



# JAPAN'S WOMEN ON TOP OF THE WORLD

*Japanese women have been achieving remarkable success in a variety of fields overseas. This month's Cover Story showcases some notable examples, beginning with "Nadeshiko Japan," Japan's World Cup winning soccer team.*

In the final of the FIFA Women's World Cup soccer tournament held on July 17 in Frankfurt, Germany, Japan beat the United States after a penalty shootout to win the tournament for the first time.

Commenting on the Japan team after the match,

the U.S. team coach and players praised the Japan team and the efforts of captain and midfielder Homare Sawa.

Sawa not only finished as the leading goal scorer of the tournament with five goals but was also cho-



Homare Sawa (No. 10) of Japan scores in the FIFA Women's World Cup final on July 17.

sen as tournament MVP.

Commenting after the match, Sawa said, "I'm so pleased that I can do something I love and in the process make so many people happy and receive all this support, and I hope this encourages more and more women to take up soccer."

The Japan team is familiarly known as "Nadeshiko Japan," *nadeshiko* being the flower which traditionally symbolizes Japanese female beauty and strength.



Homare Sawa poses with her Golden Boot award for leading goal scorer alongside Abby Wambach of the United States, who won the Bronze Boot, July 17.

Following the team's return, a "Nadeshiko Boom" exploded across Japan. The media reported on the players' movements for consecutive days and Japan Women's Football League matches, in which national team players appeared, saw their average attendance jump twenty times compared with the previous year in some matches.

On August 18, the Japanese Government presented the team with the People's Honor Award, noting "its firm teamwork and spirit of never giving up, for accomplishing a great achievement of becoming No. 1 in the world for the first time in the history of Japanese soccer, as well as for giving the disaster victims and all the people of Japan who are trying to rise from the devastation of the Great East Japan Earthquake the courage to face hardships and moving them with the team's eloquent style of play."

Thereafter, the Japan team also won an Olympic qualifying match in China in September, securing their place at the London Olympics in 2012. 