

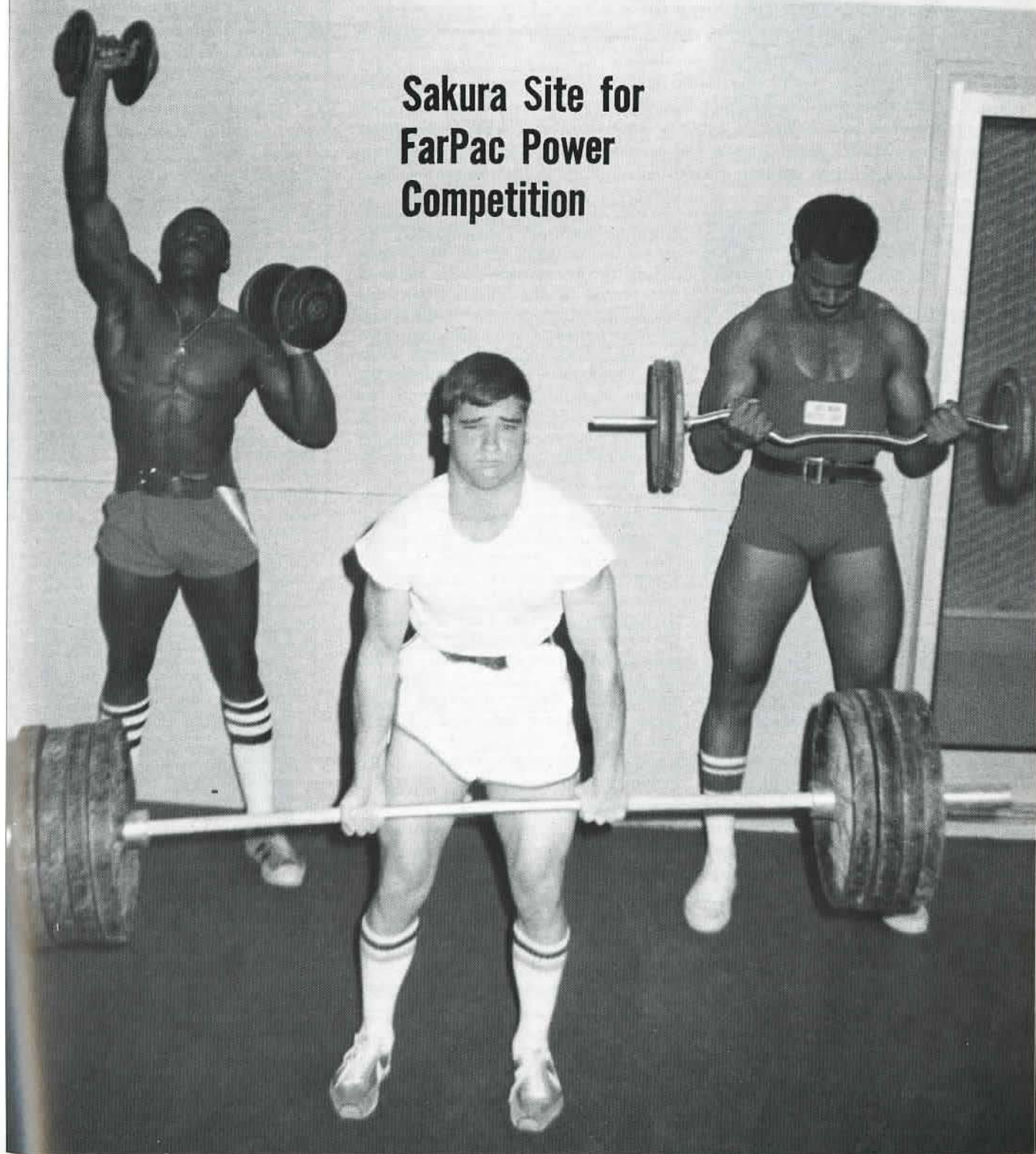
Torii Teller



Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni, Japan

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Sakura Site for FarPac Power Competition



Samisen: Catskin Craft

By GySgt. Mike Littlejohn

Long before most westerners have occasion to visit Japan, they could probably identify a tune as being oriental by the sound of of an instrument that produces music truly Japanese, the "samisen."

Often described by westerners as being something like a mandolin or a banjo, the samisen is typically Japanese. The instrument is thought to have originated in the Ryukyu Islands in 1562 but the style was gradually changed to suit the Japanese. In the Ryukyus it is called "jamisen" because snakeskin (ja means snake) was used to make the body.

