A Study on the Formation Process of Sports Recommendation Admissions to Universities in Japan*

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The objective of this study will be to clarify the historical characteristics of the formation process of admissions based on sports recommendation in Japanese universities. First, in Japan, even before the recommendation admission system was officially approved, athletes had been given preferential treatment in entrance examinations. Next, since the recommendation admission system was officially approved in 1967, private universities’ faculties of physical education, among others, started actively admitting athletes based on a recommendation. These physical education faculties selected students based on physical skills tests to secure competent athletes. And in the 1980’s, private universities played a leading role in conducting entrance examinations with a special admission quota for athletes. Waseda University launched the Special Selection System for the Physical Education Major, which introduced a special admission quota for athletes, specified the athletic events and performances, and made the selection process widely known to the public. Last of all, 1987 the Ad Hoc Council on Education recommended that assessment on sports activities be taken into consideration in entrance examinations. The 1989 University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines listed “adequate assessment of activities in sports, culture, etc.” as a selection method for university admission for the first time.

Keywords: collegiate athletic club, university entrance examination, amateur sports, student athletes, NCAA

1. Introduction

1.1. New trends in college sports in Japan

While a wide range of roles is expected from university education—including development of a wholesome character, a high level of education, and the development of special skills (University Education Subcommittee, University Education Committee, Central Council for Education, 2012)—the roles expected from collegiate athletic club activities, also known as “college sports”, are also wide ranging. In recent years, the national government has led a lively debate on how college sports should be conducted.

In order to examine measures to promote college sports, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) established and held a Review Meeting on Promoting College Sports and has set up a Task Force as its working group, in operation from April 2016 to March 2017. Through this review, MEXT released “Review Meetings of College Sports Promotion (Final Draft)” in March 2017. At the same time, MEXT set out plans for the establishment of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Japan, modeled after the NCAA US, as a significant pillar for drawing forth the latent strength of college sports resources.

In the Second Semester Basic Plan for Sports, formulated by MEXT in March of the same year, MEXT indicated its plan “to support the founda-
tion of an umbrella organization that extends across universities and competitions (NCAA Japan), in order to enhance human resources and sites, factors that serve as the foundations for the sports environment. Through this, we aim to construct a domestic structure for promoting college sports” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017a). As can be seen here, MEXT clearly indicated its intention to advance Japan’s college sports reformation, modeled after other established structures, including the NCAA US.

What is particularly emphasized in the conception of NCAA Japan is the construction of a business model that generates a large volume of revenue like the NCAA US, in order to aim at “improving the ability to procure capital for the promotion of college sports” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017b). This means that it is necessary to advance initiatives to increase the revenue of college sports through such avenues as the broadcasting rights of sporting events. It also implies the need to construct a system at the same time in which each university manages and operates college sports resources, both tangible and intangible, with its revenues channeling back to education activities and making a social contribution.

While this concept of NCAA Japan stirs excitement about the commercial possibilities that existing college sports could develop, some concerns have also been raised. Such concerns involve the issue of student athletes*1 balancing academic work and competitive sporting activities.

In the United States, which serves as the leading example, the NCAA US strives toward reinforcing various regulations that prioritize the student athlete’s role as a student. This includes academic qualifications that indicate certain academic standards for entrance and progress of the student athletes. However, despite such measures being set in place, the low graduation rate of student athletes and academic dishonesty issues in which student athletes or the university authorities are involved seem to continue unabated. In other words, because the market value of college sports has increased significantly in the United States, college sports have come to receive societal interest. However, for this reason, cases in which student athletes find it difficult to balance both academic work and sports activities are not uncommon (Glenn and Kawai, 2012).

Given these circumstances, the focal discussion point during the review meeting on the promotion of college sports became “how student athletes can manage their academic work and sporting activities”. Even in the Final Draft, it requests “appropriate support to balance academic work and sports” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017b). In actuality, approximately 70% of universities in Japan feel that it is necessary to provide specialized study assistance for student athletes (Ito et al., 2014). Furthermore, cases of student athletes who do not possess sufficient academic ability nevertheless being admitted to universities (Miyata, 2016; Yomiuri Shimbun, 2014) and of student athletes who only focus on sports while neglecting academic work have been discussed (Kubo, 2006; Tomozoe, 2016).

As seen here, even in Japan, issues pertaining to balancing academic work with sporting activities have already risen. Given that the university is an educational institution and that university is a significant place for student athletes to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed when they head out into the real world, issues of student athletes’ relationships with academic work and sports activities inherent in college sports form a significant issue that cannot be overlooked when examining the prospects of college sports in Japan.

1.2. The significance of admissions based on sports recommendation in college sports research

This research will focus on admissions systems based on sports recommendation (admissions based on sports recommendation). Admissions based on sports recommendation are part of a system of admissions through recommendation and a method in which the student’s sports performance record during high school is evaluated and used for selection, mainly during the university admissions process. According to the Japanese Association of University Physical Education and Sports (2014) Research, 30.5% of universities used admissions based on sports recommendation as of 2014.

Thus, admissions based on sports recommendation could be regarded as an admissions system that gives opportunities to many athletes to progress in their studies. However, because there are many cases in which students are exempted from the aca-
academic achievement test, the lack of basic academic ability in students admitted through sports recommendation is frequently raised as an issue (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2014). Furthermore, among those who have been admitted to university through sports recommendation, it is not uncommon for them to find it difficult to balance academic work with sports activities. Consequently, it is not rare for such students to have to repeat a year or drop out of university.

Given the realities surrounding admissions based on sports recommendation, where should this type of admission be placed within the university, whose objective, according to Article 83 of the School Education Act, is to bestow “a wide range of knowledge centered on academic pursuits, as well as providing in-depth teaching and leading in specific arts and science fields”? In other words, a situation in which student athletes who entered university through sports are subsequently unable to cope well in terms of academic work, the first aim of a university education, must highlight some sort of structural contradiction. That said, the importance of admissions based on sports recommendation in Japan has also been pointed out, because its existence promotes the college sports athlete system. In considering this situation, the topic of admissions based on sports recommendation is a significant research subject when examining student athletes’ relationships with their academic work and sporting activities within Japanese college sports. For these reasons, this study will focus on admissions based on sports recommendation.

1.3. Reviews of preceding studies

In studies that examine university admission systems, admissions based on sports recommendation are treated as a unique admission format (Nakamura, 1997; Sasaki, 1984).

When conducting an overview of the historical transitions of admission systems based on recommendations in Japan, Sasaki (1984) stated that since the 1966 addition of the admissions system based on recommendations was officially approved by the Ministry of Education, “frankly speaking, athletes from various types of sports have been let in regardless of their scholastic ability test scores” (Sasaki, 1984). When Nakamura (1997) analyzed the 1996 entrance exam implementation status of various universities, according to the difficulty level of being admitted, it was empirically shown that a greater number of private universities with low admission difficulty levels adopted admissions based on sports recommendation than did national and public universities, which are bound by fair criteria, and private universities with high admission difficulty levels. In addition, Nakamura (2011) has suggested that since the Deregulation of the University Establishment Standards in 1991, many private universities have conducted various types of admission as part of an inter-university competition strategy. Nakamura reported that admissions based on sports recommendation expanded continuously during this development.

Research other than on university admissions system includes a study by Kamiya (2015) that reviewed the systemic transition of athletic club activities but also examined university admissions based on sports recommendation as part of his research. Kamiya (2015) argued that once taking account of club activities came to be encouraged in the high school teaching guidelines that were reviewed in 1970, engaging in “athletic club activities to advance in one’s studies” came to be established. This process was closely tied in the teaching guidelines and transcripts to the evaluation of a student’s involvement in athletic club. In this context, Kamiya discussed the requests made around the same time by the Japan Sports Association to strengthen collegiate athletic club as a factor behind the spread of admissions based on sports recommendation.

