KHS student golfer selected for Japanese national team

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Nile C. Kinnick High School has no golf team, but that didn't stop Kavan Eubank, a student at the school from being selected to the prestigious Japanese national team called Kokutai.

Kavan Eubank practices at the Morale Welfare and Recreation driving range on Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Oct. 30. Eubank is the first student from a DoDEA school to be selected to the prestigious Japanese sports league know as Kokutai.

Kavan is part of a military family. His father, Gerald Eubank has been stationed with his family in Japan for more than 10 years, but Kavan didn't start golfing in Japan.

It was a sport Kavan started when he was very young while stationed with his family in Texas.

"We had gotten him a set of Snoopy golf clubs when he was maybe three or four years old," explains Gerald. "We noticed he had a natural swing and it wasn't long before he was hitting it too hard to play in the house. We eventually got him a better set of clubs and he started hitting the ball even farther."

Kavan's family enrolled him in lessons and he continued to improve.

He got his first real set of golf clubs when he was 10 and started competing in the Japan junior league.

"He took second place in the all Japan elementary school championship when he was in sixth grade" said Takako Eubank, Kavan`s mom. "He also completed all his school work while attending the tournaments. I'm so glad that he has done well."

However, it was in high school that Kavan received national attention for his golfing prowess.

He played at a tournament where students from schools all over Japan compete to be selected for the kokutai team. Kokutai comes from three Japanese words; "*ko*" is from *kokumin* which means national, "*ku*" is from *taiiku* which means sports and "*tai*" from *taikai* which means competition.

"The people who are selected for this team are the players that can be selected for the Olympic team. The (Japanese) emperor was there, too. It was that level of competition," said Kavan. "When I got selected, I found out that I was the first foreigner to ever be a part of the Kokutai."

Gerald said, "The tour manager came up to us and said that he can not remember any other students make the Kokutai that are not a Japanese national. It was a big surprise and we feel extremely honored."

Kavan has other tournaments coming up including the famous "Nishin Cup" and other Japan-wide competitions. He encouraged other students to try golfing because it can take you places, give you opportunities to experience different cultures and it's a lot of fun.

Kinnick High School holds first alumni reunion

Story and photo by Vicki Boehler, Kinnick High School Public Affairs Liaison

The swells of Nile C. Kinnick High School (KHS) alumni were heard during an afternoon pep rally Oct. 22.

What was inspiring were the generations of Kinnick alumni joining with the voices of current students.

Kinnick High School teachers Robert Stovall and Terri Ekmark were the inspiration for the event.

"A year ago '91 alums Mike Lagaspi and Connie Phillips were discussing the possibility of a reunion during homecoming with Kinnick High School Principal, Mr. (Lorenzo) Brown." Ekmark stated. "When homecoming dates didn't work out over the already purchased tickets, we proceeded with an Alumni Reunion and integrated a pep rally together with the student body."

Some Alumni traveled from as far away as California. Others traveled within the Kanto region. Douglas Hadorn and his wife Mali (Nichols) Hadorn, both class of 1991 graduates, are raising their family at Kinnick as they were raised. The oldest returning alumnus was Mary Prinz-Jessee, a class of 1982 graduate, who resides in Tokyo.

Treasured letter jackets and T-shirts of the past generation were awed by current students as well as the treasured class rings. This gave the students better insight on what had and had not changed over the years.

The pep rally was a mix of good natured games involving former and present students.

Nile C. Kinnick High School alumni pose for a grooup photo during an innagural school reunion Oct. 22.

The football team sang the Kinnick fight song bringing cheers from the crowd.

Several former students spoke to the student body with words of reflection and encouragement.

"Remember your high school and have fun," challenged William Bauman, a class of 1987 graduate.

Following the pep rally, Stovall's class room was opened to the public with articles and pictures of past "YoHi" (Yokosuka High School) on display.

Stories, laughter and tears were shared with students, parents and present faculty.

Many of the alum gathered, reconnected and reflected. Many remember moving from the old school facility to the present one in 1989.

Martha Haseley, a KHS Spanish teacher noted that she taught several of the students, and stated how pleased she was to see several of them back.

"It was wonderful to see many of my former students. Mike Lagaspi was a former Spanish Club President." Haseley recalled. "This is their school. They all come back with many fond memories."

As a special guest, a surprise to most was the arrival of former Kinnick Principal Bruce Derr. He arrived at the Kinnick-Edgren Football game to cheers and hugs.

Shellanie (Trinidad) Ferrer, a class of 1993 graduate, remembered Derr's positive interaction with the students.

"I remember one time during Spirit Week he came to school in Bermuda shorts carrying a surf board", she reflected with a smile. "He was an awesome principal that really cared about his students. I was a varsity cheerleader for three years. I remember he told me jokingly that he was not going to allow me to graduate because when I did the school spirit would be gone."

Many alumni stayed for the evening football game and half time festivities later in the evening.

It may have rained that day but it didn't dampen the YoHi spirt.

Also, because Kinnick defeated Edgren High School soundly, 43-0, it has been requested that that the Alumni Reunion be an annual event.