

**INTERVIEW**



# Mikio Oda

Produced by

**Masao Oda**

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## Cover photo

Mikio Oda makes history with this 15.21 meter gold medal winning jump at the 1928 Amsterdam Games. With this jump, Oda became the first Japanese, and also the first Asian, to gold medal in any Olympic event. This attempt was not Oda's personal best, but the distance was enough to eclipse American Levi Casey, who won the silver. Oda's diary entry on that day read, "I'll try until I break the world record."



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### Masao Oda

Son of Mikio Oda, Born 1934  
Author of "German Business Guide"  
Text of "Beginning German Language" etc.  
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## **Preamble**

Japanese sport has made tremendous advances in the 20th century, largely by leveraging knowledge & techniques imported from America and Europe.

Mikio Oda (1905-1998) was born in Hiroshima. He was a pioneer and leader of sports introduced from Western countries.

Oda, by vigorous study and supreme effort, won a gold medal in the triple jump at the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam. In so doing, he became not only the first Japanese to gold medal in an Olympic event, but also the first Asian.

Oda's gold medal performance became the basis for Japanese athletes & citizens to learn about Olympic Games.

Later as a sports writer for the Asahi Shimbun, one of Japan's leading daily newspapers, Oda submitted many well informed articles about the technique of sports. His writing and mentorship contributed greatly to the development of a new generation of athletes & journalists in Japan. Oda's legacy of disciplined scholarship continues to strongly inform and shape the consciousness of modern Japan's mass media community.

It isn't possible to talk about sports history in Japan without recognizing Oda's contribution to athletics & sportsmanship.

Interviewer  
Kazuo Chujo  
Seniorwriter of the Asahi Shimbun

## Interview of Mikio Oda as recorded by Kazuo Chujo

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## "ENJOYABLE PARIS OLYMPICS"

Q: What kind of Games were the 1924 Paris Olympics ?

A: With a large 500 meter track, the Stadium was huge. The grandstands were marvelous. The opening ceremony was well organized and gorgeous. I was so excited that I don't remember, what was going on at the ceremony.

Q: What was the location of the stadium ?

A: The Stadium, training field and village were in the city of "Colomb" outside of Paris. In the village there were about 50 small cottages. Athletes from Japan, South America and a few other nations were living there. Japan's track team arrived first and the training field was very close to the village. Top athletes of other countries were also training there. I trained with them in order to emulate their techniques.

Q: Was it a new experience for Japanese to be seen by Europeans ?

A: Among Asian nations represented, Japan was joined by athletes from the Philippines. "Colomb" is a small town. Every morning when I purchased cherries at the fruit shop, people were very kind and filled my bag with Cherries. It was my pleasure to take a walk eating these Cherries. I used a bicycle to look around the suburb and often enjoyed riding with French girls who were to their way to the work on bicycle. It was a very enjoyable Olympics.

Q: Was qualifying for the Triple Jump difficult ?

A: There were not many competitors in the Triple Jump event. From Asia, only Japan and The Philippines were represented. The only African nation represented was Algeria. The scale of competition at that time was much smaller than today.

## "LUCKY FINAL TRIAL"

Q: You won sixth place in the Triple Jump. It was a great achievement.

A: I was lucky. At the first jump I broke my own record with 14.35 meters. At this first jump I injured my heel, and my jump thereafter was worse. The fifth jumper jumped 14.97 meters, which was 60 cm better than mine. I must say, I was just lucky.

Q: It must have been a big joy for you.

A: Yes. Of course. This achievement became an encouragement for me. I thought, I may be able to get higher position in 4 years.

Q: To Amsterdam, where you won gold medal, you traveled by train through Siberia ?

A: It took two weeks from Tokyo and I was with the track team of Waseda University. Waseda was strong that time and wanted to compete with Oxford and Cambridge University before Olympics.

Q: How was the result ?

A: Their team was a combination of both Universities and had the name "Achilles Club". Waseda lost the game with 3 points difference, because I tumbled at the hurdle.

Q: I see it as a tremendous project that one university goes to Europe for competition.