The above studies imply that following official approval by the Ministry of Education of admissions based on sports recommendation, they gradually came to be introduced. Furthermore, admissions based on sports recommendation were not something confined to a simple university admissions system framework; rather, they went through transformations in their implementation format and institutional positioning due to various social conditions around universities and requests made to collegiate athletic club.

However, from a meticulous examination of the preceding studies, a question arises: How did admissions based on sports recommendation in Japanese universities take shape? With regard to admissions based on sports recommendation, various points have been made, based on research into university entrance admissions systems and athletic
club activities, as mentioned above. However, these studies did not focus on admissions based on sports recommendation. Consequently, they only go as far as making broad comments on the formation process of admissions based on sports recommendation, and the details have not been sufficiently clarified.

The current research does not provide an adequate answer to the question “What kind of a system is admissions based on sports recommendation”? When and how were admissions based on sports recommendation in Japanese universities created and what kinds of change did they go through? What is the social context that promoted the formation of admissions based on sports recommendation? When examining student athletes’ relationships with academic work and sporting activities in Japanese college sports, we need first to clarify the historical characteristics of the formation process of admissions based on sports recommendation.

1.4. Objective of this study

The objective of this study will be to clarify the historical characteristics of the formation process of admissions based on sports recommendation in Japanese universities. The study is structured in the following manner: Before engaging in a central discussion, the circumstances surrounding official approval of an admissions system based on recommendations by the Ministry of Education will be summarized. Thereafter, the following three points will be examined as specific tasks for this study.

First, the situation of the admission process of athletes that was conducted prior to official approval of the admissions system based on recommendations will be clarified. Next, the circumstances involved in the introduction of admissions based on sports recommendation after their official approval will be set forth, divided into the 1970s and 1980s in order to reveal their relations to their respective social contexts. Finally, on the basis of this series of findings, the positioning of admissions based on sports recommendation by the Ministry of Education will be discussed.

2. Research target period and methods

The period that this study will examine will be from 1965 to around 1988. This is because the admissions system based on recommendations was officially approved by the Ministry of Education in the 1966 University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines and, around 1988, the “appropriate evaluation of sports activities” was clearly mentioned by the Ministry of Education in the 1989 University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines. The University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines ensure that all Japanese universities are notified every year of the appropriate implementation procedures for admissions and entrance exams. Each university is required to make further upgrades and improvements to its student selection method (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017c). Since the University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines indicate the university admissions entrance exam policies in Japan, in this study they will be viewed as an index that represents the institutional positioning of admissions based on sports recommendation. The reason why this study will examine the period up to the establishment of admissions based on sports recommendation*2 is as follows:

According to Nakamura (2011), competition between universities became fiercer as a result of the Deregulation of University Establishment Standards*3 in 1991. That year, each university started to introduce an admissions system based on recommendations as a means to secure new students in a more advantageous manner. The number of people aged 18 has been in rapid decline since the 1990s. It is said that the era of free university competition arrived due to various policies being set in order to respond to this development (Asahi Shimbun, 1991). For this reason, universities from the 1990s onward were pressured to shift away from a university system that up to that point had been continuously expanding. In the midst of such changes, the state of the university admissions system also diversified; many universities are believed to have introduced admissions based on sports recommendation as part of their advertising strategy, with the admission exam being implemented in various formats.

First, the focus is on the period up to the establishment of admissions based on sports recommendation, meticulously picking out the historical characteristics believed to be necessary to develop this research. This is because research into universities
and university admissions from the 1990s onward, as well as the aforementioned research on the formation process of university admissions based on sports recommendation, has barely been conducted. Therefore, this study will examine the period up to the establishment of admissions based on sports recommendation in the 1980s. The paper will then explain in detail the tasks for the future, based on the findings obtained in this study.

The main resource materials in this study will be those indicating the state of entrance exams and admissions systems of universities (such as documents related to entrance exams and admissions systems from each university), those showing the trend of collegiate athletic club (such as on-campus gazettes and school sports newspapers from each university), and those related to the Ministry of Education and articles/papers in educational journals that discuss admissions based on sports recommendation.

The following research limitations will be acknowledged in conducting this study. Until admissions based on sports recommendation became publicly conducted, preferential treatment toward athletes will be assumed to have been shown by, for example, “giving a leg-up on entrance exam scores clandestinely” (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1983). Such undisclosed entrance exam/admission circumstances will be a matter related to the privacy of the examinee of the time and not just an issue of whether or not admission requirements can be found. Consequently, there are aspects of the circumstances in which universities gave preferential treatment to athletes unofficially cannot be clarified due to the confidential obligations of each university authority. This fact limits this study; however, where possible, we will collect primary resources that each university possesses (such as documents relating to entrance exam/admissions system) and will strive to accomplish this study’s tasks mainly by using such resources.

3. Official approval by the Ministry of Education of admissions systems based on recommendations

Under the new system, for universities that were set up one after another, starting in 1948, the general rule was to decide on new entrants by three forms of evaluation: an academic aptitude test, a scholastic ability test, and transcripts submitted by the graduating high school (Haruyama, 1954). If a school interview was conducted, some universities conducted it while taking into account the circumstances of the university or the academic department (Sasaki, 1984). Even then, the selection method during centered mainly on a scholastic ability test, and transcripts were treated only as a reference (Masuda et al., 1961).

The Ministry of Education officially approved an admissions system based on recommendations starting in 1965, when the 1966 University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines were released (the 1966 Implementation Guidelines). The 1966 Implementation Guidelines stipulate that of the high school students who have the academic grade evaluation A listed on their transcript, universities can give the grade of ◯A to those with particularly outstanding grades, while students with an excellent aptitude for the academic faculty/department of the corresponding university also can be marked as such. These students are then eligible to be recommended (Ministry of Education, 1965). However, to use this measure, the university had to have discussions with the Ministry of Education in advance.

What spearheaded the expansion of the admissions system based on recommendations was the 1967 University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines (the 1967 Implementation Guidelines), which were released the following year. In the 1967 Implementation Guidelines, it was stipulated that “the selection of the new entrants done by rationally compiling and passing judgment on reference materials, which include the transcript submitted by the graduating high school’s principal and the results of the scholastic achievement test and health examination conducted by the university” (Ministry of Education, 1966a). The guidelines also state that, while keeping this in mind, “a portion of the new entrant quotient can also be determined on the basis of a recommendation from the graduating school’s principal and exempting the scholastic ability test” (Ministry of Education, 1966a). The Ministry of Education defined the admissions system based on recommendations as “a method that makes its judgment on the basis of the graduating high school’s principal, exempting the scholastic ability test”, (Ministry of Education, 1966a) and added a point of concern that “the recommendation requirements that the university stipulated is to be presented as specifically as possible to the high
school principal before asking for a recommendation”. As seen here, the positioning of the admissions system based on recommendations was clarified in the 1967 Implementation Guidelines. Furthermore, each university was now able to implement an admissions system based on recommendations based on its own judgment.

The Ministry of Education gave the following three reasons for officially approving an admissions system based on recommendations:

The first reason was to eliminate the “difficulty of being admitted to a university due to a concentration of applicants in some universities” (Ministry of Education, 1966b). The population of those aged 18 years had increased from 1,402,000 in 1964 to 2,491,000 in 1966. The number of university entrants also increased greatly, from 217,000 to 293,000, in just a span of two years (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2016). Such an increase in the population of those aged 18 made competition in the entrance exam fiercer, with the university entrance exam during this period truly becoming a “serious social problem” (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1963).

