

J.LEAGUE

Amazing, J. 

J.LEAGUE NEWS

Official News Letter

English Edition **NO.32**

27 June, 2005

Japan Professional Football League

CONTENTS

Division 1	1-2	The 100 Year Vision - It's not only Football !	6
Division 2 / Yamazaki Nabisco Cup	3	Topics	7
Xerox Super Cup / Asian tournaments	4	Guest Column	8
Exhibition games / JOIN Days	5		

J.League Official Homepage
<http://www.j-league.or.jp/eng>



Antlers Raised!



© J.LEAGUE PHOTOS

A joyful start for Kashima

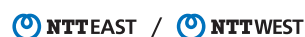
Kashima Antlers led from the front as the 2005 J. League season kicked off, scoring 9 wins in their first 12 Division One matches and opening up a 9 point lead at the head of the table. Kashima have won more J. League titles than any other club but fallen behind Júbilo Iwata and Yokohama F·Marinos in the past three seasons. Toninho Cerezo's team

have surged back now and already the question is who can stop them. But only 6 points separate the next 14 sides. The challengers include Sanfrece Hiroshima, enjoying their best season in more than a decade, and Gamba Osaka, where Masafumi Maeda has just made history with the J. League's 10,000th goal.

J.League Official Sponsors



Network Partner



League Cup Sponsor



J.League Hyakunenkoso Partner

The Asahi Shimbun

Division One Kashima in Front



Sanfrece Hiroshima vs Albirex Niigata

Kashima Antlers announced their return to form on the opening day of the new J1 season with a 1-0 win at last-year's runners-up, Urawa Reds. The 4-time J. League champions have only lost once so far, 1-0 at home to Cerezo Osaka on May Day.

Kashima took the J. League Yamazaki Nabisco Cup in 2002 and A3 Championship in 2003 but have not won the league since 2001. Manager Toninho Cerezo is not celebrating yet. "I believe in my players and my ability to bring out their power," he says "but we've also had luck to get here."

Sanfrece Hiroshima head the group hoping that the "luck" will run out. Their second season back in J1 kicked off with 3 draws and a loss, against Kashima, but they have since won 5 out of 8.

Gamba Osaka striker Masashi Oguro has carried on his improvement from last year. Top



Gamba Osaka vs Nagoya Grampus Eight

Japanese scorer with 20 goals in 2004, he is already half way there and first overall this time.

Yokohama F·Marinos, champions in 2003 and 2004, had a rough start with many injuries but are still in striking distance. So, too, are Urawa Reds, who could not win until game 6 but have climbed from last to sixth. Shimizu S-Pulse are unbeaten in 6 matches and Júbilo Iwata in 5. Omiya Ardija have also made a strong start to their first ever J1 season.

●2005 J.LEAGUE Division 1 [12th Sec]

	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Kashima Antlers	12	9	2	1	23	10	13	29
2	Sanfrece Hiroshima	12	5	5	2	18	8	10	20
3	Gamba Osaka	12	5	4	3	26	22	4	19
4	Nagoya Grampus Eight	12	5	3	4	17	16	1	18
5	Júbilo Iwata	12	5	3	4	15	14	1	18
6	Urawa Reds	12	4	5	3	15	11	4	17
7	JEF United Chiba	12	4	5	3	22	19	3	17
8	Omiya Ardija	12	5	2	5	18	17	1	17
9	Yokohama F·Marinos	12	4	4	4	16	14	2	16
10	Shimizu S-Pulse	12	3	7	2	11	10	1	16
11	Cerezo Osaka	12	4	4	4	14	16	-2	16
12	Oita Trinita	12	5	1	6	14	17	-3	16
13	Kawasaki Frontale	12	4	2	6	18	17	1	14
14	Tokyo Verdy 1969	12	3	5	4	17	20	-3	14
15	Albirex Niigata	12	3	5	4	13	23	-10	14
16	F.C.Tokyo	12	3	2	7	15	20	-5	11
17	Kashiwa Reysol	12	2	4	6	9	17	-8	10
18	Vissel Kobe	12	2	3	7	11	21	-10	9

10,000 Goals

Fans across Japan counted down to the J. League's 10,000th goal. Young Gamba Osaka midfielder Masafumi Maeda, who was still in primary school when the J. League kicked off in 1993, scored the historic goal on May 8. 277,635 fans sent in their prediction to the J. League's 10,000th Goal Campaign, and only 66 got it right! The first prize (chosen by lot) was a holiday worth 5 million yen.



Masafumi Maeda (Gamba Osaka)



Division Two Kyoto Ahead

Kyoto Purple Sanga made a bright start to their campaign to regain the J1 status they lost in 2003. Kyoto kicked off with 6 straight wins and stayed undefeated for 11 matches before stumbling 3-0 at home to much-improved Sagan Tosu. 2005 could be a good year for football in Kyushu with both Tosu and Avispa Fukuoka, third last year and disappointed in the promotion play-off, challenging for promotion spots.