A: Supervisor of the track team, Dr. Tadaoki Yamamoto, was an international fellow. He visited Olympic Game in Paris when he was studying in Europe and had a wish to give Waseda students chance to compete in Europe.

Q: I heard that Olympics was not called "International" but "World's Olympics".

A: Probably they named imitating the world's Expo.

#### **"LARGE NATIONAL FLAG WAS HOISTED"**

Q: How was the trip through Siberia ?

A: It was not easy specially with food stuff. There was a dining car, but I couldn't taste Russian meal and besides it was expensive. Soup was the only meal I could accept and otherwise I was buying egg and chicken at the station.

Q: How do you think the trip by plane ?

A: The plane is much easier. The trip for many days was boring and problem was that we could not practice training.

Q: I heard that you could learn languages and also adjust the time during the long Journey.

A: There were certainly several advantages, such as learning languages, and getting acquainted with foreigners. Someone of us gave mahjong lessons to foreigners. But in regard to sports, the circumstance is much better today, because we can train early enough and can adjust our condition. Today however, we have a different problem. Young athletes are losing their inclination for hard training.

Q: When you won the gold medal, an unusually large Japanese flag was hoisted. Is it true that the Japanese flag was not prepared by the Olympic Committee?

A: I don't know the truth. The commonly accepted explanation is that Dr. Yamamoto handed Miss Hitomi the flag, which was trusted by His Imperial Highness for the purpose of wrapping Oda in case he won. Mr. Nanbu was upset and forgot the wrapping story and ran to the pole and asked to hoist this flag. Therefore the flag was different size from others. I can't believe this story.

Q: I checked the documents of Amsterdam Olympics and found that the size of flag was larger for the winner and smaller for the second and third.

### "I WON BECAUSE I LIKED SPORTS"

Q: Was there a block in the field for the athletes to stand up for receiving an award?

A: There was no such block. After the game, I was standing at the pit. Then the national anthem "Kimigayo" commenced, and the flag was hoisted. I was looking the main pole. "Kimigayo" started from the second phrase.

Q: Where were athletes of silver and bronze then?

A: I didn't care and I don't know where.

Q: From which Olympics existed the awarding block?

A: From 1932 Los Angeles Olympics.

Q: How did you receive the medal?

A: I didn't receive it personally. The medal was presented by Queen Wilhelmina on last day of the games. I was on the day already in Paris, where the International Universiade Meet was going on. Mr. Tsuruta, a swimmer, received it for me. This type of awarding was practiced until Berlin Olympics. Miss. Hideko Maehata, Swimming winner, received medal at the final day at the Berlin Olympics.

Q: I change my question. Was the sport practiced at that time for the benefit of State Japan?

A: I never had thought that my participation in sport was for the glorification of the state. Sport was just for myself. I was trying my best for track & field and wanted to measure my own feasibility. I practiced 6 events at the intercollegiate games and 10 events at the State match. I was enjoying myself with running and jumping. These were never for the state. Olympic participation was for me the promulgation of my daily

sports regime.

Q: Your training was not specially for the Olympics ?

A: When I first heard about the Olympics, I thought it must be good chance to confirm my own ability. There was no training camp for the Olympics. During winter of the Olympic year, I trained a little bit for Olympics, but not in any special manner. I trained because I liked it. I never considered the for the benefit of nation.

Q: But people expected you to represent the flag, correct?

A: Interest among Japanese people was not big. However, I knew the Olympics news may be reported in Japan. Yet I never had an idea of my responsibility to Japan.

### "GOOD LUCK BY RAIN"

Q: Newspapers were writing that Oda will win Gold Medal. Wasn't it a burden for you?

A: The Newspaper was writing that Oda is a hopeful, because I jumped 15.52 meters the year before. I expressed some measure of confidence that I would succeed. But I myself was convinced, that I would at least get bronze medal. Therefore it was not a burden for me.

Q: Please tell about yourself before and after the winning.

A: Our lodging was in quiet suburb of Zaandam. I could have good rest. We Japanese were welcomed by the children of Zaandam and we became friends. We could therefore relax before the game.

