

【I thank high school students for their sincere play. I was deeply impressed.】

Hello, I'm Mr. Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

Currently, All Japan High School Athletic Meet is held at 5 prefectures of Chugoku area and Wakayama prefecture to compete for the championship in total of 30 sports events. On the first day of the Meet, July 28<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed His Highness the Crown Prince at the integrated opening ceremony. It was magnificently held at the Zip Arena Okayama and about 4,200 athletes and people involved participated in the ceremony.

I also attended as a hosting mayor. At the ceremony, everyone from the athlete teams of Wakayama prefecture, where the Meet in 2015 was held, said that thank you very much for the support. Also, everyone from the athlete teams of Kumamoto prefecture, which is the disaster stricken area by earthquakes, held up a banner that said thank you very much for the warm support from all prefectures. The entry march bonded with every athlete and people involved from all 47 prefectures were very moving and I had a feeling fraught with deep emotion.

During the Meet, as I wanted to watch high school students' heated events close by, I visited the arena as much as time allows me. I was fascinated by the overwhelming speed of Miss. Saito (She is in the second grade of Okayama Prefectural Kurashiki Chuo High School) who won the first prize in the women's 100-meter track and field race when I watched the finals of men's and women's 100-meter track and field races.

After that, she also won the first prize in the women's 400-meter relay race and women's 200 meter race. It was an outstanding achievement made by winning three championships

for the first time in the men's and women's track and field races for Okayama's team. Her running outshone all the other athletes and it could be expressed as a race without rivals.

The scenes of the athletes running at full speed in the head wind and falling into right after the finish line reminded me of high school students, who are passionate about track and field, written in the book "Isshun no Kaze ni Nare" ("Be the wind of the moment") by Takako Sato (2007 Japanese Booksellers' Award called "Honya Taisho 2007"). I recognized again that their strenuous practices must be beyond our imagination.

Also, since kendo is indeed a sport which values good manners, everyone had been sitting still on their heels at the kendo's opening ceremony when there was an instruction to sit at ease. If I were them, I could not have stood up immediately after sitting on my heels for a while. But the swordsmen had stayed calm as if nothing had happened. I thought that the result of their daily practices were remarkable.

Moreover, I was surprised by the heated and speedy badminton final matches of mixed doubles and women's singles. I wondered that how they developed such amazing dynamic and kinetic vision, reflexes, and stamina.

I think that there were athletes who got gratifying results and those who did not, yet the earnest attitude of each athlete for each game fascinated us and gave us a great impression.

Again, I would like to deeply appreciate the fresh impression given by high school students in Okayama prefecture from the bottom of my heart. I hope that all students will have further development and flourish in each one's field.