

It is hard to capture all of the valuable experiences I had in words, because there were just too many!

To start off with our first day, we walked around D.C. and looked at all of the buildings, amazed. All of the buildings we saw in our textbooks, like the Capitol or the White House, were right in front of us! We also made our way down to the Wharf, or the pier, where there were lots of delicious food and tourist sites.

Later the next day, as we walked into Johns Hopkins, we were amazed—the building was amazingly beautiful and spacious. We took a quick seat to finish our lunch, and proceeded with registration. Once into the competition, we sat down to watch the opening ceremony. With many encouraging messages from speakers, ambassadors, and even young Junior Japan Bowlers, we began our competition.

Stepping into the competition room, my partner Yunseul and I did some last minute preparations before the beginning of the competition. Many of the questions were similar to that of the Pacific Northwest Japan Bowl, although slightly more difficult, but the questions from the PNW Japan Bowl prepared us well. We then finished the second round as well, and afterwards got a bento-style dinner (it was really yummy!).

After returning to the hotel, Yunseul and I decided to do some more extra studying for the night in the hotel lobby. Afterwards, we went back to our hotel room and fell asleep almost instantly. The next morning, we made our trip back to the Johns Hopkins building, where they were setting up a 5k race. While eating breakfast at the competition, we watched the race go on, which was really fascinating— so much action near the Capitol!

Following breakfast, we had our last preliminary round, which we felt more confident in after studying the night before. When eating our lunch afterwards, we looked out to see a group of people setting up a protest, which was really cool to see! Coming out to D.C., I realized that there was a lot going on in the world, beyond the small bubble that I live in right now. The trip to D.C. was truly amazing, both for improving my Japanese, but also broadening my outlook on the world and on myself.

Sadly, Yunseul and I were unable to qualify for the Championship Round, but it was still very entertaining and educational to watch. We were amazed at the natural speaking of the competitors, and their in-depth knowledge. It was really inspiring.

After completing all of our Japan Bowl duties, Yunseul and I felt a surge of motivation—we were amazed by the talent of all of the people there, and we felt we needed to do more to be even more prepared next year. On the whole plane ride home, we practiced our Kanji in an effort to start studying for next year.

The National Japan Bowl was a truly amazing experience, one that I hope to be able to have the privilege of attending again in the future. I want to thank JASO and its sponsors for providing such a special experience for my group. This experience would not have been possible without your support! I would also like to thank my teacher, Bang Sensei, for all the help he has given me in my learning journey!

With many thanks,  
Sophia