Q: August 2nd was rain ?

A: It was raining slightly in the morning, but it became clear around noon. It was a fine day and we were fluttering. We started out for the event with supervisor Takeuchi in a car. The ferry loaded the car and started immediately. Mr. Takeuchi said, "Today is a lucky day". This utterance was quite suggestive for me and I could be confident that I can win. In the member list for the semifinal, I found the name of three athletes besides mine, who are stronger jumpers than myself. I could convince myself, that I can win, because I had already a plan how to conquer them. They were Winters of Australia, who had world record. Touros of Finland, and Peters of Holland.

Q: I heard that the soft ground after rain was advantageous for you. Was this the case?

A: Because of soft ground, Touros and Winters were nervous. Their first jumps were



foul. My first jump was 15.13 meters. As I never jumped so long at my first jump, I could convince myself I can win. At the second jump I tried my Hop longer than usual and I jumped 15.21 meters. Levi Casey of America jumped 15.17 meters. My jump became the longest. When the match ended, cameramen surrounded me, but I did not feel like I won. When Japanese athletes at the stand started singing National Anthem I then realized I had won, and I was relieved.

## **"THE DAYS OF NO WELCOME PARTY"**

**Q: Winning the Gold medal must have been a big event. Did interest in the Olympics grow from this time ?**

**A: Japanese people at the time were not overly interested in the Olympics. Therefore I was lucky. I didn't have to be nervous. Interest to Olympics grew after the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, and to its highest at Berlin in 1936. When I won, I didn't become a star. Only some people acknowledged it as a wonderful achievement. Newspaper issued a special edition. There was no TV, and instant communication systems of today were not yet developed yet. It was from Los Angeles that the people cheered and sent-off athletes to the Olympics at the harbor.**

**Q: When it came time for the Los Angeles Olympics, the Asahi Shimbun collected cheering songs from public such as "Hashire Daichi-O"(Run on the great earth) and "Chikara no Kagiri"(Try your best). How was that for you?**

**A: I was a captain of Track & Field team. From Tokyo to Yokohama , throngs of people were standing on the rooftops of homes waving the Hinomaru flag. At 1928 Olympics Send-off, there was only a handful of Waseda students at the Tokyo train station. There were no other people. It was considered to be just a school event.**

**Q: When you returned from Amsterdam did people cheer?**

**A: You won't believe it, but there was no homecoming party. Waseda University also held no party. I think that was just the nature of sports in the public's mind at that time. The only welcoming party was at my birthplace "Kaitaichi-machi" in Hiroshima.**

**Q: Could you tell me a bit about the welcoming party in Hiroshima?**

**A: I remember that the NHK Hiroshima office requested me to speak on radio. In the waiting room I met a judge of Sumo, and we talked about my winning the gold medal. When I returned to Tokyo, the president of a Textile company lead by a man who was from Kaitaichi-machi, met me at the station. He took me to a restaurant for a welcome party. The proprietor of this restaurant explained that her husband was now in Hiroshima, and we found that her husband was the judge of Sumo with whom I met. I remember this case very clearly, but I have no memory of welcome party either by**

Athletic Association or by Waseda University. Such was Olympics that time.

### "8 YEAR PLAN TO CONQUER USA"

Q: Was it a quiet time? Today gold medalists are considered heroes or big stars, and honorable medals are bestowed from the government.

A: Today the athletes are miserable. People are watching. Mass media is watching. They are used on TV as tool of commercialism. Sports Associations use them as tools to make advertisements of their own. The personality of athletes is ignored. Athletes themselves must be strong. Otherwise, they loose themselves. I doubt whether this is a happy thing for sports.

Q: For the people at that time, was sports considered a just a hobby, not part of concentrated study?

A: It is true. The Olympic Champions played later an important role in the society. Nowadays athletes are doing only sports. What is important is not the duration of how much they trained, but how high they achieve. Sport is trending in the wrong direction.

Q: Was there not a mood, that athletes began to be more conscious regarding the flag since LA Olympics?

