

Home Match

Jenga is a classic game around the world, and Japan is no exception. Despite its simple rules, the mounting excitement and pressure peaking spectacularly as the tower comes tumbling down can be quite addicting.

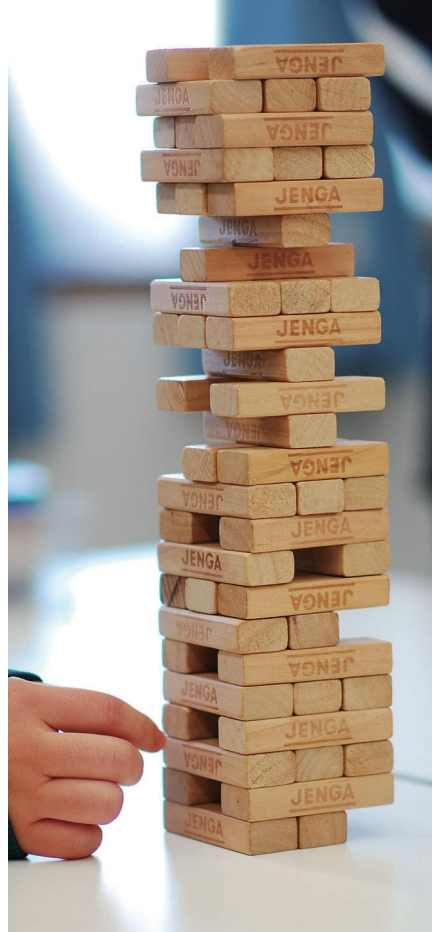
I had, of course, played Jenga before. But a Jenga tournament at school, with a proper bracket, was something I hadn't experienced until I came to Japan.

A Home Match at Japanese schools is a sports tournament held between homeroom classes. Across multiple events, homeroom classes make teams and compete to win each event and get the highest overall points. Yamada High School's Home Match was on December 21st, and the four events were volleyball, soccer, table tennis, and Jenga. Each student participated in at least one event, and I filled in for another teacher on a Jenga team with three boys.

As one would expect from a tournament with a proper bracket, the rules were also clearly laid out. Each match began with six minutes where each team took turns pulling out one block and placing it on top with one hand while following the order of players within their team. If those six minutes ended without one team winning, the expedite rules would go

into effect. Beginning with the team that lost in rock paper scissors, one player had to pull out three blocks consecutively within two minutes. That continued until one team won.

The first two matches were double elimination. In our first match, we made it to the expedite



rules but eventually lost. We also made it that far in our second match, but this time, despite the tower coming close to collapsing several times, we managed to win. Managing to pull out three blocks in a row from a tower that at first glance seemed to have no safe moves was surprisingly fulfilling. With that win, we moved on to the single-elimination part of the tournament.

Right away, however, our first opponent was the girls' team from the same homeroom class. While it was a match filled with sportsmanship, eventually one of us had to lose. After a good fight, we managed to win during expedite rules. Just like in a shōnen manga, we were told, "You have to win finals, for us!" With this encouragement, we cleaned up the next match in expedite rules.

And with that, we had made it to finals. For the sake of our comrades who we had defeated with our own hands, we went into the match in high spirits. But... lost on the fifth block. Losing like this was a bit deflating, but life isn't a shōnen manga, after all. This Home Match was, however, an enjoyable event to close off the semester before winter break.

ホームマッチ
ジェンガは日本だけでなくアメリカでも人気のゲームです。シンプルなルールながらも、一本を抜くたびに崩壊とともに爆発するの病みつきです。もちろん私も何回かやったことがあります。しかし組み合わせ表まである学校のジェンガは日本に由来からでした。ホームマッチというのは、学校のホーム同士のスポーツ大会です。ホーム内をいくつかの種目でチームを作り、それぞれの種目と全体のポイント数で競い合います。山田高校のホームマッチは十二月二十一日(木)に行われて、バレーボール・サッカー・卓球・ジェンガの四つの種目がありました。全校生徒が少なくとも一つの種目に入っていました。私も補欠として三人の男子とジェンガチームに入っていました。組み合わせ表があるジェンガ大会だけあってルールもきちんと説明されています。試合はまず六分間の間、チーム内の順番を守りながら交互に片手で一本を抜いて上に乗せません。その六分が終わったら、促進ルールが有効になります。じゃんけんを負けたチームを先に、一人の選手が一本の間、抜かなければなりません。

せん。勝敗が決まるまでそのルールが続きます。最初の二試合は敗者復活戦があるダブルイリミネーション方式でした。第一戦で促進ルールまで行きましたが、負けました。第二戦も促進ルールまで行っても、何回も塔が崩れそうになりながらギリギリ勝ちました。三本連続抜きに成功したときの達成感は半端なかつたです。その勝ちで決勝までのシングルイリミネーション部分に入りました。でも、すぐに同じクラスの女子チームと当たりました。スポーツマン精神に溢れた良い試合だったけど、いずれかのチームが負けてしまう運命です。善戦のあと、私達が促進ルールで勝ちました。少年漫画のように「私達のため、絶対に決勝に勝つて！」とか言われまして。その励ましをもつて次の試合も促進ルールで勝ちました。それで決勝戦までたどり着きました。自分たちの手で倒した仲間のため、意気があつたりと五本目で負けました。ちょっと拍子抜けでしたけど、まあ、人生は少年漫画のように行きません。冬休み前の行事としては楽しかったです。