event] has taken home some kind of cup" (July 2, 1935). When Frank Fukuda finally left the Yakima Valley to teach in Salem, Oregon, in 1937, the Nippons did not even make it to the July 4 tournament. When Fukuda died in 1941, six months before the diaspora of Japanese Americans from their homes into incarceration, there was a memorial baseball tournament held in Wapato in late August at the end of the 1941 baseball season. Japanese American teams from all over the Pacific Northwest came to Wapato to play a final series of games in tribute to Frank Fukuda.

## Communal Responsibility and Sunday Nippon Baseball

By the mid-1930s, Sunday afternoon baseball in Wapato was the cultural event of the week attracting most of the Japanese American farming community in the valley. People came for baseball, but they also came to visit friends and to be counted among the ethnic gathering in the festival atmosphere of Sunday baseball. Tsuruyo Wada Nishi recalled the pull of Sunday afternoons in Wapato:

We lived nearby in Harrah, and we were the only Japanese in that town, and so I learned to get along with Caucasians since we didn't have much choice. Sundays were special and we would drive to Wapato for the Nippons game. I don't recall much about baseball or even being interested in it—I was 10 years old—but I do remember the ice cream at the ball games and what a treat it was just to be there.<sup>114</sup>

Baseball as leisure was linked to the schedule of farm work in the Yakima Valley of the 1930s. Shops closed as the community turned out for the 2:30 games. George Yamauchi, third baseman on the winning Nippons, remembered those big Sunday turnouts: "I guess that was the one time the Japanese people could get together."<sup>115</sup> Harry Honda also recalled, "The day that we played in Wapato the Japanese farmers would work up until noon and then take the afternoon off and come to our games—that was the only entertainment they had."<sup>116</sup> Herb Iseri did not forget those Sunday crowds: "The whole Japanese community would come out to our games."<sup>117</sup>

A town team's fan base was location; for the Nippons, it also included ethnicity and the collective experience of exclusion, and the Japanese followed their team around the Yakima Valley, especially for the big games. "There'll be a wholesale migration of baseball fans over to Moxee tomorrow for the local Nippons trek there for the second game of the Mt. Adams League play-off," the *Japanese American Courier* reported (July 20, 1935). For the 1935 challenge series with the Yakima Ship-by-Truckers in Yakima there were 800 fans, "half of them Japanese who came from the outlying districts."<sup>118</sup>

Wapato fans also developed a reputation in Seattle: "Across the humps, in Yakima Valley, the fans are saying that the Wapato Nippons will take the title but that perhaps may come from the staunch loyalty of their fans themselves, for the same fans are saying that the Yakima Valley Yamatos . . . will take the B title."<sup>119</sup> And in 1935, the Tokyo Giants came to the Yakima Valley to take on the Nippons.

“It was a holiday in the Yakima Valley as practically every Japanese family deserted their farms to see the brilliant Japanese professional team meet, for the first time, a second generation ball team in the Northwest.”<sup>120</sup> The Tokyo Giants won 6-5.

A winning team is difficult to ignore; its victories eventually weave their way into the local social fabric, and the team is adopted as a civic symbol. Harry Honda noticed that when the Nippons started winning, “gradually the Caucasian public turned out to our games since we were doing better than the town team.”<sup>121</sup> The Nippons were identified with the town of Wapato, with the occupation of farmers working the reservation land and with their Asian heritage. In fact, town teams in general were identified by social markings. Honda says, “We had a lot of fun playing the town teams. Moxee had a good team—all Frenchies. Harrah was a good team—all farmers—and Goldendale was good—most of their players were college kids working during the summer.”<sup>122</sup>

The 1935 Mt. Adams League championship game matched Wapato with Moxee, a town identified with French descendant hop growers. The local press wrote:

The ol' Moxee town with its numerous French descent Americans is said to have bet its last shirts, much less last dollars and cents on their team to come through with another victory and in Wapato, the situation is reversed. Forgotten is the welfare of the watermelons, cantaloups and tomatoes in the fields and of most interest is—Can Wapato win the deciding game? The whole town, including the white population, is agog over the series and betting is sky high.<sup>123</sup>

Only the irresistible influence of the winning Nippons could break down the barriers of race. The white community of Wapato, known more for its efforts in the 1920s to drive the Japanese from the Valley, was even won over to support a winning all-Japanese American team in the 1930s.