A: As for my self, it was not. My only concern after LA Olympics was how to win against the American team at the Tokyo Olympics 8 years later. Europe was not a rival of Japan except Finland. America was a strong rival. It was not about how many flags we can hoist. My only thought was how to win against the USA. It was at that time quite natural for the track athletes to think in that way. This had nothing to do with flags or nationalism. As a matter of fact we invited US team to Japan and we won many events in 1934.

Q: Was the atmosphere of sports free that time?

A: For the Japanese swimmer,s America was also a strong rival, and they wanted to win. This idea has nothing to do with nationalism.

Q: Did you regret that the 1940 Tokyo Olympics was suspended?

A: It was certainly regrettable. I was a coach and there were good athletes. I was convinced that our jumpers could win against USA. However the atmosphere in Japan was not for Olympics. Tokyo did not even construct stadium. Preparation committee existed but was not working. MP Ichiro Kono began to insist in the Parliament on the suspension of the Olympics. When done, it must have been humiliating.

## **"A MAN WHO CAN FIGHT"**

**Q: It is hard to imagine that America was a rival nation for Japan in the 1930s. Young people should know this. At the Berlin Olympics, Japanese were strong in the Pole Vault. The final the bar was raised or lowered 5 cm. How did they decide this height ?**

**A: Two Japanese and one American were competing in the final. In the final heat, Japan had the right to decide the height. To my surprise, Japanese chose 4.35 meters. I asked them about this when they returned home. They explained that both were in good form and thought they could win. This was a very foolish decision. The choice of height gave the Americans a golden opportunity. The choice should have selected a steady height instead. If we successfully jumped the higher bar, Americans might have missed. It was a poor decision to give a rival an advantageous condition.**

**Q: Was this a delicate matter ?**

**A: After Berlin Medows and Sefton were invited to Japan. I wanted Japan to win. I was watching the training of both jumpers, who had already successfully jumped 4.54 meters. The highest Japanese jump was only 4.34 meters. I taught the Japanese jumpers some tactics that could help them win. I explained to the Japanese that they should exploit the weaknesses of the Americans, and worked to convince them that they can surely win. Medows was knocked out of competition with an injured leg. This was unfortunate for him, but this is the way things go sometimes.**

**Q: I once heard the story you won the 100 meter sprint even against a better runner. Nowadays, individual drive & enthusiasm for competition sometimes falters. What do you think about this?**

**A: Real power and skill is of course important. However, those who can extend beyond personal ability can better compete in the match and can win an Olympic event. Japanese athletes have the chance to win if they can stretch their potential. Nowadays however, those Athletes are rare.**

## **"DONATED FROM OWN POCKET"**

**Q: In the Pre-war era, Koreans competed as Japanese. Was there segregation between Koreans and Japanese ?**

**A: I think there was. Son-Ki-tei won a gold medal at Berlin but he was treated differently inside the team. I heard that he was secretly active in the Korean**

independence movement and took off the Japan insignia from his shirt. I can understand his unhappy feeling. As the captain of Japan's track team, I was trying to treat him as an equal. I myself have never consciously exercised discriminatory treatment to anybody. After LA Olympics Son-Ki-tei stayed at my house several times and we are friends. Mr. Son visits Athletic Association whenever he comes to Japan. His son is living in Yokohama. This relationship among athletes is quite natural in the world of sports.

Q: Do you have any impressive memories about committee members of that time?

A: Mr. Kano and Mr. Kishi were fair and noble. I was a player and had no chance to talk with them. At LA Olympics a situation arose when an Austrian IOC committee member flirted with some of the female Japanese athletes. Japanese track team members took notice of this and there was almost an altercation. I as a captain, asked Mr. Kishi for his advice. Mr. Kishi was a lawyer and requested of me the evidence. He said, "No evidence, no action". I was impressed by his clear, concrete response. Mr. Kishi was working as a international lawyer and donated significant personal funds for sports, not only for the House of Sports Association (Kishi memorial Hall) but also for the travel expenses of the Japanese Olympic team. Without Mr. Kishi, the participation of Japan in the Olympics may have been delayed by ten years.