The second reason was the elimination of the “doubts concerning the rationality behind selection using a scholastic ability test given only once” (Ministry of Education, 1966b). This entrance exam method, which determined whether a student passed or failed on the basis of a “one-shot deal”, had been accepted “as something traditional, or even given, in Japanese entrance exam and admission systems” (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1965). However, this approach had been identified as problematic for quite some time for its lack of rationality and reliability. Given this situation, making a judgment based on a student’s academic scores in the three years of high school was deemed to be a more rational way of selecting students for admission than a one-time exam.

The third reason was concern about the damage incurred by the excessive preparatory education for the entrance exam due to the skewed focus on it (Ministry of Education, 1966b, p. 35). In relation to entrance exam preparation conditions at the time, Asahi Shimbun (1965) reported that “the current entrance exam system puts an excessive and unnecessary psychological and physical burden on adolescents”. As can be seen here, the heavy burden of preparatory education for the entrance exam had already been noted. The introduction of an admissions system based on recommendations was expected to alleviate such an excessive preparatory education for the entrance exam.

According to University Admissions Selection Field Research conducted by the Ministry of Education, the percentage of universities that had introduced an admissions system based on recommendations as of 1972 was limited to just 5% (11 academic departments) of national and public universities; however, among private universities, 55% of universities had introduced this system (265 academic department) (University Division, University Academic Bureau, the Ministry of Education, 1973a). This shows that the admissions system based on recommendations was actively introduced by private universities. The next section will detail how the system of admissions based on sports recommendation was established within the expansion of the whole admissions system.

4. Preferential entrance exam measures for athletes before the public approval of an admissions system based on recommendations

First, this section will review the entrance exams and admission systems for athletes that were used before the official approval of an admissions system based on recommendations.

As mentioned previously, admission systems that used transcripts and interviews had been conducted in Japan before the official approval of the admissions system based on recommendations. Immediately after the establishment of the new university system, preferential measures for athletes in the admissions system were put in place in conjunction with this official approval: “In most private universities, athletes were preferentially admitted in an exam test that was given only as a formality” (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1960).

At Meiji University, for example, a special admissions selection system for athletes had been in place since 1952, under the instruction of the physical education council, which was composed of professors from each department and supervisors of athletic club (Meiji University, 1952). This was a system in which any entrance candidate recommended by a athletic club was given a grade by the physical education council. Thereafter, the acceptance or rejection of students was determined by consulting
the faculty council (Meiji Sports Shimbun, 1966). Other measures included a system at Waseda University in which students from a night school were accepted via recommendations from teachers. Although the actual numbers are unknown, it is said that many athletes were enrolled in this manner. (Asahi Shimbun, 1981a; Waseda University, University History Editorial Office, 1997).

On the other hand, Asahi Shimbun reported on the case of a university (referred to as University A, to retain its anonymity) where the admissions system worked in the following manner:

When the entrance exam was approaching, a conference was held at each athletic club as usual at University A. They determined the quota of entrants for each club, determining the number of athletes needed for the baseball club, the rugby club, the track and field club, and so on. However, this was not the number of students who were given a complete pass for the entrance exam. It was a recommended candidate registry, with rankings given. Applicants listed on the registry were given a certain number of bonus points whereby the university... In the past, there were apparently cases in which students passed the test with bonus points alone, as long as they had their names on the registry. However, more recently, the situation has become more difficult. Students need to score enough points to reach a certain threshold. In addition, clippings from newspapers showing their accomplishments during their high school years also serve as an important form of corroboration. (Asahi Shimbun, 1968a)

One can surmise from these case examples that preferential measures for athletes were given, even before the official approval of the admissions system based on recommendations in Japan. However, such preferential measures were not written down in the entrance exam details. The Japan University Accreditation Association at this time warned each university, saying, “Do not give special help with entrance admission due to reasons such as the applicant being a promising athlete” (Japan University Accreditation Association, 1958), indicating that, on the face of it, this was not an approved entrance exam method. This leads to the conclusion that it was strictly an undisclosed system. On the other hand, given that reports of such occurrences were seen several times in the newspapers, the existence of such preferential measures at the time was semi-acknowledged, even if they were not publicly admitted.

5. The rise in admissions systems based on recommendations among Faculty of Physical Education after the official approval of such admissions systems

The circumstances surrounding Japanese universities are said to have significantly changed in the ten years after the campus unrests took place (Shimizu, 1982). In around 1970, many issues related to the state of universities became manifest, triggered by the campus unrest*, which pressured each university to make reforms independently. This also had a significant impact on the positioning of athletes within universities. In the following section, the entrance exam/admissions system for athletes in the period immediately following the official approval of an admissions system based on recommendations will be clarified, in particular by referencing the social context of the “campus unrest”, which was becoming fierce during this period.

5.1. The campus unrest between the mid-1960s and early 1970s and the changes in the status of college sports members

After Japanese society recovered from the post-war confusion and entered the stage of rapid economic development, the Japanese people’s desire to advance to university increased*. Private universities became the main receptacle for such demand, advancing the rapid quantitative expansion of higher education. As a result, the various issues that universities faced began to expand. Instigated by an opposition movement to the large increase in tuition fees at Keio University in 1965, the campus unrest started to spread across Japan from the mid-1960s (Oguma, 2009; Kusahara, 2008). The main factors in the campus unrest included tuition increases, democratization of campuses, expulsion of students, opposition to integration or transfer of campuses, and issues with the teaching administration. The unrests were complex, with such various factors intertwining.
In 1966, campuses at Waseda University, Meiji University, and Chuo University were seized and closed off by the students. In 1968, the unrests at such universities as Nihon University and University of Tokyo became fierce, gradually expanding into a nationwide campus unrest. For this reason, universities such as University of Tokyo, and Tokyo University of Education were forced to halt entrance exams in 1969 (Asahi Shimbun, 1968b; Yomiuri Shimbun, 1968). This intensification of the campus unrest started to affect the situation of university athletic club members.

Although many universities had their campuses shut down or occupied by students during the campus unrests, the athletic club members acted as bodyguards for the university authorities by participating in tearing down barricades and breaking up rallies in exchange for preferential treatment from the university authorities in entrance exams and activity budget grants to their clubs. This development made the athletic club synonymous with right-wing, feudalistic organizations, and they were referred to as “right-wing athletics clubs” (Nihon University college of Low Struggle Committee, 1969) by student organizations that were opposing the university authorities. Such campus unrests particularly intensified among the so-called “traditional schools” that existed during the pre-war Showa era. As a result, the athletic club at these universities found it difficult to maintain their traditional activity structures.

Nihon University College of Humanities and Sciences, a campus that saw a fierce campus unrest, demanded that the university authorities “dissolve the Athletics Association of the university and never take any intervention measures for athletic clubs”, under the pretext of “abolishing various structures that had been allocated for oppressing the student body” (Nihon University College of Humanities and Sciences Struggle Committee, 1968). While the athletic club members were prominent as bodyguards for the university authorities at Nihon University, they were also involved in various cases of physical assault against the general student body. Such conditions caused the conflict to escalate between the athletic club members and general students, causing support for athletic club members to wane (Aochi, 1969).

Furthermore, at Meiji University, the aforementioned special admissions selection system was raised as a target of university reform, with the university authority putting forward a policy to “strive toward abolishing the special admissions selection system that is conducted to secure athletes” (Meiji University, University Reformation Preparatory Committee, 1969). Even in the past, surveys given to all Meiji University students showed that 78.4% of the students thought that “athletes should be admitted under the same conditions as the general students”, pointing to the inequality in the preferential treatment of athletes in the admission process (Meidai Sports Shimbun, 1965). Other cases involved students avoiding entry to the athletic club itself at Waseda University due to the clubs acquiring a bad reputation, starting with the conflict between athletic club members and student groups during on-campus unrests (Waseda University, University History Editorial Office, 1997).