## Yakima Valley—Inhospitable Host

The Yakima Valley is described as a garden spot, a place of agricultural abundance and production. Yet, it is a desert, a forbidding place sandwiched between dry, dusty hills that radiate desert-level heat in the summers and numbing cold in winters. The towns dot the valley floor, modest commercial centers for an ambitious agricultural economy.

The brief history of the Japanese Americans in the Yakima Valley was one of early conflicts with the white population, begrudging acceptance and eventual removal. After the passage of the 1924 immigration bill, which signaled the end of mass Japanese immigration, social tensions temporarily eased in the Yakima Valley as the threat of continual immigration was over.<sup>124</sup> The pre-World War II population numbered around 1,300; after the war and internment, few returned.

The Wapato Nippons grew up with the legacy of conflict and exclusion suffered in the years after World War I. George Yamauchi remembered the 1920s in Pasco: “There were a number of nights when we frightened kids stood on the front steps of our home on East Clark Street looking at a cross burning on the slopes of the Horse Heaven Hills behind Kennewick.”<sup>124</sup> In the small Yakima

Valley farming town of Grandview, a 1924 Ku Klux Klan public meeting attracted 40,000. The *Grandview Herald* reported:

About 1,000 white-robed, unmasked knights formed a huge crescent, within which over 500 initiates took the obligations of the invisible empire in the presence of some 40,000 people . . . it was an inspiration to see the hundreds of white-robed men and women marching behind the flag and the fiery cross borne by mounted riders, to the strains of 'Onward, Christian Soldiers,' in the field illuminated by the glare of three huge crosses studded with electric lights (August 15, 1924).

George's childhood memories include losing the purchase opportunity for their first home in Pasco for "racial reasons" and the sting of exclusion on a Boy Scout trip to Walla Walla. He remembered that "the other scouts could go in, but I, being of Japanese ancestry, was prohibited from the pool—a couple of the boys stayed out of the pool with me while the others cavorted in the water seemingly oblivious to the humiliation in me."<sup>126</sup>

The *Wapato Independent* was the local newspaper, "a father and son newspaper . . . which showed extreme hatred for Japanese."<sup>127</sup> With the Depression, tension in the Yakima Valley surfaced again in the early 1930s due to heightened fears about a new wave of Asian Valley workers, the Filipinos. Japanese farmers employed immigrants from the Philippines on their farms on reservation property. Yuriko Ito recalled their farmhouse being dynamited the spring of 1933:

With loud crackling sounds, the house was shaking. I suddenly woke up. My husband jumped out of bed, threw on his robe and ran out. Beside myself with shock, I followed him. Just as I took a couple of steps out of the house,



George Yamauchi at the plate. Source: George Yamauchi

the second explosion took place . . . pieces of wood were landing within two feet of my husband. It was dynamite that caused the explosion—some in the garage and some in the Dodge three-quarter-ton truck.<sup>128</sup>

That spring, there were six separate dynamiting and arson cases directed at the Yakima Valley Japanese.<sup>129</sup> The spring of 1933 was also the time when the Wapato Nippons were maturing as a baseball club; they would go on to stun the northwest Japanese American community that summer by claiming the July 4 tournament in Seattle.

Fumiko Iseri, Herb's wife, grew up in the valley and remembers the hostility of the surrounding white community, which she attributed to jealousy: "Before the war, 60 percent of the Japanese were on the honor roll and the whites did not like that." In the prewar days, Fumi recalled that the daily, face-to-face interaction was free of hostility, but "there were other ways you could feel the hurt . . . like, on a Sunday, after the Nippons baseball game we would want to have a dance but the white kids felt that they didn't want to go."<sup>130</sup>

After the war and release from Heart Mountain internment camp, less than 10 percent of the Japanese American community returned to the Yakima Valley, Fumiko Iseri says, "They left by choice—they didn't want to come back here."<sup>131</sup>

## Race, Ethnicity, and Baseball in the Yakima Valley

For the Wapato Nippons, race and ethnicity mattered as the team endured racial slurs off the field, but baseball in the Yakima Valley allowed the Nippons to temporarily sidestep the racism the Japanese experienced in institutional life, in job opportunities, housing, and the Washington State alien laws that forbade ownership of land. For one thing, their moment of ascendancy was in the 1930s, a time of tension and despair, but well after the turbulent race-hating 1920s in the Yakima Valley. For the Nippons, the unit of action and understanding was reducible to baseball, its ethos of fair play, and the casual nature of interaction among the baseball fraternity. Even though the Nippons team name was a tribute to ethnic character, the players themselves seemed to diminish the ethnic nationality in the team name—it was a natural appellation in the 1930s, a way of identifying their team within a social mix of teams defined by the characteristics of place, vocation, or ethnic background.

