

Fukushima Daisuki Newspaper

Team Aizu Kids

Unrivaled affection for hometown

Interview with Mr. Hideyuki Anzai **Former manager of the Fukushima's Inter-Prefectural Ekiden (long distance relay) Championships**

Fukushima's achievements in the All-Japan Inter-Prefectural Men's Ekiden Championships (1996 to 2018)

Year	Achievement
1st	5th
2nd	3rd
3rd	16th
4th	2nd
5th	15th
6th	19th
7th	7th
8th	4th
9th	14th
10th	10th
11th	28th
12th	21st
13th	9th
14th	5th
15th	2nd
16th	15th
17th	34th
18th	23rd
19th	6th
20th	20th
21st	6th
22nd	28th
23rd	9th

Secret behind Fukushima's success as an Ekiden powerhouse

"Fukushima's true strength is the love of its athletes for their home prefecture," says Mr. Anzai Hideyuki (32, Aizuwakamatsu City), former manager of the Fukushima Team, explaining the reason for the prefecture's strength. Mr. Anzai won the Hakone Ekiden Race as a student at Komazawa University, as well as the All-Japan Men's Corporate Team Ekiden Championships. Mr. Anzai shared the joy and difficulties of being an Ekiden runner. (Team Aizu Kids)

Happier to join the Fukushima Team than compete in the Olympics

In answering the question why Fukushima happens to be so strong at Ekiden, Mr. Anzai said, "Runners hailing from Fukushima tend to have a strong attachment to their home prefecture. That's something that cannot be said about other prefectures to the same degree". he said.

There seems to be another reason for Fukushima's strength, we were told. Ekiden in Fukushima is an overall effort to which the whole prefecture is committed. Anyone interested, whether a promising junior or high school student or someone with no previous good running records at all, gets the chance to practice. In Fukushima, efforts in this

field have been aimed at strengthening the potential of the entire prefecture, rather than just a certain school or district.

"Being able to join the Fukushima Ekiden Team meant more to me than to be selected for the Olympics," said Mr. Anzai. At that time, besides Mr. Anzai, several other runners were considered Olympic hopefuls in Fukushima, such as Mr. Atsushi Sato (Aizu High School) and Mr. Masato Imai (Haramachi High School). However, only two of these runners were also members of the Fukushima Ekiden Team, illustrating the exclusivity of being able to join the team. (Futaba Sato)



Mr. Anzai displaying his Komazawa University uniform

Motivated by gratitude Overcoming failure and repayment of kindness

What Mr. Anzai regrets most is the year when he could not perform as he wished and the Komazawa University Ekiden Team ended up losing the chance of winning the Hakone Ekiden for the fifth consecutive year. Despite being deeply disappointed, he did not give up Ekiden. He was hoping to get another chance to make up for his failure and show his gratitude to Coach Mr. Hiroaki Oyagi (from Aizuwakamatsu City), who gave him the opportunity to join the university team when he was still an unknown athlete.

He said he practiced vigorously, running 20 km in the early morning, 40 km in the late morning and another

20 km in the afternoon every other day for three weeks. Even on holidays, he would run 10 to 20 km in the early morning, 20 km in the late morning and 15 km in the afternoon. He is confident he was practicing as hard as the most seasoned runners during that period.

When he became team captain in his fourth year at the university, he and the other members successfully completed a tough training program consisting of running 80 km a day during their stay at the training camp. Their hard work paid off, and they won the Hakone Ekiden after three years. He said that this was his way of showing gratitude to Coach Mr. Oyagi. (Isamu Watanabe)

Mr. Hideyuki Anzai (short biography)

Mr. Hideyuki Anzai (32) was born in Kawahigashi Town, Kawanuma County (currently, Kawahigashi Town Aizuwakamatsu City) on September 18, 1985. After graduating from Aizu High School, he entered Komazawa University where he became the captain of the Athletics team and led the team in winning the Hakone Ekiden. Later, he joined the Nissin Foods Group team, considered one of the best corporate Ekiden teams, where he won the All-Japan Men's Corporate Team Ekiden Championship. He returned to Aizuwakamatsu City four years ago to take over his family's business selling agricultural material. At the same time, he was also appointed captain of Fukushima Team in the All-Japan Inter-Prefectural Ekiden Championships.

□Mr. Anzai's major achievements

<Aizu High School>

* 2003 Prefectural High School Athletics Competition, 3000 m hurdle: Winner

<Komazawa University>

* 2006 (Mr. Anzai's personal achievements shown in bracket)
Hakone Ekiden: 5th (17th, section 7)
Izumo Ekiden: 5th (1st, section 1)
All Japan University Men's Ekiden: Winner (2nd, section 4)
* 2008 Hakone Ekiden: Overall winner (2nd, section 5)

<Nissin Foods Group >

* 2012 All-Japan Corporate Ekiden Championships: Winner (5th, section 7)

<Fukushima Ekiden Team captain>

* 2017 All-Japan Inter-Prefectural Ekiden Championships: 28th
* 2018 All-Japan Inter-Prefectural Ekiden Championships: 9th

"Always be conscious of your posture"

Running lessons from Mr. Anzai

During our running lessons with Mr. Anzai, he pointed out we all had poor posture.

To improve, he advised us to be conscious of always keeping a proper posture, even when studying, and to do up to 1,000 situps every day. He said it is important always to be conscious of letting the pelvis support one's upper body weight. It was interesting to watch how smoothly Mr. Anzai could run and that his feet made almost no noise.

In response to what he regard as more important, natural ability or effort, he said that, in his case, it was making great effort rather than natural ability that helped him become a fast runner. (Takuto Aihara)



Mr. Anzai giving us an easy-to-follow running lesson

Mr. Anzai's elementary school years

Not a fast runner

Mr. Anzai said he was not a fast runner when he was in elementary school. "When it came to running, I was among the bottom half of all the students," he said.

Favorite food: Japanese curry

His favorite food is Japanese curry, which he still likes. He also loves soccer, and he played the game from the fourth year of elementary school to the second year of junior high school.

Dreaming of becoming a baker

In elementary school, his dream was not to become a track

and field athlete, but a baker. He said that, while he was good at arithmetic, he disliked Japanese language classes. For physical education, he preferred swimming to track and field.

His running ability improved when he entered junior high school. He got interested in track and field during his third year at Kawahigashi Junior High School. He finished near the top in the All Aizu Ekiden Race.

His advice to elementary school students is to remember the importance of identifying one's goal and to strongly believe that one can reach the goal. (Takaya Watanabe)

Reported by:

Team Aizu Kids

(From the right)

Takuto Aihara (Matsunaga Elementary 5th grade)

Isamu Watanabe (Ikki Elementary 6th grade)

Futaba Sato (Higashiyama Elementary 5th grade)

Takaya Watanabe (Josai Elementary 5th grade)

(Holding Mr. Anzai's Hakone Ekiden Overall Winner's Cup)

