National Japan Bowl Experience

I would like to start off by emphasizing how lucky I am to attend the National Japan Bowl.

I know it's a strange thing to say that I enjoyed this specifically, but the plane rides to and from Portland to D.C were easy and convenient. Not to mention, I haven't been on a plane in 7 years so I also liked being queen of the window seat.

We had no problems checking in our hotel, the service was great. On top of that, Japan Bowl events were inside of the hotel for our convenience.

At Japan Bowl, both of the preliminary events were a good challenge for us. During the information session after the preliminaries, I definitely learned a lot more about Japan and its culture. I knew that not knowing something wasn't a bad thing, because I would have gotten to learn about it anyway.

After the preliminaries, my favorite event was the Edamame Champ event. I thought it was simply just a contest to see who can use their chopsticks the best, but the organization behind Edamame Champ had a great cause: encouraging healthy eating everywhere. My Japan Bowl partner and I are actually considering bringing Edamame Champ to our school, so it would be great if somebody reached out to us.

I couldn't attend the translation event, but I did attend the Tea Ceremony event. Seeing all of the kanji associated with the ceremony (I am a big kanji fan), as well as everything else in the ceremony made me realize how much culture and tradition is embedded in the ceremony.

During the championships, I was wowed by how quickly the top teams were getting the correct answers. I never felt the need to look away or be bored during the championships. All four levels inspired me to learn more about the language and culture, and I'm pretty sure my partner was inspired too.

Last but not least, we explored the Sakura Matsuri and the DC mall. Sakura Matsuri was a large and vibrant festival, and it was clearly a big deal. The J-Pop and Taiko drums appealed to me the most in terms of music. My favorite activity was the Japanese calligraphy stand, and it reminded me how much I actually liked Chinese/Japanese calligraphy and that I wanted to pursue a hobby like that in the future. The inked-brush-against-paper feeling is super satisfying. We explored attractions around DC, but we mainly stayed around the natural history museum.

Heading back to Portland, we told our Japanese III classmates about our experiences there. It seemed like our classmates were also inspired to join, which I am looking forward to. Next year, we plan to be able to come back with a team of three instead of a team of two. Perhaps even multiple teams. We're proud of representing Oregon!

My name is Meiling Miller from the Pacific Northwest division of Japan Bowl, and the experience I had was enlightening. I was and still am grateful for the opportunity that the National Japan Bowl has offered us all.