

Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami - One Year Later

March 11, 2012 - One year after the powerful earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan, the region continues its recovery. The earthquake, which measured magnitude 9.0, occurred at 2:46 pm local time had an epicenter approximately 70 kilometres (43 mi) east of the Oshika Peninsula of T?hoku. It was the most powerful known earthquake ever to have hit Japan, and one of the five most powerful earthquakes in the world since modern record-keeping began in 1900. The earthquake triggered powerful tsunami waves that reached heights of up to 40.5 metres (133 ft) in Miyako in T?hoku's Iwate Prefecture, and which, in the Sendai area, travelled up to 10 km (6 mi) inland.

The earthquake forced the cancellation of many sporting events, including the National Baton Twirling Championships and International Cup Selection competitions. The Japan Sport Baton Association (JSBA) reluctantly withdrew from competing at the 6th WBTF International Cup, held in Jacksonville in August 2011.

The aftermath of the earthquake was a major humanitarian crisis. There are 15,850 confirmed deaths, 6,011 injured and 3,287 people missing across eighteen prefectures. The tsunami resulted in over 340,000 displaced people in the T?hoku region, and shortages of food, water, shelter, medicine and fuel for survivors. Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan said, "In the 65 years after the end of World War II, this is the toughest and the most difficult crisis for Japan."

Aid organizations, both in Japan and worldwide, responded - the Japanese Red Cross reporting \$1 billion in donations. The baton twirling community also responded - at the WBTF International Cup, Aikio Takayama from the JSBA was presented with the results from many different fundraising efforts.

On December 24 and 25, 2011, the Tohoku region hosted the first regional championships since the disaster - the 37th Tohoku Regional Baton Twirling Championship. Over 25 clubs with 400 athletes participated in the Championship. 53 athletes were selected to compete in the Japanese National Championship in March 2012. Keisuke Komada attended and provided an exhibition performance, including an encore of his famous quadruple illusion. In addition, the casts of the Cirque du Soleil shows "Ka" and "Zed" sent messages of support and encouragement.

The complete text of the JSBA announcement regarding their recovery from the disaster is attached.

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