

Olutomola Bolonduro

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2025 Regional Japan Bowl Report

My experience at the regional Japan Bowl this year was very unique and memorable for me. I had been hearing about the Japan bowl for a long time from one of my friends, and although the idea of competing and flying to Washington DC after winning sounded very fun, I did not predict that I would end up in the same position this year!

I had never competed in a competition like the Japan Bowl before, so I studied very hard without knowing what to expect. I thought I might be stressed heading into the competition, but as soon as I entered the building, I became very excited for what I knew was going to be a fun day. Despite having to show up as early as 8 am, all the students were very lively, so I couldn't help but adopt a similar mindset. Everything was very organized and there was even food and drinks provided, which made it easier for me to relax and get ready for the competition to begin.

For the preliminary rounds, the different competition levels split off into different rooms to answer 2 different rounds of questions as a team. Even though my team couldn't answer every question correctly, it was really rewarding to see how much we knew as a collective group as a result of our studying. I felt that our team was very balanced, and we covered each other's bases well. I also appreciated the sense of community everyone in the room had despite us all being competitors; the collective noises of surprise and shock whenever the correct answers were revealed made it feel more like a game than a competition. It also felt like a separate game on its own trying to gauge which teams may make it to the finals just based on their reactions. When I first saw the rooms, I worried it would feel like I was taking a test, but this part was actually just as fun as the finals!

There was a very long wait between the preliminary rounds and the finals. Truthfully, my team was pretty anxious wondering if we would make it onto the stage— but this did not prevent us from enjoying the activities in between! There were social networking events that allowed us to get some college merchandise and practice speaking with students from Japan, and we also watched some great musical performances. The most entertaining thing was watching the level 2 and 3 students compete in the final round on stage. There was enthusiasm among the students that only built up suspense for the level 4 round – which, thankfully, my team did make it to!

Being up on stage was a bit nerve wracking, especially since we were in the center, and I can't say I ever got used to hearing my voice from the speakers, but my team still did great. I was most nervous about constructing a sentence in front of the 7 Japanese judges, so my words were a bit jumbled in a way that caused only 6 out of 7 judges to understand me. If there is enough time, I would definitely recommend future competitors to write down their sentence before saying it, no matter how

well they rehearsed it in their head! As for the buzzer round, there were many questions that none of the teams on stage knew the answer to, so the competition ended on a bit of a lighthearted note as we took turns making fun guesses rather than staying silent. I appreciated that everyone was able to stay so optimistic even in the finals.

In the end, my team won first place for level 4, but the Japan Bowl was so much more than the awards at the end! The whole experience from start to finish was thoroughly engaging and felt much like a long field trip. There was clearly a lot of effort put into organizing this event and making it an enjoyable experience for everyone regardless of how they performed. My only wish is that I had also competed in earlier years, but I will make up for this by trying my best in Washington DC!