Q: I heard from Mr. Ichiro Sawada that the Mitsui and Mitsubishi groups were donating 50 thousand yen each. Today there is no big corporate sponsorship and no rich benefactors. In America there are individuals and corporations that underwrite the US Olympic team.

A: 50 thousand yen was a big amount at that time. I don't know much about expenses. Sports were financed by donations. Today companies are not in a position to donate. Therefore we have to rely on government support. The scale of sports in Japan has become smaller as a result.

#### **"DISTINGUISHED SERVICE OF MR. WADA & KOMETANI"**

Q: Documents show that first ministerial subsidy started from the 1924 Paris Olympics. Mr. Kanaguri participated in the 1920 Olympics at his own expense.

A: I was an athlete and did not have an interest in the financial aspects of the Olympics.

Q: After World War II, Mr. Wada of California and Mr. Kometani of Hawaii provided assistance to Japan in the field of sports. What was the impact of their actions ?

A: After the war, many Japanese athletes were helped by Mr. Wada and Mr. Kometani. I myself received lots of help from them, when I visited America to report on the swimming of Mr. Furuhashi in 1949. Mr. Wada was operating a super market and

many Japanese stayed at his home. Japanese were not allowed to bring enough dollars with them, so we owed much to Mr. Wada for his assistance. I was going to repay my debt in Yen, but he didn't accept the money, instead requesting that I donate the funds to his grammar school in Wakayama. For the selection process of the 1964 Olympics, Mr. Wada visited the South American IOC Committee, using personal funds with the aim of collecting the support votes. He told us that lots of gifts to the committee made the games a success. He demanded no compensation from the Japan Olympic Committee.

**Q: Was Mr. Kometani a member of the American 442nd combat regiment ?**

**A: Yes.** He was a commander of the Japanese-American corps that landed on the Italian coast. He became a dental doctor. When Furuhashi and the Japanese swimming team went to America, he supported them financially. When I went to Hawaii I was also presented with a jacket and hat because my jacket was old and of cheap material. Many Japanese athletes were also presented with jackets. I heard that the Japanese committee member who participated in the IOC General Meeting also received the support from him. Mr. Takizo Matsumoto, who is a graduate of Meiji University and a Diet member from Hiroshima, spoke fluent English and had a good connection to General MacArthur's GHQ. After the war all Japanese athletes received his support. Japanese sport was able to recover from the effects of the war thanks to direct assistance from these supporters. The Japan Athletic Association should record this history for future generations.

### **"INSUFFICIENT ENDEAVOR OF THE IOC"**

**Q: What is your view of the 1980 Moscow Olympics boycott ?**

**A: I was against a boycott from the beginning.** The reason is simple. There should be no boycott in Olympics. This is a fundamental principle. Our main consideration instead should have been how we would conduct a productive meeting. One solution might have been to wait one year to observe the state of world affairs. The most important point is that all nations should be able to participate, not only a select few. This was my belief and I pressed this point with the Track & Field Association as well as with the JOC.

**Q: We should aim for a higher standard with regard to the Olympics. What is your view ?**

**A: Yes we should.** The Olympics is pointless if only a select few nations choose to participate. The significance of medal is diminished when only few nations compete. I claimed that the conditions should be created so that all nations would choose to attend. I felt the IOC should make strenuous efforts in this regard. The IOC should help those Olympic teams who were experiencing difficulty with their government. At

the Winter Olympics of that year, President Kilanin of IOC said he would try to solve this difficult problem. We expected action, but he did not follow through. He should have talked with US President Jimmy Carter about the ideal of Olympics. He made no effort to mediate the situation with Russia either. Just before the start of Olympics some countries decided not to participate, and some even insisted on using their National Olympic Committee flag instead of their national flag. These actions threw the 1980 Olympics into chaos. For me, this ceased being the Olympics. I remain steadfast in my belief that waiting a year to hold the games would have been the right course of action. At the Track & Field committee meeting, 3 or 4 members agreed with my opinion. However, a majority voted for the boycott.