Baseball could also break down Asian stereotypes, as Harry Honda recalled in an experience the Nippons had at Roslyn, Washington:

We played in places where they'd never even seen an Oriental. They turned up out of curiosity. When we moved up to the Yakima Valley League, there was a team up there in Roslyn. Roslyn was a coal mining town, a tough place. The whole town came out to see how this Japanese team played and we played a real good game there. Later they invited us back. They appreciated us maybe because they'd never seen a Japanese before . . . I thought that was nice because in those days Japanese had a tough row to hoe, you know, everywhere we went somebody would make some remark about us, you know an all-Japanese team. You know, though, through sports you can get rid of a lot of discrimination.<sup>132</sup>

Honda's memory of the Roslyn games is typical of the Nippons' experience with race. Within a backdrop of tension in the valley, sport was the one social setting that temporarily bracketed the norms of racism.

George Yamauchi, playing for the Pasco Railroaders in the 1930s as well as the Nippons, recalled baseball as remarkably free of discrimination. He could not recall a single incident of discrimination playing for Wapato and did not feel the tension playing against white teams: It was strictly baseball—we were just another team.<sup>133</sup>

For Herb Iseri, playing against white teams was also free of racial tension “just like playing a regular team. There wasn't any tension on the field with white players. I don't know about the spectators but to the players it was just another game.”<sup>134</sup> Herb recalled the incident in which an opposing white player broke his leg sliding into the Nippons' catcher, Art Kikuchi. “The money we made on the game, why we put it together—both teams—and gave it to the guy with the broken leg.”<sup>136</sup>

Thus, we see in the veteran Nippons, in Honda, Iseri, and Yamauchi a stubborn resistance to complain about mistreatment or to think of themselves as victims of racism. They are proudest of playing baseball well enough to earn the respect of the valley white community and a temporary reprieve from the burden of race. In the Seattle leagues as well, as Banzo Okada, manager of the Taiyos said, “We were never called ‘Jap’ on the playing fields . . . at least in baseball we were never discriminated against.”<sup>136</sup>

The Wapato Nippons played their final games August 31, 1941, and September 1, 1941, at the tournament in Wapato honoring Frank Fukuda. War with Japan in December 1941 was soon followed by internment in April 1942. The Yakima Valley Japanese were ordered to report to the Portland Relocation Center and were eventually relocated to Heart Mountain near Powell, Wyoming.

## The Nippons, Sport, and Ethnicity

One of the remarkable stories of amateur baseball was the rise and stunning run of the pre-World War II Wapato Nippons. This group of Nisei ball players charted their own course in the 1930s. They won in a highly competitive league of white town teams, they eschewed an ethnic militancy while at the same time wearing the colors of their Japanese subnation on their uniforms and in their team slogan, and they confronted their social environment known for its hostility and violence toward their fathers and mothers with indifference.

Weber described the ethnic impulse within modern societies as “the vague connotation that whatever is felt to be distinctively common must derive from common descent.”<sup>137</sup> The experience of the Wapato Nippons and the teams in Seattle's Courier League all seemed to embrace and contribute to the validation of “common descent” within the Japanese American community—teams of players captured and distributed through baseball ethnic traditions and agrarian sensibilities that were part of the enclave that was the world of Japanese Americans before

World War II. Yet, these ballplayers did so without celebration within a larger society that was not receptive to the construction of a separate cultural identity.

There were other social markings surrounding Japanese American baseball that had just as much influence as ethnic culture. The common struggle with the desert land in the Yakima Valley and the occupation of farming or being part of a larger agricultural economy was just as powerful a bond to the Wapato Nippons as ethnicity. In Seattle's Courier League, the division of labor within an urban economy forged social bonds that were reflected in the diversity of city amateur baseball teams. The Market team, for example, organized around Japanese American farmers and workers in Seattle's Pike Place Market, had sufficient cohesion to produce a distinctive baseball team.

