



RWC & Japan Digging a little deeper

For us Kiwis, the Rugby World Cup did not end as we had hoped.

For those dedicated fans who followed our All Blacks to Japan to watch the games, their misery will have been offset by the magical experience of Japan.



STORY

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Incredible hospitality, mouth-watering food, ancient traditions and super technology make Japan a truly unique destination.

I've had a long love affair with Japan and often describe myself as living in a "Japanese bubble" here in New Zealand. I head Team Japan at Baker Tilly Staples Rodway and have the privilege of dealing with many wonderful clients and our dedicated team of native Japanese speakers.

My family is also Japanese.

I was fortunate to be in Japan for part of the World Cup, attending the Japan New Zealand Business Council Conference in Kashiwa no ha.



It was incredible to be part of “NZ Inc” and attend so many fantastic events. This included being at our stunning New Zealand Embassy in Shibuya for the launch of Tourism New Zealand’s brilliant brainchild, *New Zealand Says 39*, to thank the people of Japan for hosting the Rugby World Cup and our All Blacks. 39 in Japanese translates as *san kyu* – meaning thank you.

Another highlight was a reception for Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. New Zealand put on an impressive show and “NZ Inc” leveraged over fifty events in the nine-week period!

Seeing the world’s reaction to Japan and the Brave Blossoms, and observing our All Blacks on and off the rugby field made me a little philosophical. A few years ago Baker Tilly Staples Rodway hosted an event with New Zealand rugby great Sir John Kirwan as the keynote speaker. Sir John had coached the Auckland Blues as well as the Italian and Japanese national rugby teams. My question to him was simple; “What was different about coaching Japan?”. His rather unforgettable answer was; “The Japanese team would do whatever you asked them, no matter what. If you said to run into a brick wall, they would.”

The Brave Blossom’s staggering results in Rugby World Cup 2019 showed sheer determination, doing what was asked of them and never giving up. It reminded me of Japan’s

economic miracle, which saw Japan soar to be the world’s second-largest economy from 1978 to 2010.

These same traits are what I see in my team at work and in my family. There’s an old saying in Japan 七転び八起き “fall down seven times, get up eight”. It’s one of our family mantras, and a 間仕切り wooden screen painted with this has a prominent place in our lounge (pictured above).

The All Blacks were gracious and humble in defeat. They thanked Japan in unique ways – through *New Zealand Says 39* and as the first country to bow after a game.

New Zealand and Japan are two great nations, incredibly different, yet remarkably similar. Perhaps that’s one of the reasons why so many New Zealand rugby players spend years in Japan. Steve Hansen is about to join them. We all know collaboration brings great results, and the connections between New Zealand and Japan are getting stronger all the time.

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FAR LEFT: Annette Azuma with All Black hooker Liam Coltman in Tokyo