Q: Is it your belief that IOC committee members, and specifically President Kilanin failed to fulfill their responsibilities ?

A: Yes. President Kilanin claimed that the Moscow Olympics was a success with participation of just 80 countries. This assertion is outrageous. Participation by only 80 out of 150 nations is not a success. For those teams whose participation was prohibited by their government's action, the IOC should have interceded on their behalf and made it possible for them to participate. The IOC failed to demonstrate leadership. The IOC should have made a greater effort to create the conditions necessary for major countries such as America, Japan, and West Germany to join the 1980 games. The IOC should have found a solution acceptable to all parties. Kilanin's description of the 1980 Moscow games as a "success" is pure nonsense.

### **"SPORT SHOULD BE THE OBJECT OF THE OLYMPICS"**

Q: The age of IOC members is often high. Is this problematic?

A: The IOC is a promotor of sport and is responsible to examine whether the preparation work for Olympic competition is in progress and also identifies what is not in order. The IOC should try to promote sports in under-developed countries. The IOC members should go to villages and towns to examine whether conditions for the athletes meet IOC standards. There are only few members who give real consideration to sports, even though the Olympics is about sports.

Q: What kind of examination is needed?

A: Most of coaches from Asian countries staying in the village are my pupil who come to me and want to dine together. No IOC member will go to a small town or village dining room to dine together with local athletes. IOC members are pampered in first class hotels where they relax in luxury. With regard to athletes from Asian countries, I am afraid that they are just eating in the dining room without thinking of their condition, because they know they can't compete and win. They are not interested in the sport. The basic tenets of sportsmanship should be taught to them correctly. I

sincerely hope more care will be taken for Olympic sports as a whole.

Q: I see.

A: IOC committee members do not have a true concept of what the games are about. They should study seriously how they can fulfill the magnificent promise of the Olympics. I am especially disappointed when I consider that most of them are former athletes. They don't understand this point. More consideration should be given to the games themselves. Winning and losing can be an object of interest, but it is more important to enjoy the games in a way so that everybody can participate.

Q: It seems like that ideal is dying. IOC members in old times could challenge authorities and persuade them on an idea. Nowadays they are just so-called salaried men, discussing business matters. They focus only on small points, such as matters of rule or regulation. People who can implement great ideas in the field of sport are decreasing in today's world. I am afraid the Olympics is breaking down because of corruption. The most important thing is lacking, which is a focus on the athletes and on sport.

A: We should give consideration for Olympic games that everyone can enjoy. There is nothing else. Just playing a game with joy does not cost anything. There is then no problem of becoming a gigantic Olympic theatrical event.

#### "LISTEN WIDELY TO THE VOICE"

Q: I want to know the attitude of Japan regarding the Moscow Olympics. Were you present at the Japan Olympic Committee General Meeting ?

A: I attended the meeting, but immediately withdrew, because some people were forcibly trying to persuade the attending members in favor of a boycott. It was no use to speak in such a meeting. I never attended again. However the concept of "Olympics as Number One" is now prevailing in Japan. Sports is not limited to just the Olympics. The Olympic games certainly are top class competition. It is important however to do ones best at any sporting meet. It is sad that athletes are trying only for Olympics and do not value other competition venues. Athletes strive not for the sake of Track & Field itself, but only for the rewards that come from winning. This may be a current trend. Therefore, after Olympics is over, in their mind the world is over. I dare say, this is not the right attitude of a true sportsman. Today sports is distorted in such a manner.

Q: What could be the future of Japanese sports ?

A: I am concerned that the Japanese sports world may become more difficult under such circumstances. The Athletic Association should listen to the opinions of people. If a final paper is presented at the beginning of the meeting, there must be no chance for the

others to propose their idea.

Q: Morality among athletes has declined. Originally sportsmen had pride for both study & sports. Also they were well-behaved. What do you think about this ?

A: Nowadays sportsmen think themselves to be superior and to be a type of hero.

Q: You said the Athletic Association has a problem. What is the nature of the problem?