There was also the popular culture of prewar town baseball to contend with, a leveling force that did not tolerate outside interference with its code of political abstinence. Here, in the all-male world of amateur baseball in the 1930s and 1940s, the culture of vernacular expression, banter, and self-effacing humor established a set of norms that made the air around baseball light and comfortable. It was an atmosphere that Japanese Americans were drawn to and in embracing the cultural norms of baseball, the Nisei generation gave up some claim of ethnic and cultural exclusiveness.

Thus, baseball, as an ethnic representation, was mediated by and through an assortment of factors. The Nisei intelligentsia—Sakamoto, Hosakawa, and Fukuda—promoted messages about assimilation within American norms, as well as ideas about the higher values of playing baseball. The ethnic community in the Yakima Valley, bound by its isolation and patterns of discrimination, rallied around its baseball team as a marker of ethnic pride, as well as a demonstration of achievement in the American pastime. Through all these influences and constraints, ethnicity was embraced and at the same moment subordinated to the leveling culture of baseball by a subgroup in the Pacific Northwest struggling in the decades before World War II to map its passage through and into American society

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1. Gail M. Nomura, "Beyond the Playing Field: The Significance of Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball in the Yakima Valley," p. 19, in *Bearing Dreams, Shaping Visions*, edited by Linda Revilla, Gail Nomura and Shirley Hine (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 15-31.
  2. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
  3. Paul Spickard described relations between the Nisei and Issei as "intergenerational conflict" brought on by differences and tensions in language, attitudes toward work, and a Nisei desire to more fully integrate with the larger white society. Paul R. Spickard, *Japanese Americans: The Formation and Transformations of an Ethnic Group* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), p. 79.
  4. Samuel Regalado, "Sport and Community in California's Japanese American 'Yamato Colony', 1930-1945," *Journal of Sport History* (Summer 1992): 19, 143.
  5. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, U.K.: Basil Blackwell Publishers, 1986), p. 28.

6. Gail M. Nomura, "Beyond the Playing Field: The Significance of Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball in the Yakima Valley," p. 28, in *Bearing Dreams, Shaping Visions*, edited by Linda Revilla, Gail Nomura, and Shirley Hine (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 15-31.
7. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 560.
8. Michael L. Mullan, "Sport As Institutionalized Charisma," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 19 (1995): 204.
9. G.P.T. Finn, "Racism, Religion and Social Prejudice: Irish Catholic Clubs, Soccer and Scottish Society: The Historical Roots of Prejudice," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 8 (1991): 72-95. See also Joseph M. Bradley, "Integration or Assimilation? Scottish Society, Football and Irish Immigrants," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 13 (1996): 61-79.
10. Michael Banton, *Racial and Ethnic Competition* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 4. The anthropologist Jeremy MacClancy describes the ethnic label belonging to modern sport as part of an operating functionalism-teams used the ethnic label to provide, "a sense of difference and a way of classifying themselves." Jeremy MacClancy, "Sport, Identity and Ethnicity," in *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity*, edited by Jeremy MacClancy (Herndon, Va.: Berg Publishers, 1996), p. 2.
11. Donald Roden, "Baseball and the Quest for National Dignity in Meiji Japan," *American Historical Review* 85 (1980): 511-534.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 515.
13. These higher schools were prep schools for the national university in which students ages 17-20 participated. The locus of baseball shifted to the universities by the 1920s-to Waseda, Keio, Meiji, Rikkyo and Hosei. Ryoichi Shibazaki, "Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926" (Master's Thesis, University of Washington, 1981).
14. Donald Roden, "Baseball and the Quest for National Dignity in Meiji Japan," 511-534.
15. Paul R. Spickard, *Japanese Americans: The Formation and Transformations of an Ethnic Group* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996).
16. Ron Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1989).
17. Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988).
18. Brian Masuru Hayashi, *'For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren': Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism Among the Japanese of Los Angeles* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 44.
19. Donald Roden, *Schooldays in Imperial Japan: A Study in the Culture of a Student Elite* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1990), p. 122.
20. Harry Honda, interview by author, tape recording, Spokane, Wash., January 15-16, 1997.
21. Noboru Kobayashi, interview by author, tape recording, Philadelphia, January 18, 1997.
22. George Yamauchi, interview by author, tape recording, Portland, Ore., February 8, 1997.
23. Ted Van Arsdol, "The Yamauchis in the New World," *Franklin Flyer* 20 (1987): 1-6.
24. George K. Yamauchi, *Growing Up in Pasco* (private memoirs of George K. Yamauchi, 1984), pp. 20-21.
25. Paul R. Spickard, *Japanese Americans: The Formation and Transformations of an Ethnic Group* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), p. 9.
26. By 1915 high school baseball in Japan had progressed to the point where a national baseball tournament was organized. Ryoichi Shibazaki, "Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926."
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

