

OTHER NATIONS

Aleppo and Hamah to hunt terrorists. Reed contends that Assad's indiscriminate repression will only strengthen the opposition in the long-run. And if Syria returns to its pre-Assad chaos, he warns, the chances of a negotiated Middle East peace will decline even further.

*The First
World Series*

"Baseball and the Quest for National Dignity in Meiji Japan" by Donald Roden, in *American Historical Review* (Summer 1980), 400 A St. S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

With an intimidating show of force, Commodore Matthew C. Perry opened Japan to trade with the West in 1853. The jolt he dealt to Japanese national pride did not wear off until the 1890s. Helping to ease the loss of face, writes Roden, a Rutgers historian, was Japan's military victory over China (in 1895), the development of a strong Western-style constitutional government, the growth of an internationally competitive textile industry—and baseball.

Since the 1850s, athletic-minded Western businessmen and soldiers had been conspicuous inhabitants of port cities in Japan. These men viewed the "feebleness" of Japanese males "who carried fans, and manifested other effeminate customs" as proof of Western superiority. Japanese schools contributed to the stereotype. Hell-bent on spreading the West's technical and scientific know-how to their students, Japanese teachers ignored physical education.

American educators hired as advisers in Japanese schools were the first to recommend exercise in Japanese curricula, hoping to infuse young Japanese with "fire, energy, and manly independence." By 1889, Minister of Education Mori Arinori was promoting "military calisthenics" as a way of drilling the virtues of patriotism into grade schoolers. Meanwhile, Japanese university students searched for a "national game" that would emphasize teamwork and cultivate the nation's fighting spirit. Baseball—touted by American teachers eager to see the sport "follow the flag"—seemed to reflect traditional Japanese values of harmony, loyalty, and finesse over brute strength. Some Japanese compared the skilled batter to a samurai swordsman.

In 1891, Japan's best schoolboy team challenged the American businessmen and soldiers at the Yokohama Athletic Club to a game. The Westerners' refusal to take the proposal of the "little Japanese" seriously turned the contest into a struggle for national honor. They finally met on the diamond on May 23, 1896. The jeers and howls from the American crowd that greeted the arriving Tokyo Higher School team turned to stunned silence as the visitors pasted the home team 29 to 4. The Japanese won most of the rematches—hastily requested by the Americans—between 1896 and 1904, outscoring their rivals 230 to 64.

These victories, reported widely in the press, filled Japanese with pride. Crowed one student writer: "The aggressive character of our national spirit is a well-established fact, demonstrated first in the Sino-Japanese War, and now by our great victories in baseball."