A: Correct opinions within the Athletic Association could no longer be heard. Sport has its own logic. The Olympics also has its own logic. We must take tremendous care regarding this logic. It must not be distorted by one-sided thinking of any Government or other people. If we cannot keep this non-interference principle, we are no longer talking about sports.

#### "OLYMPICS FOR THE ATHLETES"

Q: Do you think a national flag ceremony is necessary for the Olympics ?

A: I wish that both the National flag and National Anthem ceremony should be abolished. After Soviet Russia participated, hoisting of the flag became an important element of the Olympics. Before World War II it was different. The sports world after the war deviated from the right way. For many years my opinion was to abolish these practices. It is enough to use just the Olympic anthem and flag.

Q: At the World Championship of table-tennis the flag is not used. What do you think of this ?

A: Once at the university national flags were not used. I was content with this. From the Universidad de Mexico the flag was used again. After the game is over the result is announced on the illuminated board, and this is enough. The Olympics is for the athletes. The Olympics should be programmed for the benefit of athletes. In many cases, the athletes are ignored. I was always concerned more with taking care of athletes. I am very much concerned about it. The Olympics of today is filled with mistakes. The opening ceremony is the worst case. At the 1972 Olympics in Munich, I went to the Olympic village around 11 o'clock, in order to encourage the athletes. I saw the athletes walking to the park at the stadium with lunch boxes. It was outrageous to be forced to wait at such early hour of the morning until the Opening Ceremony which started at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I was filled with resentment. The athletes are tired and can't keep their best condition if they are participating in such a long, drawn-out ceremony.

Q: In Japan the emphasis is given more on the opening ceremony than the sports events themselves. It is absurd that so much money is spent on pomp and ceremony. The condition of athletes is destroyed by participating in such spectacles.



A: At the Opening Ceremony of the 1968 Mexico Olympics I was watching with Mr. Kenzo Kono from the back reviewing stand. Athletes were lying on the ground, taking photos and walking around. Mr. Kono was angry about this. We could not see from the back-stand several ceremonies taking place on the main stand. Athletes in the stadium were not listening the Speech of the IOC President. The ticket was ¥5,000. I suggested to Mr. Ryutaro Azuma, an IOC member, that some reformation of the opening ceremony was needed.

Q: At the Opening Ceremony of Tokyo Olympics athletes were chasing pigeon on the ground. I think the number of athletes to join the procession should be limited. What do you think ?

A: I am against that idea. At the 1932 Olympics in LA, I was both a coach and the track team captain. One of our athletes was suffering a cold with fever. However he wanted to participate in the Opening Ceremony. I didn't permit him go. Later I heard that he was regretting this very much, because for him the Opening Ceremony was the most important part of the Olympics. I regretted this later as well. My idea is that all athletes should join the procession and then all go up to stand to see the ceremony.

Q: Too much time, effort and money are spent for the opening ceremonies. For the National Sports Festival (Kokutai) school children are trained for brass-band for many years even though they play only once. Brass bands have nothing to do with a sports meet. What are your thoughts ?

A: The essential thing is that a sports event should take care of athletes. It is pointless to repeat the rehearsal of an opening ceremony until perfect choreography can be achieved. At Amsterdam in 1928 the opening ceremony was simple, with the march of athletes and an oath by athletes. The games started from that afternoon. It is a prerequisite to take full care of athletes. Today this is forgotten.

#### **"FOR A TRULY PEACEFUL OLYMPICS"**

Q: There are many problems in the world. What problems can be solved by the Olympics ?

A: What was written by the newspapers after the Olympics ? Newspapers are writing the who and when regarding who becomes a professional athlete. This is a reality of the Olympics today. Can it be accepted ? Medalists should remain out of the spotlight for at least one year. Then if they wish to turn pro nobody should stand in their way. But the constant media focus on Olympic athletes who turn professional is annoying. IOC members should guide athletes into proper path for turning pro. Otherwise the Olympics will become little more than a breeding ground for

professionals athletes. I suggested to IOC members a reformation, but their answer was negative. The IOC should give consideration for the benefit of athletes and should not forget to protect athletes from the pressure to turn pro.