28. Samuel O. Regalado, "Play Ball": Baseball and Seattle's Japanese-American Courier League, 1928-1941," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (Winter 1996): 29-37.
29. *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, Nov. 20, 1943.
30. Ryoichi Shibazaki, "Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926."
31. Reported in the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*. Gail M. Nomura, "Beyond the Playing Field: The Significance of Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball in the Yakima Valley," In *Bearing Dreams, Shaping Visions*, edited by Linda Revilla, Gail Nomura, and Shirley Hine (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 15-31.
32. Samuel O. Regalado, "Play Ball: Baseball and Seattle's Japanese-American Courier League, 1928-1941," 29-37.
33. The *Seattle Star* was a journal identified with Japanese exclusionism in the 1920s. Kazuo Ito, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America* (Seattle: Japanese Community Service, 1973).
34. Ron Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1989), p. 222.
35. At Minidoka, Sakamoto was constantly writing letters for his fellow inmates. Whether it was arranging exit visas or working papers for beet workers or trying to salvage confiscated Japanese American property in Seattle, Sakamoto used his wide network of pre-war contacts to minimize the suffering. James Sakamoto Papers, University of Washington Library.
36. *Minidoka Irrigator*, Aug. 19, 1944.
37. Takayoshi was one of the original Asahis. In addition to his administrative work for the Courier leagues, he had a reputation as the best umpire in northwest Japanese American baseball. *Great Northern Daily*, Oct. 16, 1936.
38. *Japanese American Courier*, March 8, 1941.
39. Samuel O. Regalado, "Play Ball": Baseball and Seattle's Japanese-American Courier League, 1928-1941," 29.
40. Baseball also, according to Regalado's study, accelerated the socialization of "American values [such as] . . . democracy. . . courage, honor, and physical toughness." *Ibid.*, p. 30.
41. *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, Aug. 28, 1943.
42. This team was made up of high school students. Suquamish seems to have had a rough time of it on their tour of Japan; they lost their games badly, their reserve pitcher was hit by a train and seriously injured, and their agent abandoned them their gate money. The American Consul in Kobe helped get the team home. Ryoichi Shibazaki, "Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926."
43. *Sunnyride Sun*, June 9, 1938.
44. Ryoichi Shibazaki, "Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926."
45. Erving Goffman, *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order* (New York: Harper Books, 1971), p. 69.
46. *Wapato Independent*, Aug. 2, 1934.
47. *Japanese American Courier*, Sept. 10, 1938.
48. *Ibid.*, July 4, 1935.
49. *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, June 5, 1943.
50. *Japanese American Courier*, Aug. 12, 1933.
51. *Ibid.*, July 27, 1935.
52. Gail M. Nomura, "Beyond the Playing Field: The Significance of Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball in the Yakima Valley," p. 26, in *Bearing Dreams, Shaping*

