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2025 National Japan Bowl Report

The 2025 National Japan Bowl was really exciting for me. I was thrilled to have the experience of flying to Washington DC to compete. The atmosphere was constantly amazing to me– the location of the Japan Bowl this year was also proximal to cool places like the Capitol and various museums, so there were many places to visit whenever my team had down time. The competition itself was held in Johns Hopkins though, and the building was very beautiful and somehow made me more motivated to try my best.

Everyone was overwhelmingly nice. As soon as we entered the building, my teammates reconnected with some competitors from previous years and so I had already begun to meet new people. There were numerous more opportunities to chat with strangers with all the breaks that were given to us, and our differing levels were not a barrier either. One specific experience that was enjoyable to me was asking everyone how they felt about the questions in the preliminary rounds after the end of the first day. There was bonding over finding out other people also struggled on a certain question, or a thrill in guessing who we might see competing in the final rounds.

The staff and volunteers did a great job maintaining an enjoyable atmosphere throughout the competition with their friendliness and calm demeanor. When there were technical difficulties during the final preliminary rounds, everything remained lighthearted rather than there being a tense mood that I feel many other competitions would have had. Additionally, there was a great effort in making sure all competitors were entertained throughout the 2 days of competition. I participated in the kendama and tea ceremony workshops, both of which were entirely new experiences for me. The meals that were supplied were also really well put together, and there were quite a few foods that I ended up trying for the first time! I also appreciated that the haikus students made were put together for everyone to spend time reading.

The final rounds were of course entertaining to watch, and the quality and layout of the auditorium helped to make it appealing and comfortable to watch. The competition ended on a memorable note with the closing drumming performance, and although I couldn't go, it was very kind for all the students to be given free tickets to the Sakura Festival. So much effort was put into making this event fun and memorable, and because of that, Japan Bowl to me was much more than just a competition.