

DOCTORAL THESIS ABSTRACT
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**A study on the developmental process of Japanese basketball
competition in early Showa era**

Focused on the Yukio Matsumoto and *Rokyu-Kenkyu* (1934–1936)

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In order to clarify the process by which basketball in Japan developed into a competitive sport during the early years of the Showa Era (1926–1989), the author presents two elements; internal and external factors. This study is comprised of two chapters, the first of which focuses on the various aspects of external factors on basketball's progression as a competitive sport in Japan. The second chapter deals with the elements directly linked to the technical and strategic competitiveness of basketball, i.e., internal factors. The author will discuss these factors which affected the development of basketball as a competitive sport in early Showa Era Japan, by analyzing both Yukio Matsumoto and his study, *Rokyu-Kenkyu* (1934–1936). Yukio Matsumoto was no more than a sole individual from the Kansai region, who expressed his passion for basketball in *Rokyu-Kenkyu*, and therein relayed his thoughts [on the sport] to those in the basketball world. Basketball was first introduced into Japan in the Meiji Period (1868–1912), but it only truly became a competitive sport in the Taisho Era (1912–1926), after Japan began participating in Far Eastern tournaments. According to Yutaka Mizutani, who deepened the study of basketball history, it was only in early Showa that basketball began to take root in Japan as a competitive sport. This is deduced from the fact that a national basketball association was established in the fifth year of Showa (1930), and that the Japanese basketball team played with commendable results in the Berlin Olympic Games (1936). However, much of all literature on Japanese basketball history closes with not much more than these accomplishments. Studies or articles revealing the technical/tactical and strategic facets of competitive basketball in the Showa Era, or individual perspectives are rare.

Within the competitive development of basketball in Japan during the early Showa period, there is evidence that enhanced intricacy in tactic and strategy existed. Since basketball was found and developed in the United States, American tactics and strategies

cannot not be overlooked. Nevertheless, in the early years of Showa, Japan raced to attain as much information possible [for self-improvement] from the U.S. by inviting instructors from overseas, and promptly translating and disclosing articles from American basketball magazine(s). Such effort invested at the time is quite amazing even by today's standards. The author [of this paper] tries to uncover the process of Japan's acquisition of team strategics, including a clarification of the contributing role of Yukio Matsumoto during this period.

From all the aforementioned, one can conclude that in the so-called, "Golden Age" for basketball in early Showa Era Japan, not only did Japan prove successful in showing high competitive standards in international matches, but the domestic environmental setting—basketball courts, basketballs, et cetera—was put into place. As for competitive development from an internal perspective, it can be said that the implementation of "systematic play" had had an enormous role. Furthermore, it seems that Japan was aiming for the competitive standard of "scientific play", —a combination of "systematic play"(a teamwork strategy) and the uninhibited play of individuals, and swift, aggressive action. Yukio Matsumoto's work, *Rokyu-Kenkyu*, encouraged those in the basketball industry to take such measures; in itself precious advice. Readers of his book were impressed by his work. Through Matsumoto, basketball captured the hearts of many, including representatives of the national basketball association Sang-Beck Lee and Makoto Mihsashi. It is also why it's believed people who found basketball appealing felt drawn to Matsumoto himself as well. His *Rokyu-Kenkyu* not only describes the then state-of-the-art basketball techniques and strategies, but also gives the direction in which the sport was to move forward. Hence, we can say that the implementation and enhancement of techniques in the early Showa Era became the foundations of modern day basketball in Japan.