

Basketball

Hello everyone! My name is Stephen Cannell, Coordinator for International Relations in Toyohashi. Today I'd like to introduce you all to the extremely popular sport of basketball. Basketball will be returning to the Olympics in 2020, and Japan will be making its first Olympic basketball appearance in 44 years. 3x3 basketball will also make its debut as an Olympic event. Let's all tune in to the basketball tournament at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics!



Basketball is a sport in which you shoot a ball through a hoop, and compete to score more points than your opponent. 5 players on each team continuously run the length of the court competing for the ball and the opportunity to score. The players must be able to seamlessly switch between offense and defense. In order to move with the ball in basketball, you must “dribble” the ball. Dribbling means continuously using the palm of your hand to bounce the ball off of the floor. In basketball you are not allowed to use your feet to progress the ball. The amount of points awarded for a successful shot is determined by the position from which the shot was made. If you make it from outside of the arc, it is worth 3 points, and from within is worth 2. In the case of a foul, a “free throw” may be awarded, where a player can shoot unobstructed from a pre-determined line. Made free throws are worth 1 point each.

When you think of basketball, you probably think of a slam dunk, when a player jumps with the ball and slams it downwards through the hoop. This is also worth 2 points.

Basketball has been an Olympic event since 1936. Until the 2016 Olympics in Rio, the only event was standard 5 vs 5 basketball, but starting with the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, 3x3 basketball will also be added to the program. 3x3 basketball is played in a shorter time at a higher pace, and uses only one half of a full-length

basketball court. The players appearing in the Olympic 3x3 tournament will qualify either through the FIBA world rankings, or through one of two qualifying tournaments.

In 2020, the Japanese national basketball team will make its first Olympic appearance in 44 years. They proved they are ready when they secured their first world cup qualification in 13 years, by winning 8 straight games in the qualifiers. Japanese basketball has grown much stronger in recent years, with a number of young talents emerging. Rui Hachimura became only the second Japanese player ever to be chosen in the NBA draft, and Yuta Watanabe became only the second ever to appear in an NBA game. Japan will be playing my home country of America in the first round of the world cup.

America will undoubtedly be strong once again at the Olympics. Among the long list of strong players are names such as Stephen Curry, LeBron James, and James Harden. America has appeared in 18 Olympic basketball tournaments and has taken medals at all 18. It's captured 2 bronze medals, 1 silver medal, and 15 golds. They are ranked 1st going into the world cup. Their game against Japan will surely be exciting.

Lithuania, with 3 Olympic bronze medals, will also be appearing at the world cup this year. On the team is 213cm NBA top center, Jonas Valanciunas, as well as the Indiana Pacer's Domantas Sabonis.

Germany, eyeing its first Olympic basketball medal, is also playing in the world cup. They'll be armed with 19 year old Isaac Bonga, Dallas Maverick's Maxi Kleber, Boston Celtic's Daniel Theis, and team captain Robin Benzing. Germany played Japan in a friendly exhibition match on August 24th, where Japan won 86 to 83.

With loads of young talent, as well as the addition of the 3x3 event, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will be a must watch!