Kyoto Purple Sanga vs Tokushima Vortis



Sagan Tosu vs Montedio Yamagata



Avispa Fukuoka vs Ventforet Kofu

●2005 J.LEAGUE Division 2 [16th Sec]

	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Kyoto Purple Sanga	16	13	2	1	31	14	17	41
2	Avispa Fukuoka	16	6	8	2	22	13	9	26
3	Sagan Tosu	16	7	5	4	21	15	6	26
4	Ventforet Kofu	16	6	6	4	31	22	9	24
5	Montedio Yamagata	16	6	6	4	21	15	6	24
6	Consadole Sapporo	16	5	6	5	17	19	-2	21
7	Vegalta Sendai	16	6	2	8	24	21	3	20
8	Shonan Bellmare	16	4	7	5	16	20	-4	19
9	Tokushima Vortis	16	3	8	5	18	22	-4	17
10	Mito Hollyhock	16	4	4	8	17	26	-9	16
11	Yokohama FC	16	2	7	7	14	23	-9	13
12	Thespa Kusatsu	16	2	3	11	11	33	-22	9

2005 J.LEAGUE YAMAZAKI NABISCO CUP

Urawa Reds stayed on course for their fourth consecutive League Cup final with a convincing performance in the group round of this year's tournament, but holders F.C.Tokyo and league leaders Kashima Antlers, finalists in 5 of the past 8 seasons, both had early exits.

The quarter-final draw matches Urawa Reds against Shimizu S-Pulse and also features an attractive Osaka derby between Gamba and Cerezo.

Yokohama F·Marinos and Júbilo Iwata, both on byes through the preliminary round due to the Asian club competitions, have drawn Omiya Ardija and JEF United Chiba, respectively.

The quarter-finals will be played over two legs on August 8 and 13; the semi-finals over two legs on August 31 and October 5; and the final as a single match at the National Stadium in Tokyo on November 5.

●Preliminary Round Tables

Group.A

	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Urawa Reds	6	5	0	1	10	7	3	15
2	Omiya Ardija	6	3	1	2	9	6	3	10
3	Albirex Niigata	6	3	1	2	7	5	2	10
4	Vissel Kobe	6	0	0	6	1	9	-8	0

Group.B

	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Gamba Osaka	6	4	1	1	17	12	5	13
2	Kawasaki Frontale	6	2	3	1	16	12	4	9
3	Tokyo Verdy 1969	6	1	3	2	12	14	-2	6
4	Sanfrece Hiroshima	6	1	1	4	8	15	-7	4

Group.C

	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	JEF United Chiba	6	4	1	1	14	7	7	13
2	Kashiwa Reysol	6	2	2	2	6	8	-2	8
3	Oita Trinita	6	1	3	2	3	6	-3	6
4	F.C.Tokyo	6	1	2	3	5	7	-2	5

Group.D

	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Shimizu S-Pulse	6	3	2	1	12	7	5	11
2	Cerezo Osaka	6	3	1	2	10	8	2	10
3	Nagoya Grampus Eight	6	2	1	3	5	8	-3	7
4	Kashima Antlers	6	1	2	3	7	11	-4	5





2005 XEROX SUPER CUP

Tokyo Verdy 1969 followed up their Emperor's Cup victory on New Year's Day by defeating 2004 J. League champions Yokohama F. Marinos in the curtain-raiser to the new season. Verdy fought back to 2-2 with the very last kick of the match and won 5-4 on penalties.

Washington was Verdy's hero with 2 goals on his first appearance for the club, immediately showing the form that made him top scorer with 34 goals for Atletico Paranaense in last season's Brazilian championship.

"It is a rare thing," said Verdy manager Ardiles, "to win 2 finals in 2 months, and Verdy hadn't won anything for such a long time." Verdy's last trophy was the Emperor's Cup in 1997.



Asian Tournaments

The Japanese teams struggled in this year's Asian club tournaments. Yokohama F. Marinos finished third at the A3 Nissan Champions South Korea in February, and both Yokohama and Júbilo Iwata fell at the first round group stage of the Asian

Champions League.

"The result was unfortunate," says Marinos manager Takeshi Okada, "but my players made a tremendous effort. I hope we can try again next year."





