

NATIONAL JAPAN BOWL EXPERIENCE REPORT

My experience at the National Japan Bowl!

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こんにちは！ My name is Lexxy. I am a 17 year-old high school student from South Kitsap High School who is currently studying Japanese at the AP level, and I was also a recent competitor for this year's (2023) National Japan Bowl. Having formerly participated in the Pacific Northwest Japan Bowl this year, I was very grateful to have been provided with the flights and hotel required to participate with my team in the National Japan Bowl.

For the first day of the National Japan Bowl, I was excited to look around at the “Study in Japan Information Session,” all of the stands were very cool and interesting, and the people who were informing at their stands were exceptionally kind (many of which also provided goodies, which I thought was fun. I have also kept all of the items I received from that information session!). It really did make me want to try studying in Japan.

Afterwards, we attended the dinner (which was nice), and listened to all of the speakers who presented on that first day of the Japan Bowl. Following that, we headed off towards our preliminary rounds, were given some snacks for participating in a subsequent “conversation round practice,” and headed off to bed.

The next day, we went to compete in the second preliminary round, and soon after went to lunch. Lunch was neat, with many boxes being prepared for all of the attendees and participants. Unfortunately, I did not personally get the chance to check out any of the cultural workshops, though the ones I did pass by seemed interesting and entertaining for those who were present. I instead went over to the conversation round area, and the lady who introduced me and my partner's conversation was also very kind.

Once again, we had dinner, thereafter watching the final rounds of the competition. The final rounds seemed challenging, as I tried to follow along from my seat, and I was surprised at many of the finalist team's abilities to answer a significant amount of questions that posed themselves as more obscure

to a student like me. All in all though, the final round was quite fun, and was a good closure to the 31st National Japan Bowl. Also, the message from Princess Takamado was super cool, and the Taiko group who performed as a sort of “closure” to the event were really skilled and had great energy. But yes, overall, a very fun and challenging competition.

The Sakura Matsuri was the following day, and I was very thankful to have been given free tickets to explore the event. After handing the staff our tickets, we went to go get food and a drink from the vendors (also, we could see many of the vendors cooking from the line while we were waiting, it was really cool, almost made me hungrier). I had some gyoza, which was very tasty, and a smoothie, which was also very tasty. Only a little bit later, we saw a different Taiko group performing, and their energy was also super fun, and they were also exceptionally talented. It was fun chanting/singing along with one of their performances where they got the audience to participate. Afterwards, my team played Karuta, and later I also bought a kimono for my little sister, and a few books in Japanese (which I have been enjoying, and have been helpful for me!) for a really nice deal. Also, there was this very cute possum mascot (I believe it was a possum), and a fun idol-esque performance to boot. But even though we probably didn't make it to every stand or vendor or activity, it was still very enjoyable. As well as this, the energy at the festival was super lively, all of the people attending or assisting in the event were amazingly kind, and it was overall a great experience! Thank you for giving me and my team such an amazing opportunity, and thank you to all of the staff and sponsors that helped with the event(s) as well, it really enhanced the experience ten-fold! Thank you once again!