The above situations led to the average number of members in collegiate athletic clubs decreasing significantly, from 37.3 in 1965 to 30.1 in 1971 (Japan Sports Association, 1980). This was the result of the unequal preferential treatment shown athletes during the entrance admissions system and the violent and insular state of the athletic club organizations, which received harsh criticism from the general student body. As Miyagawa reported on athletic club members at the time, “Hearing the criticism that collegiate athletic club played a violent role within campus unrests and seeing that cases of hazing at such clubs were unending . . . they started to become alienated socially as well” (Miyagawa, 1969); athletic club members were being viewed harshly.

For this reason, giving preferential treatment in entrance exams to athletes as had been seen in the past became difficult in most universities, and consequently this type of measure was reduced or abolished. It seemed evident that the existence of “an athletic club that is separate from the general students”, in which the club members were admitted to the university as a result of preferential treatment (Yoshida, 1969) would be viewed as unfair by the general student body given a social situation in which the fierce competition for entry had become even more intense.
5.2. The introduction of admissions systems based on recommendations for the Faculty of Physical Education at private universities

As a result of the campus unrests and competition for entry becoming more intense, judgment based solely on the score of a scholastic ability test became common even for the admission of athletes. On the other hand, newly emerging universities founded after the war (Asahi Shimbun, 1968a) and, in particular, physical education universities (Ikei, 1978) were able to accept many excellent athletes.

Thus, this study will now focus on the admissions system based on recommendations in the faculty of physical education of private universities. In Japan, a faculty of physical education had been established in 12 private schools by 1969*7. After the official approval of an admissions system based on recommendations, the faculty of physical education at each university started to introduce an admissions system based on recommendations.

First, from 1967, Osaka College of Physical Education, Chukyo University, Shigakkan University, Tokyo Women's College of Physical Education, and Japan Women's College of Physical Education introduced an admissions system based on recommendations in their faculties of physical education (Obunsha, 1967). By 1972, Sendai University, Tokai University, and Fukuoka University had also introduced an admissions system based on recommendations in their faculties of physical education. Within a short span of five years after the official approval of such a system, admissions systems based on recommendations had been introduced into the faculties of physical education at eight schools. Furthermore, admissions systems based on recommendations started to be conducted at Juntendo University (Juntendo University Narashino Research Committee, 1981) in 1976, four years later, and at Nippon College of Physical Education from the 1977 entrance exam/admissions system (Nippon College of Physical Education, 1976). The ratio of successful applicants to total applicants for such admissions systems in these faculties went from 1:0 to 2:1 (Obunsha, 1967, 1971). The selection method was centered on interviews and practical skills tests, while some universities also conducted a "simple scholastic ability test".

The fundamentally different feature of an admissions system based on recommendations in faculties of physical education compared to such admissions systems in other faculties is that they include a practical sports skill test. Practical skills tests were also given in general admissions tests for the faculties of physical education of the above universities, while the main test for the general entrance exam was the scholastic ability test. In most universities, the ratio of students admitted through the general entrance exam to students admitted through the practical skills test was between 2:1 and 3:1. (Obunsha, 1972).

While no scholastic ability tests were conducted in the admissions system based on recommendations, it can be inferred that the weight given to the practical skills test was heavier than that given to the general exam. Athletes who had excellent sports performance records were likely to have superior motor abilities, and it is believed that the implementation of a practical skills test favored such athletes. To paraphrase, the admissions system based on recommendations for faculties of physical education actively evaluated the physical resources that the athlete had previously developed through such practical skills tests. Therefore, by conducting an admissions system based on recommendations centered on a practical skills test, the faculty of physical education during this period aimed to secure superior athletes. This can be understood from the fact that universities that did not have a faculty of physical education (e.g., Chuo University and Meiji University) wished to establish such a faculty to "secure athletes" (Chudai Sports, 1967; Meidai Sports Shimbun, 1965).

On the other hand, there were universities (e.g., Osaka College of Physical Education) that stressed the significance of the admissions system based on recommendations in the faculty of physical education based on its relationship to educating physical education teachers. Kitsuo Kato (Kato), who served as a professor at Osaka College of Physical Education, explained the admissions system based on recommendations from the university:

I don't think this method (an admissions system based on recommendations: author note) is necessarily a logical one, but we gave this method a try because we believed that a student who majored in physical education should have a certain degree of knowledge while simultaneously being excellent in physical fitness and
competitive strength and a person of good nature. I believed that personal characteristics are especially important in a physical education instructor. . . . When looking at the achievements of alumni after their graduation, I often heard that a student who was a bit behind in academic achievements but who was sorted as a person was receiving great praise. (Kato, 1970)

Kato believes that, given that “most of the current physical education universities are training students to become school physical education teachers” (Kato, 1970), one mission of a physical education university is the “education of physical education teachers” (Kato, 1970). For Kato, an admissions system based on recommendations that selects students by focusing on their physical strength, competitive power, and even personalities by using interviews was a very significant measure in selecting students who were suited to becoming physical education teachers. The positioning of the admissions system based on recommendations within Osaka College of Physical Education indicates that the faculty of physical education expected student athletes to perform well in academic respects in relation to their training as physical education teachers.

As seen above, the faculty of physical education at this period was able to secure excellent athletes even without having to introduce a special bracket for athletes because the students they wanted matched the criteria on the physical fitness test. However, the content discussed above refers to initiatives conducted within the general admissions system based on recommendations framework. Separate to this, we can also make a similar point about the existence of the specially arranged admissions systems.

One such admissions system was the “admission selection of excellent athletes based on recommendations”, which Nippon College of Physical Education generally conducted unofficially. According to the Detailed Admissions Selection of Excellent Athletes Based on Recommendations Guidelines, this admissions system had the “direct objective of discovering and educating excellent athletes and strengthening their athletic club” (Nippon College of Physical Education, 1974). Decisions to pass or fail were given by discussing the Admissions Selection of Excellent Athletes Based on Recommendations Committee. The athletic club chief then submitted the verdict to the University Admissions Decision Committee, with the final decision given by the judgment of the faculty council.

As mentioned above, the introduction of an admissions system based on recommendations in Nippon College of Physical Education started in 1977, with this admissions system being introduced unofficially. Given that there are many unclear aspects of the admission selection of excellent athletes based on recommendations, and of the admissions system based on recommendations, this study will avoid further mentioning this matter. However, in the case of Nippon College of Physical Education, it is known that a specially arranged preferentially conducted admissions system was conducted in certain cases, even after the introduction of the general admissions system based on recommendations. Further examination of the circumstances of this admissions system needs to be conducted in the future, including interviewing the person in charge at the time.

5.3. Conducting admissions systems based on recommendations in the School of Physical Education at University of Tsukuba, a new-concept university: Admissions system for those who have excellent skills in a certain field

The Ministry of Education proposed a policy under which they would review the rigid university system that had treated all universities uniformly, aiming for a flexible management system that corresponded to the circumstances of the individual universities. To be specific, reform of the university system was pushed forward under the slogan of “the diversification of higher education” (Ministry of Education, 1971) in the Central Council for Education report of June 11, 1971, entitled “Basic Policies for the Development of Comprehensive Expansion of School Education in the Future” (the 1971 Report).

