

After winning the Pacific Northwest Japan Bowl for Level 3, I was really excited to go to the national competition with my teammate, especially since we were not really expecting to place first. I expected a larger version of the regional competition with a few more events and opportunities, but what I experienced was even better than what I could have imagined.

The “ganbatte” video with people encouraging and cheering for all of the Japan Bowl competitors was very inspiring and enjoyable. There were a lot of very respectable people and even a lot of funny moments where the whole audience was laughing. Even the small jokes that the presenters/announcers were making as they talked on the stage helped me feel less pressured and more relaxed.

Before the preliminary rounds, I was very nervous. While Sophia, my teammate, and I were waiting, we heard a lot of the other kids conversing in Japanese and reviewing their study guides, which looked much more prepared than whatever we had. We could tell that we were very underprepared, and that brought our spirits down a little bit, but we had a lot of fun during the preliminary rounds anyways. I liked how we got to review our answers on the same day during the first day and right away on the second day, so that we could remember what we got wrong and learn about Japan as we went through the correct answers for each question. I think my teammate and I might have been kind of obnoxious-- we kept laughing and making jokes when we were completely lost on a question. But the important thing is that we had fun and the other teams did too; I feel like I saw a lot of people enjoying themselves at the competition.

I really enjoyed the cultural experiences that were provided to us on the second day after the third preliminary round. To be honest, I didn't get to do as many stations as I wanted, because my teammate and I were so tired from jet lag (we had to get up at 3:30 AM PST). We only got to participate in the puzzle station, but it was very fun. The person leading the station was very kind

and patient, even when we were struggling and taking a long time to figure out a puzzle. The puzzles that we got to do were actually really interesting. I liked the boxing by number puzzle the best.

Although my teammate and I did not make it to the championship round, it was one of the highlights of our experience at Japan Bowl-- at least, for me personally. Many of the shokai's were entertaining and all of them gave the participants on the stage a chance to display their Japanese skills and appeal to the audience. The questions were really hard--I don't think I could have answered most of them--but the championship teams did pretty well and it was overall so fun to watch. It was also educational and motivating. My teammate and I actually downloaded a Kanji practice app on our phones that we did for most of our plane ride back to Oregon. National Japan Bowl was a unique and unforgettable experience that I really hope to get the chance to enjoy next year as well. ありがとうございました！