High-Profile Friendlies

J. League clubs have again taken advantage of the European close season to arrange some high-profile exhibition matches against world class club teams. Urawa Reds kicked off the series with a match against Hamburger SV on May 31. Juventus visited Yokohama F·Marinos and F.C.Tokyo, and FC Barcelona travelled to Marinos and Urawa Reds, in June. The visitors in July and August will include Real Madrid at Tokyo Verdy 1969 and Júbilo Iwata, Bolton Wanderers at Vissel Kobe and Kawasaki Frontale, Manchester United at Reds and Antlers, Bayern München at F.C.Tokyo and Júbilo, and Fiorentina at Cerezo Osaka, Sanfrece Hiroshima and Verdy. European champions Liverpool, however, unfortunately had to cancel their plan to visit Shimizu S-Pulse and Antlers due to Champion League commitments.

Date	Kick off	Home	vs	Away	Stadium
May 31	19:00	Urawa Reds	vs	Hamburger SV	Saitama Stadium 2002
June 1	19:00	Yokohama F·Marinos	vs	Juventus FC	Nissan Stadium
June 7	19:00	F.C.Tokyo	vs	Juventus FC	Ajinomoto Stadium
June 12	16:00	Yokohama F·Marinos	vs	FC Barcelona	Nissan Stadium
June 15	19:00	Urawa Reds	vs	FC Barcelona	Saitama Stadium 2002
June 25	15:30	Shimizu S-Pulse	vs	Júbilo Iwata	Nihondaira Sports Stadium
June 25	19:00	Nagoya Grampus Eight	vs	Gamba Osaka	Kariya General Athletic Park
July 25	19:15	Tokyo Verdy 1969	vs	Real Madrid	Ajinomoto Stadium
July 26	19:30	Vissel Kobe	vs	Bolton Wanderers FC	Kobe Universiade Memorial Stadium
July 27	19:10	Júbilo Iwata	vs	Real Madrid	Ajinomoto Stadium
July 28	19:00	Kashima Antlers	vs	Manchester United FC	Tokyo National Stadium
July 28	19:00	F.C.Tokyo	vs	FC Bayern München	Ajinomoto Stadium
July 28	19:00	Cerezo Osaka	vs	ACF Fiorentina	Nagai Stadium
July 28	19:15	Kawasaki Frontale	vs	Bolton Wanderers FC	Kawasaki Todoroki Stadium
July 28	19:30	Albirex Niigata	vs	Dalian Shide	Niigata Stadium
July 30	19:00	Urawa Reds	vs	Manchester United FC	Saitama Stadium 2002
July 30	19:00	Júbilo Iwata	vs	FC Bayern München	Tokyo National Stadium
July 30	18:00	Sanfrece Hiroshima	vs	ACF Fiorentina	Hiroshima Big Arch
August 1	19:00	Tokyo Verdy 1969	vs	ACF Fiorentina	Ajinomoto Stadium

JOIN Days!

The J. League's community JOIN Day activities took place again this year during the Japanese holiday period from April 30 to May 8. Mr. Pitch, the J. League's 100 Year Vision

messenger, was again a prominent figure at the special family events organised at J1 and J2 matches. The photos give some idea of the fun.



Carp contest
(The carp streamers are a feature of Children's Day, a Japanese holiday celebrated on May 5)

The 100 Year Vision – It's not only Football!



F.C. Tokyo and Tokyo Verdy in the gym

Another Tokyo derby took place on February 27 in Tokyo's Inagi City: F.C. Tokyo versus Tokyo Verdy on the final weekend of volleyball's V1 League. Supporters of both clubs who normally gather behind the goals were out in force in their replica football shirts and bearing banners with the volleyball players' names. The championship was at stake and the atmosphere was as electric as if the two clubs were playing at the Ajinomoto Stadium, their shared football home. The chanting came loud and clear from the upper floor spectator zone of the gymnasium. Verdy took the match the full five sets but, in the end, it was F.C. Tokyo who made it three wins in a row.

The J. League's clubs promote a wide range of sporting activity with the goal of becoming comprehensive hubs of community sport. That is why it is not only about football. They field many other teams as well.

The V1 League is the second tier competition in Japanese volleyball. Both F.C. Tokyo and Tokyo Verdy are aiming for promotion to the V League and also organise volleyball schools to foster the sport in their hometown area. And it's not only volleyball: Tokyo Verdy have a triathlon team as well.

Neighbouring Kanagawa Prefecture has the famous Shonan beaches, so it is no surprise that Shonan Bellmare operate both a triathlon and a beach volleyball team. A softball team has also



The Albirex basketball team

been launched this year, and it includes Misako Ando, "the world's Number One short-stop", who won the silver in Sydney and also represented Japan in Athens. When the Bellmare fans turned out to roar on their new softball team in April, it felt like the Olympics all over again! Ando says she wept with the emotion.

At the other end of the spectrum, the mountains of Niigata lie several metres deep in snow in winter, and Albirex Niigata have a ski team in addition to their indoor basketball activity. Montedio, in equally snowy Yamagata, operate a women's long-distance relay running team for the ekiden races, which are hugely popular in Japan. Kashiwa Reysol have a professional woman golfer on their books.