What was conducted by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with the above policies was the establishment of the new-concept universities. While the Ministry aimed to prepare for the expansion of the pre-existing universities—mainly those that were science and technology oriented—it also aimed to establish a university built on a new concept, not restricted by the previous culture. An insti-
tution that is representative of this endeavor is University of Tsukuba, which was founded in October 1973 by developing Tokyo University of Education as its parent organization.

University of Tsukuba had three main characteristics: First, the new organizational structure centered on a university system/division; second, the establishment of a university body that covered the entire university; and third, “an open university” as its basic principle (University Division, University Academic Bureau, the Ministry of Education, 1973b). What gained attention in the initiatives taken by University of Tsukuba was the active incorporation of an admissions system based on recommendations.

At University of Tsukuba, the admissions system based on recommendations was introduced to the First Cluster of Colleges and the School of Physical Education, starting with the 1974 admissions, which was the first year that the colleges were officially opened. For these, the successful applicants were pooled from an admissions system based on recommendations at a rate of 20% or under of the admissions quota for the Colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences in the First Cluster of Colleges and School of Physical Education, and 10% or under for the College of Natural Sciences of the First Cluster of Colleges. An approach to admissions based on recommendations with such a high percentage (20%) was not seen in other national universities.

The School of Physical Education was conceptualized as a place to “develop a physical education leader with both excellent athletic skills and a wide range of physical science education, researchers in physical science who possessed athletic skills, or leaders in health education who had acquired a wide range of knowledge in physical science and a high level of athletic skills” (Tokyo University of Education, School of Physical Education Conceptualizing Committee, 1971). As such, it was “expected to show itself to be the only place dedicated to physical education in a nationally run university” (University Division, University Academic Bureau, the Ministry of Education, 1973b). From its opening, University of Tsukuba was equipped with various sporting facilities and training camps, including a 400-meter track, rugby and soccer fields, and expensive facilities that were suitable not just for research/education activities but also for competitive sporting activities. Concerning the introduction of an admissions system based on recommendations among such schools of physical education, the bracket for the admissions system based on recommendations was “incorporated actively by having it limited to 20% (of the quota)” by the faculty council of the School of Physical Education, Tokyo University of Education, in August 1972, before University of Tsukuba was opened (School of Physical Education, Tokyo University of Education, 1972). This indicates that it was an initiative planned to accompany the official opening of the university.

Thereupon, when checking the content of the admissions systems based on recommendations in the University of Tsukuba Admissions Selection Guidelines (1973), the qualifications and recommendation requirements of applicants were those who were expected to graduate from high school and were “within the top 10% in academic scores among the students enrolled in the corresponding grades throughout all their years in high school (for the final year, at the point of giving a recommendation)” (University of Tsukuba, 1973), in addition to requiring the recommendation from the high school principal. What should be noted is the other recommendation requirement: “a person who has a particularly excellent skill in a certain field” (University of Tsukuba, 1973).

With regard to this particularly exceptional skill in a particular field, University of Tsukuba gave specific examples in its Implementation Guidelines, such as, “Someone who has shown an exceptional unprecedented skill in a subject in their high school” or “had an excellent skill in track and field while also being an athlete competing in interschool athletic competitions” (University of Tsukuba, 1973). Although these examples are given for both the First Cluster of Colleges and the School of Physical Education, the latter example is probably one that was given for the School of Physical Education.

In addition, the School of Physical Education asks for the submission of “a transcript related to athletic skills” (sports transcript). Given that the sports transcript required the specification of physical information and sports performance records, it is believed that judgment concerning sports performance records was made on the basis of this transcript. The selection method included document
screening for the primary selection, with a physical skill exam, a short essay, an interview, and a thorough medical examination for secondary selection. No restriction was given for the sports category.

What is significant here is that University of Tsukuba’s clear reference to “those with exceptional skills in a certain field” as a recommendation requirement puts forward a policy that evaluates skills other than academic ability. In previous admissions systems based on recommendations conducted in schools of physical education at private universities, such “exceptional skills” were not mentioned, and the position of physical fitness measured through a practical skills test was not clear either. By contrast, in addition to holding a practical skills exam, University of Tsukuba positioned athletes’ sports performance records as a skill, given that the university clearly mentions the submission of a sports transcript and recommendation requirements. These are measures that are entirely in line with the Admissions System Improvement Report*8 compiled by the University Admissions System Improvement Council of the Ministry of Education, and can be traced back to the foundation of University of Tsukuba under the leadership of the Ministry of Education.

6. Establishment of admissions based on sports recommendation at private universities in the 1980s

6.1. University reformation in the 1980s and the request made to collegiate athletic clubs

In the 1980s, the Ministry of Education continued to promote the autonomous reformation of universities and aimed to “reform the university system, which had been rigid and fixed, to a more flexible and spontaneous one”, following on from the Ministry’s 1971 Report in order for universities to be able to address various demands from citizens (University Division, University Bureau, the Ministry of Education, 1982). In addition, planned development of higher education was also being pushed forward. Within this development, the promotion of private universities, which accounted for 71.5%*9 of all universities, was viewed as a priority task (Ministry of Education, 1981a). Using this situation as a general framework, most private universities sought ways to revitalize collegiate athletic clubs under the slogan of diversification.

Direct requests made by the Japan Sports Association to collegiate athletic clubs started to become prominent in the early 1980s. One such request was a government subsidy for clubs, which universities specifically wanted to be strengthened in 1980. This involved partially subsidizing the activity budget required for camp training fees and instruction based on recommendations from each sporting organization for collegiate athletic clubs with achievements, such as producing athletes selected to represent Japan in the Olympics and world championship meets (Japan Sports Association, 1980). To justify its requests, the Japan Sports Association stated that the competition level of Japanese student athletes was “clearly on a declining trend” (Japan Sports Association, 1980), and it asked for athletic club in each university to be strengthened using this initiative as an opportunity.

The Japan Sports Association also highlighted the commercial potential of college sports. The Japan Sports Association (1980) proposed “strengthening ticket revenue, TV revenue, and sales of publications and other items” as a new promotional measure for college sports from the 1980s onward (Japan Sports Association, 1980). The Japan Sports Association said that this was an issue that should not be relegated solely to the Japan Sports Association or sports organizations but was something that all four bodies, including the university authorities and athletic clubs, should tackle as one party. In reality, there had been a push by the mass media, as in the TV broadcasting of the Tokyo-Hakone collegiate ekiden relay race that started in 1979. As such, the strengthening of collegiate athletic clubs was emphasized as a strategy to improve the campus image of the university (Japan Sports Association, 1980).

As shown above, the circumstances surrounding collegiate athletic clubs entered a new phase in the 1980s due to the further advancement in the diversification of the university and the demand to strengthen collegiate athletic clubs. The number of athletic club members, which had been steeply declining during the campus unrest era, had increased to 39.0 persons per club by 1977 (Japan Sports Association, 1980), showing a sign of recovery.

With the above developments as the backdrop,
private universities in the 1980s started to use entrance exams and admissions systems that were generally open to society but in which a special bracket for athletes was in place. This transition took place with the special selection system for a physical education major (physical education major special selection system) conducted by the School of Physical Education, Department of Education, Faculty of Education at Waseda University. The implementation of a physical education major special selection system was described by newspapers thus: “by establishing a special bracket, it was the first attempt in Japan to admit students who are exceptional in written exams, sports, and scholastic ability” (Asahi Shimbun, 1982; Yomiuri Shimbun, 1982). As can be seen here, it was focused on as a turning point for the later expansion of admissions based on sports recommendation. In the next section, the initiatives taken by Waseda University in conducting this physical education major special selection system will be discussed.