Instead of snakeskin, Japanese samisen makers began to use catskin since snakes are less plentiful on the main islands. It was also discovered that snakeskin does not last as long as catskin. Another change that took place was the shape. The Ryukyu samisen had a round body but on the main islands it is square, since samisen players here place the instrument on their knees to play it.



While the flute, "koto" and hand drum, "tsuzumi" were played by people in the upper strata of society during the feudal days, the samisen was played by the masses when they sang folk songs, narrated poems and chanted ballads. The instrument also became popular among geisha who were regarded as the most enlightened among Japanese women during the feudal period. Later, the daughters of merchants began to learn to play the samisen while those in high society took koto lessons.

Samisen music is indispensable in Bunraku (puppet) and Kabuki plays, because long epics, ballad dramas and folklores are always told to the accompaniment of this instrument.

An interesting thing to note about the samisen is that they are all not the same. Ordinary samisen are made with quince wood while the better, more expensive models are made from sandalwood. Wood from both types must be imported from India, Burma and Thailand.

Strings are made of silk thread though sometimes synthetic thread is used. Those who know, say that silk strings produce a softer sound.

Being able to tell a superior quality samisen from an inferior one takes a keen eye, an ear for music and a knowledge of wood. An expensive, well-made instrument has a riblike carving on the inner side of the body and the neck, which is made in three pieces, is joined with gold. Those made with quince wood usually have a soft luster which looks like lacquer. This happens when the necks are polished with whetstone. However, a good samisen is never lacquered because the instrument is played by moving the fingers along the neck.

The body is made of four pieces of wood glued together with catskin stretched over both sides. This is done by skilled tradesmen, since the sound of the samisen depends on how well it is done.

Anyone interested in purchasing a samisen for novelty or use, should be ready to pay anywhere from ¥15,000 to well over ¥150,000 for a good one, and for the less adventuresome, novelty samisen can be purchased locally for about ¥300.



Torii Teller

MCAS, Iwakuni, Japan
FPO Seattle, Wash. 98764

CO, MCAS: Col. Robert D. Miller
Public Affairs Officer: Maj. R. D. McGinn

Torii Teller Staff
Bldg. 360, Rm. 2
Ph. 5551

Editor: Sgt. Michael J. Purcell
Asst. Editor: Cpl. Cathie Combs
Illustrator: Capt. D. E. Feigel

Interpreter - Advisor
Mr. Shiro Suga
Mr. Masaaki Hirayama

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Our Cover

This week's cover highlights the upcoming Far Eastern Powerlifting Championship this weekend. Pictured are LCpl. Gary Jackson (left), LCpl. Jerome Kelly (right) and Cpl. Mike Geha of Okinawa's powerlifting team. GySgt. Herb Gowing, NCOIC of the Station Fitness Center and Armed Forces World Powerlifting Champion since 1973, expects about 25 lifters for the competition. (Photo by Cpl. Cathie Combs)

'They Were Marines, Period'

By GySgt. Mike Littlejohn

This month, black Americans throughout the world will take time to reflect on the deeds and contributions members of their race have contributed to the building of America. February, designated "Black History Month" and given the theme "torch for the future", is also a time for Marines to note with pride the contributions made by a "chosen few" black Marines who paved the way for minorities in the Corps.

Though the doors were not opened to let blacks serve in the modern day Marine Corps until June 25, 1941, it is well known that at least three blacks served in the ranks of the Continental Marines during the American Revolution. At least 10 others served as Marines on the ships of various state navies.

With the doors opened, a select group of men brandishing colorful nicknames like "Peepsite, Big Foot George, Hashmark Johnson, Hambone" and "Blood the Boot Killer" became some of the Corps' first black drill instructors. They and those they trained would soon come to be called "Montford Point Marines," after the camp at which they trained in North Carolina.

Enthusied with the quality of their training and proud to be called Marines, the "graduates" of Montford Point were eager to serve in combat, hoping to prove their value as a fighting force.

Serving in the 18th, 19th and 20th Depot Companies, and the 3d and 4th Ammunition Companies, black Marines received the Presidential Unit Citation for their efforts in the battles of Guam, Saipan and Tinian. Members of the 8th Ammunition Company also served with note on Iwo Jima and were tasked with repairing the former Japanese Naval Base at Sasebo. It was during these island-hopping campaigns that Pfc. Luther Woodward, serving with the 4th Ammunition Company, earned the Silver Star Medal for his actions on Guam.