- Visions*, edited by Linda Revilla, Gail Nomura, and Shirley Hine (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 15-31.
53. Ryoichi Shibazaki, "Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926," p. 82.
  54. *Japanese American Courier*, July 8, 1935.
  55. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1938.
  56. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1938.
  57. *Wapato Independent*, Aug. 29, 1935.
  58. *Japanese American Courier*, July 6, 1935.
  59. *Ibid.*, July 8, 1939.
  60. *Ibid.*, July 8, 1939.
  61. *Ibid.*, Aug. 16, 1938.
  62. Harry Honda, interview by author, tape recording, Spokane, Wash., January 15-16, 1997.
  63. Gail M. Nomura, "Beyond the Playing Field: The Significance of Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball in the Yakima Valley," p. 8, in *Bearing Dreams, Shaping Visions*, edited by Linda Revilla, Gail Nomura, and Shirley Hine (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 15-31.
  64. *Japanese American Courier*, July 8, 1939.
  65. Herb Iseri, interview by author, tape recording, Wapato, Wash., July 28, 1996.
  66. Gail M. Nomura, "Beyond the Playing Field: The Significance of Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball in the Yakima Valley," in *Bearing Dreams, Shaping Visions*, edited by Linda Revilla, Gail Nomura, and Shirley Hine (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 15-31.
  67. Scottish football clubs organized by Irish immigrants and Scots of Irish descent appeared in the late nineteenth century most notably in Glasgow. The Irish clubs, reflecting the segregation of Glasgow into an Irish Catholic enclave, were naturally ethnically homogeneous. G.P.T. Finn states these early ethnic clubs, like the Japanese American baseball teams, plunged into sport with an assimilationist motivation. G.P.T. Finn, "Racism, Religion and Social Prejudice: Irish Catholic Clubs, Soccer and Scottish Society: The Historical Roots of Prejudice," *International Journal of the History of Sports* 8 (1981): 72-95.
  68. Harry Honda, interview by author, tape recording, Spokane, Wash., Jan. 15-16, 1997.
  69. Gail M. Nomura, "Beyond the Playing Field: The Significance of Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball in the Yakima Valley," in *Bearing Dreams, Shaping Visions*, edited by Linda Revilla, Gail Nomura, and Shirley Hine (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 15-31.
  70. Harry Honda, interview by author, tape recording, Spokane, Wash., Jan. 15-16, 1997.
  71. Herb Iseri, interview by author, tape recording, Wapato, Wash., July 28, 1996.
  72. George Yamauchi, interview by author, tape recording, Portland, Ore., Feb. 8, 1997.
  73. Harry Honda, interview by author, tape recording, Spokane, Wash., Jan. 15-16, 1997.
  74. *Ibid.*
  75. 1932 Yakima Valley and Mt. Adams Baseball League Contract, Frank Fukuda Scrapbook, Frank Fukuda Papers, University of Washington Library.
  76. Herb Iseri, interview by author, tape recording, Wapato, Wash., July 28, 1996.
  77. Harry Honda, interview by author, tape recording, Spokane, Wash., Jan. 15-16, 1997.
  78. Kazuo Ito, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America* (Seattle: Japanese Community Service, 1973).
  79. Harry Honda, interview by author, tape recording, Spokane, Wash., Jan. 15-16, 1997.

80. Ibid.
81. Gail M. Nomura, "Beyond the Playing Field: The Significance of Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball in the Yakima Valley," p. 27, in *Bearing Dreams, Shaping Visions*, edited by Linda Revilla, Gail Nomura, and Shirley Hine (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 15-31.
82. Ibid., p. 27.
83. *Wapato Independent*, Aug. 23, 1935.
84. Ibid., Aug. 12, 1935.
85. Ibid., Aug. 19, 1935.
86. Ibid., Aug. 19, 1935.
87. Herb Iseri, interview by author, tape recording, Wapato, Wash., July 28, 1996.
88. *Wapato Independent*, Aug. 29, 1935.
89. *Japanese American Courier*, April 11, 1936.
90. Frank Fukuda Scrapbook, Frank Fukuda Papers, University of Washington Library.
91. The Japanese associations were sponsored by the Japanese government, an example of its long arm extending to the United States. The Japanese associations sponsored all kinds of cultural events, including baseball. Stephen Fugita and David O'Brien, *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).
92. *Japanese American Courier*, July 7, 1935.
93. Ibid., Aug. 31, 1935.
94. Ibid., July 2, 1938.
95. Ibid., July 9, 1938.
96. Ibid., July 15, 1933.
97. Kazuo Ito, *Isei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America* (Seattle: Japanese Community Service, 1973). Ryoichi Shibazaki states that Fukuda was first introduced to baseball in Japan as a student in the Shimonoseki Commercial School. Ryoichi Shibazaki, "Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926."
98. Ryoichi Shibazaki, "Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926."
99. *Great Northern Daily*, Oct. 16, 1936, Frank Fukuda Scrapbook, Frank Fukuda Papers, University of Washington Library.
100. The Portland pitcher George Okuda accompanied his coach on this trip to Japan. Okuda studied at the Bofu Commercial School where he played baseball on the school team. Fukuda seems to have acted as an "agent" for other Japanese American baseball players, helping to locate them at Bofu as students and players. Frank Fukuda Scrapbook, Frank Fukuda Papers, University of Washington Library.
101. Thomas Heuterman, *The Burning Horse: Japanese American Experience in the Yakima Valley, 1920-1942* (Cheyney, Wash.: Eastern Washington University Press, 1995).
102. Ryoichi Shibazaki, "Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926," p. 84.
103. Ibid., p. 83.
104. Ibid., p. 105.
105. Ibid.
106. Ted Van Arsdol, "The Yamauchis in the New World," *Franklin Flyer* 20 (1987): 3.
107. *North American Times*, Aug. 9, 1933, Frank Fukuda Scrapbook, Frank Fukuda Papers, University of Washington Library.
108. *Japanese American Courier*, July 13, 1935. The class announcement read, "Japanese history will be taught by Mr. Fukuda to those who are interested in attending. The school, which