6.2. The introduction of the special selection system for a Physical Education Major in Waseda University: An admissions system targeting those who have exceptional skills in sports

6.2.1. Background to the introduction of a Special Selection System for the Physical Education Major

One of the issues that Waseda University athletic club had since 1970 was a decrease in the number of athletic club members. Despite having approximately 2,000 athletic club members at Waseda University in 1961, the number rapidly decreased to approximately 1,300 by 1970. Although the number increased slightly to approximately 1,450 in 1982, the Waseda University athletic clubs faced a serious situation in which there were clubs that could not compete in group competitions (Waseda University, University History Editorial Office, 1997). A student described this situation in the following manner:

Within the span of three to four years, the lack of members became serious, with all clubs racking their brains for ways to acquire new members. The number of those applying to Waseda University was high. In addition to it being difficult to welcome in promising new-comers, newly established universities would implement special measures to have athletic club members join, putting us in an increasingly bad situation. (Waseda Sports, 1969)

As the above statement indicates, the reason why the number of club members decreased included the increase in the number of applicants to Waseda University, as well as newly established universities actively enacting preferential measures in admissions systems for athletes. As mentioned previously, although there was a system for accepting athletes on the basis of recommendations from teachers at night schools at Waseda University, after 1965, night schools gradually stopped recruiting new students. In addition to the difficulty level of the entrance exam increasing as a result of intensification of competition, the institutional restriction, in the form of halting recruiting for night school enrollments, made it difficult to secure sports members. This impact lowered the competitive level of all sports at Waseda University (Waseda Sports, 1980).

Later, this situation resulted in the entrance exam cheating incident, which was uncovered at the faculty of commerce in 1980. This was an incident in which professors intentionally leaked the entrance exam questions of the faculty of commerce. It was discovered that individuals connected to the athletic clubs were involved in the back-door entry of athletes (Asahi Shimbun, 1981c). Because of this, Waseda University was asked to make reforms to implement an open entrance exam that was transparent and fair. As a result of this development, the special physical education entrance exam was introduced in 1983.

6.2.2. Details of physical education—specialized special selection

Firstly, this article will recap the content of the 1983 Special Selection System for Physical Education Major Guidelines (1982) (Table 1).

First, the eligibility requirements for the examination include the “high academic ability demanded by the department”, as well as “excellent skills” that match the sports performance records standards of the sports category that the faculty of education stipulates. 10 team sports were considered, including volleyball, basketball, baseball, and rugby. The sports performance records standards were set as “first-string players whose team ended within the top 4 places in a national competition (in-
Application Eligibility

1. A male student who is expected to graduate from high school or to have completed three years of technical college in March 1983.
2. Those who strongly desire to enroll in the major of physical education in this faculty and who possess the high academic ability that this faculty seeks, as well as skills that meet the standard stipulated by this faculty in a sports event (listed on the separate chart).
3. A person who has clear aspirations and a passion for learning after enrolling in the university, and who has the aptitude suited for this endeavor.
4. Transcript standards
   (1) The average grade score for each class/subject in all subjects until the second year of high school/technical college must be 3.5 or higher.
   (2) There must be no “C” mark on the behavior and character records.
   (3) The number of days absent from school up to the first semester of the third year of high school/technical college must be 40 days or less.
5. You must be healthy and must not suffer from any ear infection that prohibits you from swimming.

Number of specially selected candidates 16 or less.

Documents required for application

1. Application chart (the form will be provided by the faculty)
2. The following forms of identification
   (1) Those who are expected to graduate from a high school must bring the transcript prepared by the school principal.
   (2) Those who are expected to graduate from technical college must bring the certificate of expected completion and the academic transcript prepared by the school principal.
   (3) Sports activity transcript (the form is provided by the faculty).
3. Test fee
   Same amount as the 1983 general test applicants (reference: 1982 test: 20,000 yen)

Test Short essay, interview

Test date December 5, 1982  Test time table Short Essay: 10 AM–11:30 AM; Interviews: 1 PM

(Summarized from the Special Selection System for Physical Education Major Guidelines (Faculty of Education, Waseda University, 1982, pp. 2-4))
weight was placed accordingly on sports performance records as an evaluation criterion. Third, the entrance exam requirements were widely released to the public in an attempt to ensure a sense of fairness in the entrance exam.

The first special physical education entrance exam that was conducted in line with the above passed 16 students. The breakdown of the sports performance records of the passing students were as follows: of the 16, 9 students were high school athletes representing Japan in international matches or winners of national competitions, showing that the majority of those who passed had extremely high sports achievements (Waseda Sports, 1983).

6.2.3. The status of the special selection system for the Physical Education Major at Waseda University

The special physical education entrance exam was said to have been planned and conducted under the guidance of the faculty of education and that the Sports Bureau was not involved. Minoru Kubota, the director of the Sports Bureau, which supervises the athletic clubs on the campus, said, “No one came to consult the Sports Bureau and it was something that the faculty of education determined by itself” (Waseda Sports, 1982). Even the pass-fail judgments were made by the special selection council established by the faculty of education council, neither of which included members from the Sports Bureau.

Yoji Tanabe (Tanabe), the educational affairs curriculum coordinator and a member of the faculty of education, explained that because the special physical education entrance exam was based on the idea that “students with exceptional physical and academic abilities should have excellent abilities in leadership and guiding others . . . having such students enter the university pull up the entire body of students who are majoring in physical education” (Waseda Sports, 1982). Thus, Tanabe said, “If the clubs become stronger by installing this system, that will be the result and no longer just the objective” (Waseda Sports, 1982). In reality, the admitted students were not obliged to join an athletic club.

On the other hand, the athletic clubs perceived the entrance exam in a different light to the university authorities. For example, Director Kiyoshi Nakamura of the track club expressed concerns about how the 16 members would be distributed, saying, “Although I think it is revolutionary progress, will we be able to secure athletes who excel both academically and athletically with just 16 slots? . . . It can’t be helped that the allocations go to the strong clubs because this is a world in which power says everything” (Waseda Sports, 1982). Student A, who was the captain of the handball club, voiced doubts about how the sports performance records standards were set, saying, “This system is advantageous for individual sports. With team sports like handball, it is common for an athlete from an unknown school to be stronger and to develop further in university than an athlete from a high school that ranked within the top four places. At any rate, those criteria have many issues” (Waseda Sports, 1982). Furthermore, baseball club coach Yasuyuki Miyazaki said, “I would like at least two or three athletes for the baseball club. I wish they would think of where they put their weight and the balance of the clubs a bit more” (Waseda Sports, 1982). Such opinions from those involved in the athletic clubs show that each club viewed the special physical education entrance exam as a means of strengthening itself.

As seen here, the evaluation of the special sports entrance exam was difficult in the sense that it was unclear whether it was a system for strengthening the athletic clubs. Yomiuri Shimbun (1982) expressed doubts about the objectives of the special physical education entrance exam, saying, “Regardless of the motivation or the objective that they put out officially, it is clear that, as a result, Waseda Sports will become stronger. Thus, regardless of how the departmental authorities explain it, the objective of this system could be said to be the strengthening of the athletic clubs” (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1982). In light of the opinions for and against the special physical education entrance exam, then-President Haruo Nishihara made the following statement:

Of course, as a university, we cannot let students in without considering their academic abilities at all. However, the true value of physical education lies in its objective of training a physical education teacher and the strengthening of clubs. There has been criticism made that by focusing on academic ability, both sports and academic activities become unsatisfactory as a result. Consequently, it feels like we are vacillating between our true reasoning
and the reasoning we put out officially. (Waseda Sports, 1983)

As seen here, although the intention of “strengthening athletic clubs” can be glimpsed here, the university authorities were in a situation in which they had to avoid clearly stating how they positioned the special physical education entrance exam. However, even if the university authorities did not have the intention of strengthening athletic clubs, it was incontrovertible that the special physical education entrance exam would result in strengthening them. As such, it was a system that contradicted its own objective.