In June, 1944, Marine Corps Commandant Alexander A. Vandegrift commented on the actions of black Marines he had observed under fire on Saipan: "...the negro Marines are no longer on trial. They are Marines, period."

Indeed, black Marines had earned their place in the ranks of the Corps and four years later, Sept. 9, 1949, Montford Point was closed. The closure ended an era in the Corps that began when Alfred Masters and George O. Thomson signed contracts on June 1, 1942 and became the Corps' first black recruits. More than 20,000 recruits had undergone training at the camp.

Montford Point Marines can be proud of the roles they played in United States history as well as black history. But even more important, the roles they played in the history of the Corps is something all Marines can be proud of. They accepted the responsibilities of being Marines, bore that responsibility in combat and proved what General Vandegrift would later confirm. That they were Marines, period.



Colonel Robert D. Miller, Air Station commanding officer, presided over the ribbon-cutting that officially reopened the Station Fitness Center Feb. 13. He is assisted by GySgt. Herb Gowing.

Silence is Golden

By GySgt. Mike Littlejohn

In today's highly technical world where computerized warfare is a sobering reality and each nation's military capabilities are under constant scrutiny and analysis by friend and foe alike, silence is still one of the most effective weapons.

As members of America's first line combat units, Marines have access to information that is not readily available to civilians. Regardless of a person's rank or job, each Marine has some information that could be of value to a potential enemy.

Since we operate on the principle that each Marine can think, accept some degree of responsibility and contribute ideas of value to the effort as a whole, each of us is privy to varying degrees of operational information.

With this in mind, we then become accountable for this information and are responsible for keeping it from falling into the wrong hands.

Silence is a negative weapon and to accompany it there should be a positive weapon...the habit of being alert. Don't talk "classified" shop with your friends when off duty, or shop in general when off Station. Loose talk can be deadly, especially since all of our enemies are not fighting men.

It has always been unnerving to me to go into town and find out information that has been regarded as classified on base. Obviously, if the information is that available, it must be assumed the enemy has the same access.

Let's face it, seemingly harmless comments about unit movements, condition of equipment, logistical shortages and short-comings can help a potential enemy capitalize on our weaknesses. That premature farewell to friends, mentioning weather conditions, how long you'll be gone and monetary exchange rates can all help experienced intelligence agents.

It makes no difference whether our nation is engaged in an armed conflict or at peace, there is one battle that never ceases. A battle on which the security of our nation and the effectiveness of her military forces depend—"the battle for information."

How successful we are, individually, in this battle for knowledge whether during peace or conflict may decide whether the odds are with us or the enemy.

Net Roundup

Standings

Division One

Team	W	L	Pct.
3d FSSG	13	1	.929
MABS-15	10	4	.714
Logistics	7	4	.636
VMA-224	6	4	.600
H&MS-15	7	6	.538
H&MS-12	5	6	.455
VMFA-232	3	9	.250
Disbursing	1	12	.077

Division Two

Team	W	L	Pct.
VMFA-122	11	1	.917
Navy	9	2	.818
WES-17	10	3	.769
H&GMS-17	9	5	.643
PMO	6	7	.461
Perry	2	9	.182
VMA-311	2	11	.154

Results

- Feb. 1** Navy (74) '311 (24)
H&MS-12 (58) Disb. (49)
- Feb. 2** WES (74) PMO (57)
FSSG (73) '232 (39)
- Feb. 5** H&GMS (70) '311 (36)
MABS (72) Disb. (40)
- Feb. 6** '122 (58) Perry (30)
H&MS-15 (56) '224 (49)
- Feb. 7** Navy (67) OTHG (55)
Log. (73) H&MS-12 (47)
- Feb. 8** '122 (56) '311 (21)
H&MS-15 (72) Disb. (19)
- Feb. 9** OTHG (62) Perry (57)
Log. (61) '224 (60)
- Feb. 12** Navy (45) PMO (33)
FSSG (74) H&MS-12 (34)
- Feb. 13** WES (67) H&GMS (64)
MABS (66) '232 (28)
- Feb. 14** '122 (59) PMO (22)
FSSG (58) H&MS-15 (27)

Navy Topples PMO, 45-33

Navy established an early lead against PMO in Monday night's round-ball matchup and refused to let it go throughout the game, which helped them down the MPs 45-33.

