



Helping Hands

Some 80,000 people are expected to volunteer their assistance in the day-to-day running of the 2020 Tokyo Games.

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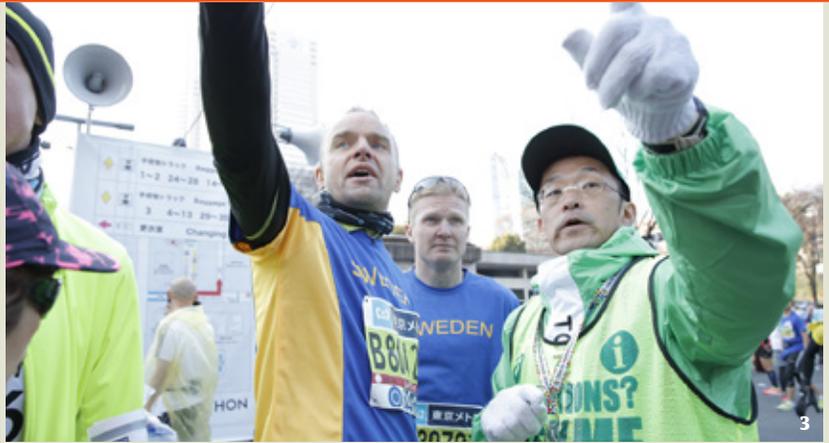
LARGE-SCALE sporting events such as marathons and triathlons are held frequently across Japan. To support these events on the day, large numbers of volunteers are required. In the case of a marathon, for example, volunteers are needed to collect and return the runners' belongings, man water stations, and control pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

“The Tokyo Marathon, which

started in 2007, was a major turning point for sports volunteering in Japan,” says Kazutoshi Watanabe, Senior Executive Director of the Sasakawa Sports Foundation (SSF) and Vice President of the Japan Sports Volunteer Network (JSVN). “More people have come to realize that sports are not only things that they can do or watch, but also things that they can support.”

In the annual Tokyo Marathon, approximately 10,000 volunteers support 34,000 runners. Before this, there was no regular sports event in which so many volunteers participated on a single day. Volunteering opportunities for the Tokyo Marathon are now so popular that they become full as soon as the application period opens.

According to the nationwide survey that SSF has been conduct-



ing every two years of 2,000 men and women aged 20 years or older, those who responded that they had supported a certain kind of sports activity as a sports volunteer has remained at seven to eight percent for the past twenty years. However, the number increases to approximately 16% (2014 survey) for those who responded that they had been involved with support activities for the sports in which their children took part or with the preparation of sports events in their communities.

“These people are unconscious volunteers who do not realize that they are doing sports volunteering activities,” says Watanabe. “Going forward, it is important to encourage them to participate in activities with a sense of volunteering.”

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games are already in-

spiring such active volunteerism. According to a 2015 opinion poll by the Cabinet Office, those who responded that they wanted to participate in volunteering at the 2020 Tokyo Games stood at 22.7%.

The Japan Sports Volunteer Network has been conducting sports volunteer development programs, in which people can gain knowledge and communication skills useful to sports volunteers. Approximately 2,000 people have participated over the past four years. The organization expects that the number of participants will grow ten times within the next four years as a result of the decision to host the Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo.

Approximately 70,000 volunteers participated in the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Tokyo Games expect to see around 80,000 volunteers participating from around the world.

University students will make up a large number of these volunteers. The Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, which has concluded agreements with approximately 780 universities in Japan,

engages in activities such as giving classes and hosting a symposium with a focus on the 2020 Games.

In addition, more companies are encouraging their employees to participate in sports volunteering as part of their CSR activities. SSF's statistics show that most sports volunteers in Japan are in their 40s and 50s, this being the generation of people that can most afford to spend time on volunteering activities. As more and more companies endorse employees' participation in volunteering activities in the 2020 Games, so even more working adults are expected to volunteer in the Games.

“I think that 80,000 volunteers will be found without any problem,” says Watanabe. “What's important is that after the 2020 Tokyo Games sports volunteering has become engrained in Japanese culture as a legacy of the 2020 Games.”

- 1 Volunteers at a food and water station for runners at the 2016 Tokyo Marathon
- 2 Kazutoshi Watanabe, Senior Executive Director of the Sasakawa Sports Foundation (SSF) and Vice President of Japan Sports Volunteer Network (JSVN)
- 3 A volunteer guides two Swedish runners at the Tokyo Marathon in February 2016.