Nonetheless, as predicted by the Yomiuri Shimbun on the introduction of the special physical education entrance exam that “it might affect other private universities” (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1983), the implementation of admissions based on sports recommendation gradually expanded among private universities from 1983, including Chuo University, Ritsumeikan University, and Doshisha University. Although a further detailed examination needs to be conducted on this point, these universities also set standards for the target sports and sports performance records, like Waseda University, and placed importance on the evaluation of sports performance records. Thus, it can be said that an implementation format similar to admissions based on sports recommendation that is still conducted today had taken shape by the 1980s.

7. Reflection on the 1989 University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines

So, how should the Ministry of Education evaluate admissions based on sports recommendation when considering the university admissions system?

In 1984, an Ad Hoc Council on Education (the Ad Hoc Council)*14 was established as an advisory body to the prime minister. The Ad Hoc Council listed eight council tasks, the main ones being to determine “the basic state of education looking toward the 21st century” and the “correction of damages from organizing and systemizing lifelong learning and a society focused on academic history” (Ad Hoc Council on Education, 1985a). A specific reform proposition for the university admissions system was put forward as part of the council’s task of increasing the “sophistication and individualization of higher education”.

The Ad Hoc Council made the following statement on a future admissions system based on recommendations in its deliberation process on the issue of connecting university education with higher and middle school education:

In our society, we focus on the score of scholastic ability tests even when selecting new admissions, showing a strong tendency to rely on the objectivity and fairness of the tests. This in itself is reasonable, but in order to aim for the qualitative improvement of the new admissions selection method, we need to make it so that a fair and flexible attitude becomes approved and widely supported by society. This includes evaluating people from various angles or respecting the responsibility and trusting in the fairness with which the admissions system based on recommendations is conducted. (Ad Hoc Council on Education, 1985a)

As seen here, the Ad Hoc Council felt that the multi-faced evaluation of abilities was being neglected because the traditional university entrance exam and admissions system had relied too much on scholastic ability tests. The Council also highlighted the attitude of each university toward the implementation of an admissions system based on recommendations, requesting that the system to be conducted with a sense of fairness toward society.

In the “Third Reports on Educational Reform”, released by the Ad Hoc Council in 1987, Chapter 4, “Sports and Education”, said that “In order to aim to promote sports activity among adolescents, consider ensuring that such activities are evaluated during an admissions selection, promotion, or job recruitment” (Ad Hoc Council on Education, 1987). The Ad Hoc Council gave the following explanation for its reasoning:

In particular, the way in which the fierce competition in entrance exams makes adolescents distance themselves from sports activities, as well as the way in which doing physical training is being neglected in this time of abundance, raises concern about the decrease in the physical fitness of Japanese citizens in the future, leading to the stagnation of Japanese society’s vitality. In light of this development, we re-
quest that consideration be paid to ensuring that sports activities are appropriately evaluated during school admissions selection processes and actively evaluated during recruitment for companies and government offices. (Ad Hoc Council for Education, 1987)

As seen here, the report by the Ad Hoc Council made requests for “the appropriate evaluation of sports activities” in the university admissions system. A characteristic of this report is that it also asks that such activities be evaluated when recruiting for companies and governmental offices, not just during university admissions.

In the 1989 University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines, which were revised in accordance with the report by the Ad Hoc Council, the introductory section specifies that “university entrant selections shall judge knowledge and aptitude suitable for receiving a university education in a multifaceted manner, and the selection method is to be conducted in a fair and valid manner” (Ministry of Education, 1989). In addition, one of the explicitly stated selection criteria was “to evaluate various activities in the various fields of sports and culture appropriately” (Ministry of Education, 1989). Through this, sports performance records became explicitly cited as an evaluation criterion in the policies on the university admissions system of the Ministry of Education.

8. Conclusion

The results of this study can be summarized as follows:

1) Preferential treatment for athletes in the admissions system had been in place in Japan even before the official approval of an admissions system based on recommendations. However, this was not indicated clearly in entrance guidelines and was solely an “unofficial” system.

2) In the period immediately after the official approval of an admissions system based on recommendations, preferential treatment toward athletes in the admissions system was criticized during the campus unrest, which made it difficult to exercise such preferential treatment as it had been exercised in the past. Consequently, each university decreased or abolished preferential treatment for athletes in the admissions system from the late 1960s to the early 1970s.

3) The faculty of physical education of private universities used an admissions system based on recommendations immediately after the official approval of such systems. Their use in the faculty of physical education aimed to secure athletes by making selections centered on practical skills tests. The students that the faculty desired matched the physical fitness the athletes possessed, enabling the faculty to secure athletes even if a special bracket for athletes had not been installed.

4) In the 1980s, entrance exams that installed a special bracket for athletes were introduced, mainly at private universities. The special selection system for physical education majors at Waseda University established a special bracket targeting athletes, even designating sports category/performance records, that was conducted publicly. However, this entrance exam’s institutional positioning conflicted with its objectives in terms of whether or not it was a system for strengthening athletic clubs.

5) In the Ad Hoc Reports of 1987, the Ad Hoc Council made requests for sports activities to be evaluated during university admissions. In the 1989 University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines, which were revised in accordance with this report, “appropriate evaluation of various activities in various fields of sports and culture” was identified as a selection criterion in the university admissions system.

As described above, this study clarified the formation process of university admissions based on sports recommendation in Japan. Table 2 and 3 present information on the recommendation requirements of admissions systems based on recommendations and of admissions based on sports recommendations of the different universities in this study, as well as statements on the admissions system based on recommendations mentioned by the executive agencies and deliberation councils (e.g., the Ministry of Education).

Next, the historical characteristics of admissions based on sports recommendation in Japanese universities will be summarized on the basis of the findings of this study.

First, the special physical education entrance exam of Waseda University restricted the sports
Table 2 Summary of Each University’s Implementation Status of Admissions System Based on (Sports) Recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year introduced</th>
<th>University classification</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Name of the admissions system</th>
<th>Recommendation requirement</th>
<th>Implementation format</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1967            | Private | Physical Education | Admissions system based on recommendations | • Those who are expected to graduate from high school and, as a general rule, who have received an academic grade rating of B or higher throughout high school.  
• Limited to current students | Document screening, physical skill exam, scholastic ability test (English/Japanese), interview |
| 1970            | Private | Physical Education | Admissions system based on recommendations | • Those who are expected to graduate from high school and, as a general rule, who have received an academic grade rating of C or higher throughout high school.  
• Those who have won a national sports tournament, block sports tournament, or prefectural sports tournament. | Document screening, physical skill exam, Short essay, interview |
| 1974            | Private | Physical Education | Admissions system based on recommendations | • Those who had an academic score in the top 10% of their corresponding grade throughout the entirety of their high school years (for the final grade, up to the point of receiving recommendation).  
• Those who have exceptional skills in a certain field. | Primary selection: Document screening  
Secondary selection: Physical skills exam, Short essay, interview, Health examination |

category to the special bracket entrance exam admissions system for athletes. After establishing a standard for sports performance records, such exams were conducted publicly. These special physical education entrance exams were regarded as a turning point in the expansion of admissions based on sports recommendations that took place later on. However, the special physical education entrance exam was not itself a novel system. Preferential treatment for athletes in entrance exams was shown under various formats even before the official approval of such systems, albeit covertly. In other words, Waseda University was able to conduct a special physical education entrance exam because the institutional foundations of preferential measures for athletes had already been constructed over a long period in Japan.

Moreover, preferential treatment for athletes was
Table 2  Continue.

