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The People's Republic of China—Short History of National Athletic Meets

By *Kohsuke Sasajima**

In the People's Republic of China, the 5th national athletic meet will be held in September this year. The national athletic meets are similar to the people's physical training meets; participation units are provinces, special cities (cities equivalent to provinces), autonomous districts and the liberation army; these meets are to be held once every four years and the 1st meet was held in 1959. National athletic meets are not meets which came to be held after the establishment of the People's Republic of China; it was in the 2nd year of Itung (1910), the last period of the Ching Dynasty, that the nationwide meet was held for the first time. After the establishment of the Republic of China, the names of such meets were changed national athletic meets, and the 1st meet was held in 1914, which was followed by five meets until 1948.

Due to the instability of the political situation of the nation, wars, etc., only 11 national athletic meets were held during the 73 years from 1910 to 1983.

In this paper, mention is made on the history of national athletic meets.

1. Period of Ching Dynasty

In the 2nd year of Itung (1910), meets of a large scale were held in Nanking with Y.M.C.A. as a main sponsor. This athletic meet was named "the 1st Nationwide School District Squad Physical Training League" which was renamed the 1st National Athletic Meet after the establishment of the Republic of China.

This meet was divided into three parts, one being the nationwide high school games, another being the middle school games and another being the six universities' games; for the former two, the students from five districts such as Huapei, Huanan, Shanghai, Wuning (Suchou and Nanking) and Wuhan participated.

The meet included four events, namely track and field, soccer, tennis and basketball, and the participants were all male, 140 in total. For the track and field, the yard

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and pound system was adopted.

The results of the competition were: in the case of high schools, Shanghai took the 1st place; in the case of middle schools, Huapei 1st place, and in the case of six universities, St. Yokan University 1st place, by the total points scored respectively.

2. The Period of the Republic of China

The Republic of China was established in 1912, however, due to the instability of political situation, civil wars, the occupation of the territory by the Japanese army, etc., which the country suffered successively, the national athletic meets were held six times only for the 37 years until 1949.

The 2nd national athletic meet is said to have been held sponsored by Peking Physical Training Meet Committee, however, the real responsible person was Mr. A. N. Huagland, an American manager of Peking Y.M.C.A.

In the 2nd national athletic meet, the champions from four districts—East, West, South and North—participated in the meet; two events, namely volleyball and baseball were added newly. The north district won the victory in the total points scored in all the events. In the case of this 2nd meet, too, all the competition was taken care and progressed by foreigners, and notifications and programs were written in English.

The 3rd meet was held in Wuchang in May 1924. Champions from four districts, namely Huatung, Huanan, Huapei and Huachung, competed their power; swimming was added as a new event; 360 champions participated in this meet; and Huapei won the victory by the total points scored in all the events. For this 3rd meet and the meets followed, the events were taken care and progressed by Chinese instead of foreigners; the yard system was taken place by the meter system; and women's events were adopted.

The 4th meet was held in April 1930 in Kangchou; the participation units were provinces, special cities, special districts and bodies of Chinese abroad; the number of the units participated was 22 (the body of Chinese abroad was from Kobe); 1,630 champions took part in this meet; and Kuangtung won the victory by the total points scored by both man and woman competitors.

The 5th meet was held in Nanking in October 1933 participated by 33 units (including the two bodies from the Philippines and Dutch India); the number of participants was 2,248 (male—1,542 and female—706). National art of defense was added to the events for men and the same event and softball were added for women.

Shanghai won the victory by the total points scored in all the events by men and women.

The 6th meet was held in Shanghai in October 1935, participated by 38 units including two from Java and Malay; 2,700 champions took part in this meet and the Shanghai unit was the winner by the points scored in all the events by men and women. An exhibition was added in this Shanghai meet for the first time, making the meet brilliant.

The 7th meet was held in May 1948 in Shanghai participated by 55 units of 2,000 champions, including the unit of Chinese abroad, and the army and the police units. In both men and women, Hongkong won the victory by the total points scored in all the events. The number of events increased to 29, including the exhibition.

3. The People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China ruled in 1958 that national athletic meets should be held once four years. The 1st meet was held in 1959, however, due to the very poor harvest in the three consecutive years and the cultural revolution, it was in 1965 that the 2nd meet was held and in 1975 that the 3rd one was held.

The 1st meeting was held in September 1959 in Peking, participated by each of the provinces, special cities and autonomous districts as well as by the liberation army; 29 units in total covering 10,600 participants. The participants competed in 32 events, and six exhibitions were held.

The 2nd meet was held in September 1965 in Peking; 29 units of 5,900 champions from provinces, cities, autonomous districts and from the liberation army participated in the meet. The participants competed their power in 22 events, and exhibitions were held in one given arrangement.

The 3rd meet was held in September 1975 in Peking; 31 units of more than 10,000 champions from provinces (including Taiwan), special cities and autonomous districts as well as from the liberation army participated in the meet. The participants competed in 28 events, and exhibitions were displayed in four given arrangements.

The 4th meet was held in September 1979 in Peking participated by 31 units (the same number of units as in the 3rd meet) of 15,144 champions. The winter event was added in this Peking meet, numbering 34 events in total.

In the 1st through 4th meets, several world records and many Chinese records were established.

In the national athletic meets of old China and the People's Republic of China, the records were renewed each time, and improvement was made on the facilities, therefore, it may be said that the national athletic meets have made a great contribution to the development of the sports in China.