The J. League is already in its thirteenth season, and the vision continues to grow.



The Bellmare softball team

TOPICS



J. League Academy

Four more clubs – Albirex Niigata, Omiya Ardija, Kashiwa Reysol and Kawasaki Frontale – have established J. League Academy children's training centres this year, bringing the total to fifteen.

The J. League Academy helps local children to develop not only in sport but also as happy and well-rounded members of society. The goal is to establish a Japanese-style youth training system that nurtures children who are healthy in body and

mind and fosters players who can take Japanese football to the top.

The Academy clubs have coordinated phased training programmes for their children's and youth teams in each age group and also give soccer clinics from the kindergarten level up to diffuse the sport in the community. They gather physical data on children's health and physical development, too, for use in scientific training methods, and organise courses to instruct the children's instructors.

Rising Attendances

J. League attendances are strong again this year. The average for the newly expanded 18 team Division One was 19,605 after 12 games, and reached an all-time record aggregate of 225,780 on the weekend of the twelfth round, when the

average rose to 25,087. The previous record aggregate of 225,453 was set on the opening day of the 2005 season. The highest weekend average of 27,413 was set on May 2, 2004, when there were only 8 games.

Live Internet Match Relays

The J. League launched regular live Internet distribution on May 1 following the success of the experimental service provided for last year's J1/J2 play-off. 34 matches should be relayed this season

at a rate of about one a week on:
<http://www.jsgoal.jp/tv/> and
<http://plala.tv/4media/>.

Donation for Tsunami Victims

The J. League donated 10 million yen towards relief activities for victims of the Asian tsunami on December 26. The gift is being addressed to football associations of the region

through football federation routes. The J. League clubs also made their own independent disaster relief collections at their first home games of the 2005 season.

Looking Back, Looking Forward

By **Michael Church**

Michael Church has spent the last decade covering football in Asia, including the J.League and the Japan national team for the last three years for The Daily Yomiuri. He is currently the Asia Bureau Chief for PA Sport.



Looking back over the last three years, it's hard to believe that so much has been achieved in such a short space of time.

The continued evolution of the J.League into a league that now adheres to the traditions and standards that have seen football grow into the world's most popular sport is testament to how much the landscape has changed in Japan since the league's inception in 1993.

Football is no longer a fad, a fashion that has to be tailored to the taste of fans bred on a steady diet of baseball and a sporting mentality more akin to that of the United States, where there always has to be a winner.

The abolition of the penalty shootouts followed by the scrapping of the V-goal have been nothing but good for Japanese football as fans and players alike realise that, like in life, sometimes things aren't so cut and dried as there being a winner and a loser. The beauty of football's simplicity is that, in so many ways, it reflects reality.

With the arrival of draws on the J.League scene brought with it the necessity for coaches to develop a better understanding of how best to use their squads. It was a point highlighted by the likes of Kashima Antlers coach Toninho Cerezo, who said at the time of the change in 2003 that playing for 90 minutes rather than having the threat of extra time hanging over the heads of players and coaches meant, for the first time, that coaches could use substitutes to influence a game in the same way as their counterparts throughout the rest of the world.

Yet again, it was a way of closing the gap on the game's leaders and educating Japanese players and coaches on how best to use their talents and prepare them for the international game where the rules had, for 10 years, been different to life in the J.League. While playing in a league that regularly saw matches go into extra time helped in terms of fitness, Japanese players lacked the tactical flexibility and understanding of those in the rest of the world.

But perhaps the strongest signal that the Japanese football scene has evolved is this season's decision to end the two-stage system and opt, instead, for an orthodox single-stage system that is the norm throughout planet football.

The changes highlights how much not just the clubs and the players but also the fans have matured and this year, for the first time since 1996 and for only the second time in the league's history, the team that wins the league title can be guaranteed to be Japan's strongest football club.

So, after all these changes, where does the J.League go next? Certainly there is a need for a J.League club to establish itself on the continental scene by winning the Asian Champions League. With the added incentive now of a place in FIFA's revived Club World Championship, victory in the ACL is important but to achieve that will require a change in attitude toward the tournament within Japanese football, which has for too long looked upon Asian competition as little more than an afterthought.

And for the single-stage season to be given the greatest chance of being successful, the J.League and the Japan Football Association needs to put pressure on the Asian Football Confederation to expand the ACL and include the clubs that finish first and second in the league in the tournament so as to encourage a greater level of competition throughout the duration of the season.

It's what many of the nation's top club coaches want and it's what the J.League needs to continue its development. With J1's expansion to 18 teams, a failure to do so in the near future could lead to too many meaningless games. While the J.League has evolved and the fans developed an understanding of how the game is played in the rest of the world, there still need to be enough incentives to allow the sport in Japan to keep improving.