- is being conducted under the auspices of the Taiyo Tigers, will be taught at the home of Shieru Aoki.”
109. *North American Times*, Aug. 9, 1933, Frank Fukuda Scrapbook, Frank Fukuda Papers, University of Washington Library.
  110. Kakuei Nakamura, an Asahi player, in an address at a reception following the Asahi-Keio University game, said, “the most important objective [of the tour] was to learn “yamato damashii” in order to become a Japanized American-born Japanese.” Ryoichi Shibazaki, “Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926,” p. 86. The Yamato reference is to the ancient capital of Japan’s first emperor. To Japanese historian John Dower, *yamato damashii* represented a national “racial ideology” based on “the notion of purity” and national “homogeneity.” Given Japan’s unhappy experience with twentieth-century nationalism and militarism, the *yamato* spirit remains a discredited attempt at the reconstruction of a mythic past. John W. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace* (New York: New Press, 1993), p. 272.
  111. *Ibid.*, Aug. 9, 1933.
  112. Nomura points out that baseball competed with gambling and drinking among the Issei in the pre-World War I years. Fukuda and Sakamoto can be counted in the long list of reformers attempting to pose sport as an option to the vices available in urban America. Gail M. Nomura, “Beyond the Playing Field: The Significance of Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball in the Yakima Valley,” in *Bearing Dreams, Shaping Visions*, edited by Linda Revilla, Gail Nomura, and Shirley Hine (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 15-31.
  113. Ryoichi Shibazaki, “Seattle and the Japanese-United States Baseball Connection, 1905-1926,” p. 78.
  114. Tsuruyo Wada Nishi, interview by author, Grandview, Wash., July 27, 1996.
  115. George Yamauchi, interview by author, tape recording, Portland, Ore., Feb. 8, 1997.
  116. Harry Honda, interview by author, tape recording, Spokane, Wash., Jan. 15-16, 1997.
  117. Herb Iseri, interview by author, tape recording, Wapato, Wash., July 28, 1996.
  118. *Wapato Independent*, Aug. 22, 1935.
  119. *Japanese American Courier*, July 2, 1935.
  120. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1935.
  121. Harry Honda, interview by author, tape recording, Spokane, Wash., Jan. 15-16, 1997.
  122. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1935.
  123. Gail M. Nomura, “Beyond the Playing Field: The Significance of Pre-World War II Japanese American Baseball in the Yakima Valley,” p. 10, in *Bearing Dreams, Shaping Visions*, edited by Linda Revilla, Gail Nomura, and Shirley Hine (Pullman, Wash.: Washington State University Press, 1993), pp. 15-31.
  124. Thomas Heuterman, *The Burning Horse: Japanese American Experience in the Yakima Valley, 1920-1942* (Cheyney, Wash.: Eastern Washington University Press, 1995).
  125. George K. Yamauchi, *Growing Up in Pasco: A Sequel* (private memoirs of George K. Yamauchi, 1988), p. 46.
  126. George K. Yamauchi, *Growing up in Pasco*, p. 48.
  127. Kazuo Ito, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America* (Seattle: Japanese Community Service, 1973).
  128. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
  129. *Ibid.*
  130. Fumiko Iseri, interview by author, tape recording, Wapato, Wash., July 28, 1996.
  131. *Ibid.*
  132. Harry Honda, interview by author, tape recording, Spokane, Wash., Jan. 15-16, 1997.

133. George Yamauchi, interview by author, tape recording, Portland, Ore., Feb. 8, 1997.
134. Herb Iseri, interview by author, tape recording, Wapato, Wash., July 28, 1996.
136. Kazuo Ito, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America* (Seattle: Japanese Community Service, 1973), p. 238.
137. Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (3 vols.), (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1978), p. 395. Weber preferred to submerge racial groups within nationality and the nation-state. Race, as a traditional form of social cohesion, was assumed to be less influential to modern societies based on bureaucratic control and technical rationality.