

# A Real Team Effort

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and tsunami of March 11, many local residents both Japanese and foreign chose to evacuate the area as quickly as possible. Loss of supply lines, the risk of major aftershocks, and fear of the unknown with regard to the unfolding situation at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant, all combined to make leaving an easy decision for many, once a safe route out could be found.

Some, however, chose to stay, and immediately put their backs into relief and recovery work.

In the small city of Kamaishi in Iwate Prefecture, where some 1,300 of the town's 41,000 population are believed to have perished in the tsunami, players from

the local rugby club, the Kamaishi Seawaves, lent their weight and sporting stamina to

the relief operation. At a time when anxiety was at its peak in the aftermath of the tsunami, the rugby team's efforts caught the imagination of people around the world and won the deep admiration of those in Japan.

Kamaishi is known in Japan as a "rugby town," the Seawaves traditionally being a strong team featuring numerous star players from overseas. All of the thirty-four-strong squad survived the March 11 disaster.

The Kamaishi Seawaves captain, former All Black Pita Alatini, was one of three foreign players to stay on in the town, where he has lived for seven years, to help out with recovery efforts. Alatini explained to reporters at the time, "I love this town and I've got a lot of good Japanese friends. We can rebuild the town."

The team helped other local volunteers unload trucks of food, clothing and other supplies, which poured in from across Japan and around the world for the survivors of the disaster.

Australian star Scott Fardy, who has lived in Kamaishi for two years, was in his apartment when the quake hit. "It was pretty scary, but my building handled it well. A couple of hours later we were told to go to the clubhouse, where about thirty or so players and their families had gathered. Over the next few days we put all our food together and prepared some great meals over a fire."

At a time when most foreign embassies in Japan were advising their nationals not to travel to the northeast of Japan, did Fardy ever consider leaving?

"I have grown to love the town. It was a simple decision to stay for me. I felt very safe and was eating well. My teammates were there and I'm part of that

team. We are young guys in good shape, so for us, whether Japanese or foreign,



Scott Fardy (center) appears alongside fellow Kamaishi Seawaves players in a road-safety poster published by the Iwate Prefectural Police Force in 2010. The Seawaves serve as a symbol of trustworthiness and of Iwate Prefecture's strength.



Kamaishi Seawaves star Scott Fardy helps fellow volunteers unload relief supplies from a truck in the tsunami-stricken town, March 18.

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we knew we could help in some way.”

And Fardy is convinced that his adopted town will bounce back.

“I think the prospects are good for recovery in Kamaishi,” he says. “It’s terrible to see what it’s like there now—it was a heartbreaking experience walking through town after the tsunami. However, the

people are amazingly strong and generous, and the whole community will band together to help, as they already have done.”

Fans and former Seawaves players have joined the huge recovery effort in Kamaishi, holding charity games and offering donations. Seawaves' pre-season training was in full swing in early May. 