

# “The Future” as seen from Fukushima



## Assisting the National Team with food

When Japan’s national football team, which is currently in the midst of its qualifying campaign for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, travels overseas, it is accompanied by Yoshiteru Nishi (56), a chef from the town of Hirono who acts as head chef for the team and supports the players by preparing and serving appropriate food. The six members of Group 5 visited Yoshiteru Nishi and spent a whole day speaking with him about the national team and his thoughts and feelings about Fukushima. During our conversation, he spoke of his desire “to support the national team in their effort to secure a place in the World Cup as a means to boost morale in Fukushima through sport.” (Suzuki)

### Nishi: “Food that helps lead to victory”

Nishi previously worked as the executive chef of the restaurant in the soccer training center, J Village. Now, he runs two restaurants, the Alpine Rose in Hirono and Cuccina, located inside the Aeon shopping mall in Hirono. Since 2004, he has been accompanying the national team as its head chef on overseas trips. In addition to preparing meals for the team, his main duties include maintaining food quality and

sanitation standards. He always puts a lot of thought into his job and likes to be creative when preparing meals. Previously, meals were usually served buffet-style and had to be prepared beforehand, which meant the dishes were cold by the time the players started eating. After finishing their meals, the players would often return to their rooms right away with little communication.

Nishi wanted the players to be able to enjoy warm meals that would also lift their spirits, and so he came up with the idea of doing live cooking, in which the dishes are prepared in front of the players. The idea proved to be a success, making mealtimes more fun



Nishi at the Alpine Rose restaurant in Hirono, answering questions from the students. (photo by Hayashi)

and leading to greater communication between players, who started staying behind in the dining hall longer to continue their conversations.

According to Nishi, creating an environment in which players can eat without stress and that promotes greater communication among them is also part of a chef’s responsibilities. We got the impression that, for Nishi, the best interests of those to whom he served food was of utmost importance. For the national team players to live up to their full potential during their games overseas, Nishi’s support seems indispensable. As the 24th member of the team, Nishi will no doubt continue to support the players through food. (Suzuki)

### After the disaster

In the aftermath of the earthquake disaster, J Village became the main operational base for the cleanup operations underway at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Nishi, who was executive chef at the J Village restaurant at the time, and his staff were in charge of preparing meals for the cleanup workers at the nuclear power plant. Nishi said there were two reasons why he put so much effort into preparing food for the workers. Firstly, he wanted them to be able to enjoy good food. Secondly, he wanted to play his part in restoring the prefecture to normal. We

thought this was a true reflection of his kind and thoughtful nature. Negative misinformation after the disaster contributed to a huge drop in the sales of agricultural and other products of Fukushima, which in turn had a negative impact on the incomes of those dependent on those products. As a way of helping the residents affected, Nishi made sure that, where possible, only local products were used in preparing the meals in the restaurant. His determination, as someone involved in preparing and providing food, to do all he can to contribute to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Fukushima remains unchanged to this day.

(Kokubun, Kusumi)



Nishi at Cuccina, speaking with a smile. (photo by Hayashi)

## Smiles throughout Japan

Looking to the future, Nishi said he has three wishes: to see Japan’s national team successfully qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, to see J Village return to the way it was before and to one day travel across Japan in a food truck. His wishes are a testament to his kind nature and his desire to bring a smile to every face, not only in Fukushima, but also throughout Japan.

He said he believes that the match

with Saudi Arabia to be played next month as part of the final round of Asian qualifiers will also create a lot of excitement in Fukushima.

“I will do my best to prepare the kind of food for the players that will help them to create an exciting match for everyone,” he added.

Let’s hope the food he prepares can help the team to pull off a victory.

(Seino)

### Food to prepare Halilhodzic-led Team for battle

When accompanying the national team on their overseas tours, Nishi is always mindful that players are served Japanese meals that they are used to. As a rule, three and half hours before a game, each player is served Japanese udon noodles and two onigiri (rice balls) and an additional onigiri within thirty minutes after each game. Finally, to make sure players can quickly recover from exhaustion and their fatigued muscles can recuperate after the strenuous exertion, Japanese curry that is rich in high-quality protein is served within one hour after a game.

(Kaneko)

Honda has a soft spot for paprika?

Okazaki has sophisticated taste in food

Nagatomo loves miso-baked sablefish

### Edited by:



Takuma Suzuki

(Asaka Kaisei High 3rd grade)

Masato Kaneko

(Aizu Gakuho Junior High 2nd grade)

Sakura Kokubun

(Tomita Junior High 2nd grade)

Ryusei Hayashi

(Yumoto 1 Junior High 1st grade)

Sara Seino

(Chuodai Higashi Elementary 6th grade)

Ryoma Kusumi

(Yumoto 2 Elementary 5th grade)