In the first quarter, Navy, ever alert for rebounds, used the fast break after they snagged a rebound and took it in for the first points of the game. This set the stage for the game and PMO was hard-pressed to launch an effective defense.

Plagued by fouls throughout the first quarter and well into the second, PMO had trouble finding the range with many of their shots falling short of the bucket. As if this wasn't enough, they also found Navy's much improved defense was close to impossible to crack.

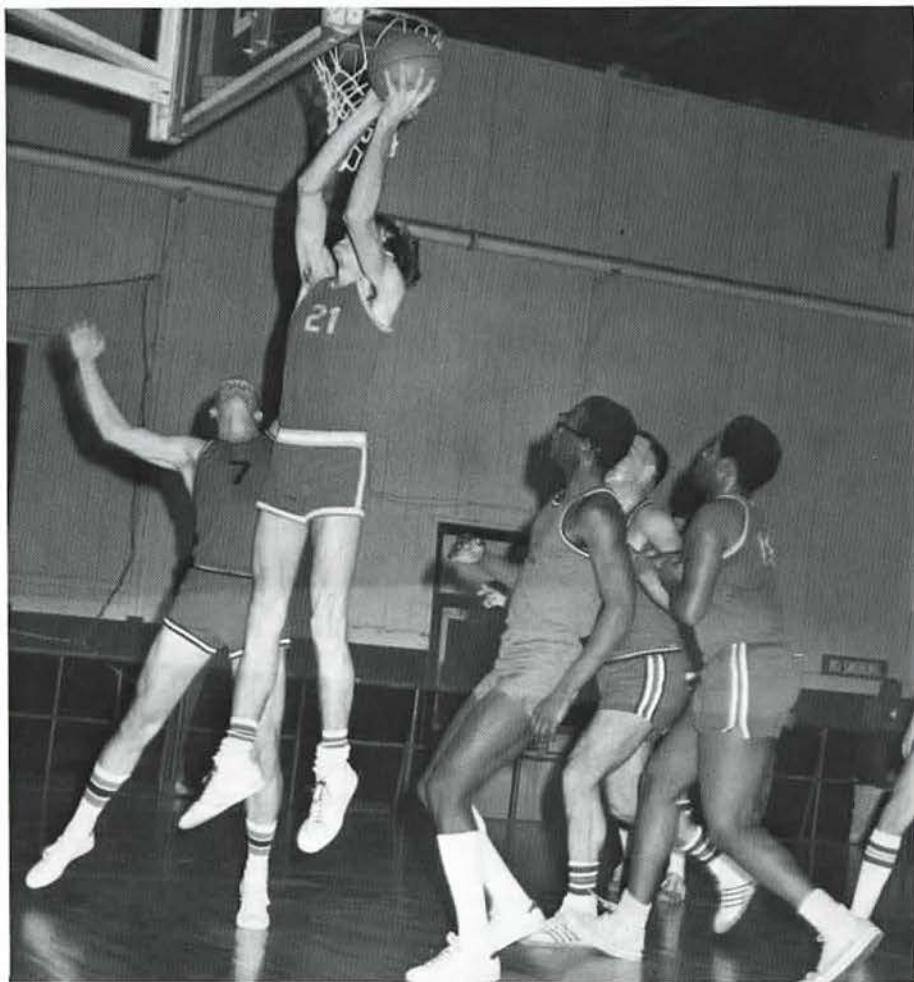
When the half ended, Navy had a commanding 24-13 lead.

In second half, PMO, sparked by center Wayne Adams, who ended the half with a team-high six points, braced for an upset. Using the man-

on-man and taking only the percentage shots, PMO managed to gain momentum in the third quarter.

Caught off-guard by the sudden surge by PMO, Navy appeared frustrated with their play under the boards which netted them more fouls than rebounds. Fighting to regain control of the game and stop the PMO scoring drive, Navy fed the ball to center Tom Simmons. Simmons found the range and racked up a game high 19 points, helping Navy hold on to a 30-26 lead at the end of the quarter. It wasn't until late in the final quarter that Navy regained firm control of the action, taking an impressive 12-point lead and game honors.

The championship game schedule will begin with two games Feb. 20, followed by two games Feb. 21 and one game Feb. 23. Teams slated for the playoffs had not been determined at press time.



Navy's center Tom Simmons goes up for two against PMO's defense in Monday night's basketball game. Simmons was also high scorer in the game, totaling 19 points.