Q: Is it a true statement that IOC members are too self absorbed and can no longer think of athletes ?

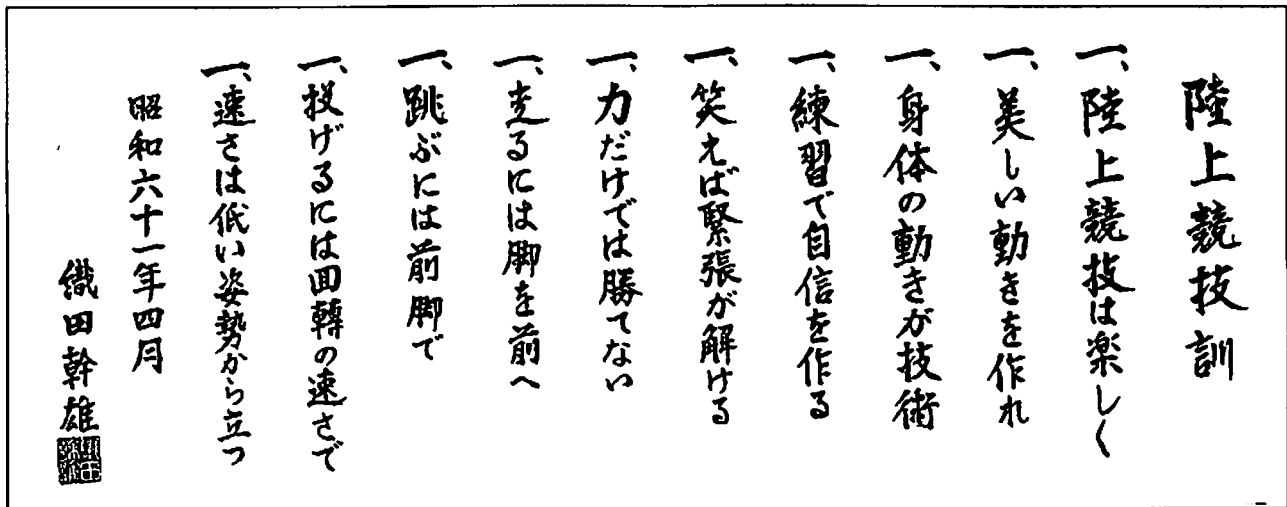
A: One more thing. People say the Olympics is a movement for peace. But actually nothing is done. They say the games are for peace because young people from all over the world gather and play. But those who could not win simply return home next day. There is no real movement for peace. My cherished desire is to hold a welcome reception after the games. All the Athletes, winners and losers alike, can get together and exchange information. It would cost money and require commitment. But we can't consider the present Olympics as a movement for peace unless coaches and athletes of all nations get together and can friendly exchange conversation.

Q: I understand.

A: After the war, I took athletes of track & field, wrestling and gymnastics to the Youth Friendly Festival in Poland. Every night there were parties, to which all participating nations were invited. Coaches of different nations were enjoying the exchange of opinions. This is important for sports. In previous times a party was actively held at the Olympics. Nowadays we see no party at all. It is sad that sports is meant to tear down the walls and barriers that separate nations, but nowadays the Olympic movement has built walls of its own.

Q: Today there are too many global tensions that jeopardize human relations. Global security is also another problem. What do you think ?

A: The IOC should try their best for peace, if they are sincere in promoting the Olympics as a movement for peace. It is against the spirit of the Olympics if the organizers strive only to enhance national glory or revel in the adulation that comes from accumulating medals.



- 1) Track and Field is meant to be enjoyed
- 2) Performance is a beautiful movement
- 3) Movement of the body is itself a technique
- 4) Self-confidence derives from training
- 5) Laughing breaks tension
- 6) Power alone can't win
- 7) In full stride, stretch the feet forward
- 8) Jump with the front foot
- 9) Throw with the force of turning
- 10) Accelerate with movement from a low to standing position



Mikio Oda (left)  
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Interview Article of IOC Presidents,  
History of Football Coach etc.