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<th>Year introduced</th>
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<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Name of the admissions system</th>
<th>Recommendation requirement</th>
<th>Implementation format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1974            | Nippon College of Physical Education | Private                 | Physical Education    | Admissions selection of excellent athletes based on recommendation | ① Individual sports  
  • Those who have come in eighth place or better in inter-high or national sports meets, or an equivalent tournament and/or high school ranking.  
  • Those who have entered a regional tournament and have come 15th or better in the high school rankings, or, in particular, who have a natural talent and have been deemed to have potential.  
  ② Team sports  
  • Those on a team that has come in 8th place or better in inter-high, national sports meets, or an equivalent tournament, and have particularly outstanding individual skills.  
  • Those who have entered a regional tournament and have come in 15th or better in the high school ranking, and, in particular, have a natural talent and have been deemed to have future potential. | Unknown |
| 1977            | Nihon Private Economics (day, night school) | Private             | Health and Physical Education Council Admissions System on Recommendation Admissions system based on recommendations | Admissions system based on recommendations | • Those with excellent academic ability and personal character.  
  • Those corresponding to one of the following concerning physical ability/sports  
  a) Those who have achieved an exceptionally high grade in the regular subject of health and physical education during their studies.  
  b) Those who have achieved an outstanding record in a sport or have been acknowledged as having potential. | Primary selection: Document screening  
Secondary selection: Physical skills exam, interview |
<p>| 1982            | Nihon Private Economics (day, night school) | Private             | Health and Physical Education Council Admissions System on Recommendation Admissions system based on recommendations | Admissions system based on recommendations | • Those who are expected to graduate from high school, have an outstanding sports performance record in a specific sporting event, and have received an academic grade rating of C or higher throughout high school. | Document screening, interview, composition |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year introduced</th>
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<th>Implementation format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Waseda</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Special selection system for a physical education major</td>
<td>• Those who are expected to graduate from high school, have an outstanding sports performance record in a specific sporting event, and have received an academic grade rating of C or higher throughout high school. • Those who are expected to graduate from high school or complete three years of technical college. • Those who strongly desire to enroll in the major of physical education in this faculty and who possess the high academic ability that this faculty seeks and skills that meet the standard stipulated by the faculty in a sports event (listed on the separate chart). • A person who has clear aspirations and a passion for learning after enrolling at the university, and who has the aptitude suited to this endeavor.</td>
<td>Short essay, interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Chuo</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Law, Economics, Commerce, Humanities, Science and Technology</td>
<td>Admissions systems based on sports recommendation</td>
<td>• Those whose academic record during high school shows that their average grade from the first year to the first semester of third year was 3.0 or higher in general courses, or 3.5 or higher in vocational courses. • Limited to current students • Those who have participated in national high school tournaments, national athletics events, national championships, or other equivalent events, and who have achieved an exceptional record and have the desire to continue performing in the same sport after enrollment.</td>
<td>Short essay, interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

shown by traditional schools, with schools that existed in the pre-war Showa era taking the helm. This is believed to be related to the fact that the collegiate athletic clubs played a central role in supporting Japanese amateur sports (Kinohista 1970; Maruyama, 1981; Takenoshita and Kishino, 1959). In Japan, physical education and sports had been developed through schools since the establishment of the Meiji state. In particular, modern sports, such as track and field and baseball, were developed
mainly within the athletic club activities of higher education institutions. This lineage was succeeded by the post-war athletics-strengthening structure, centered on the Tokyo Olympics of 1964 in particular. During this time, traditional schools where athletic club activities had been vigorous since the pre-war Showa era served as the template. The top 3 schools for then-current students participating in Olympic Games between 1964 and 1976 were Nihon University (47 students), Waseda University (44 students), and Meiji University (32 students), all of which were covered in this study (Japan Sports Association, 1978). It could therefore be said that the preferential treatment for athletes in the entrance exams of traditional schools has been an important way of supporting Japan’s athletics system for a very long time.

On the other hand, those universities that actively engaged in securing athletes using the admissions system based on recommendations immediately after its official approval were universities that had a faculty of physical education. In the admissions system based on recommendations at these universities, the intention of strengthening athletic clubs appeared more prominently, as represented by the initiatives of Nippon College of Physical Education. This trend is believed to have led to the establishment of admissions based on sports recommendation in the 1980s, whose turning point was Waseda University’s special physical education entrance exam.

Therefore, admissions based on sports recommendation in Japanese universities comprise an admissions system whose formation can be traced back to the preferential treatments that were shown to athletes in some traditional schools, conducted as part of an athletics system that had supported Japanese amateur sports. After this preferential treatment received an institutional guarantee from the Ministry of Education in the form of official approval of an admissions system based on recommendations, it tied in with the intentions of each university to strengthen its athletic clubs, resulting in the practice of admissions based on sports recommendation. These admissions gradually became streamlined in content and foundation in response to the various social contexts around the universities, including the intensification of the campus unrests and the emergence of newly established universities and faculty of physical education.

(Summarized from using “Admission Guidelines of Each University” and Keisetsu Jidai (Obunsha, 1967, 1971, 1972, 1973)). Only those universities whose recommendation requirements at the time of introduction could be identified are included.

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<th>University classification</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Name of the admissions system</th>
<th>Recommendation requirement</th>
<th>Implementation format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1987            | Ritsumeikan | Private                   | Law, Economics, Management, Humanities | Admissions systems based on sports recommendation | - Those expected to graduate from high school. Current students are eligible.  
- Those whose academic record during high school shows that their average grade from the first year to the first semester of third year was 3.0 or higher for each subject, and who have the pro-active intention of managing both academic work and sports activities, at clubs certified by the university association of sports, after enrollment.  
- Those who have a performance record higher than the specified standards in a specific sporting event. | Primary selection: Document screening  
Secondary selection: Scholastic ability test (English/Modern Japanese) |
Table 3  Statements by administrative organs (e.g., Ministry of Education) and deliberation councils on the admissions system based on recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Administrative organ/deliberation council</th>
<th>Details of the content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>The Ministry of Education officially approved an admissions system based on recommendations in the 1966 University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines.</td>
<td>[Universities, as needed, can request that a student who belongs to the academic grade evaluation A, has done exceptionally well academically, and whom the high school principal can recommend with responsibility, be given a grade of 3.] [The university can request that aptitude for the corresponding faculty/school of the university and other information be written down for the student by the high school.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>The Ministry of Education clarifies the positioning of the admissions system based on recommendations in the 1967 University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines.</td>
<td>[The selection of new entrants is done by rationally compiling and passing judgment on reference materials, including the transcript submitted by the graduating high school's principal and the results of the scholastic achievement test and health examination conducted by the university.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>The University Admissions System Improvement Council proposes an improvement to university admissions system selection methods.</td>
<td>[In order to select human resources suitable for the objectives, characteristics, and specialist fields of the university/faculty, a scholastic ability test, a practical skills test, an interview, short essays, and other special exams need to be conducted in order to judge thoroughly the degree of knowledge/aptitude specifically emphasized in the corresponding university/department....Such tests need to be conducted by adding a sufficient amount of ingenuity to the question format and content, such as placing the focus of tests and practical skills tests on creative thinking and expression skills, and by conducting such tests in a rational manner.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>In the “Third Reports on Educational Reform”, the Ad Hoc Council on Education requests “the appropriate evaluation of sports activities”.</td>
<td>[In order to aim to promote sports activity among adolescents, consider ensuring that such activities are evaluated during an admissions selection, promotion, or job recruitment.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>The Ministry of Education includes sports performance records as an evaluation criterion for admissions systems in the 1989 University Admission Selection Implementation Guidelines.</td>
<td>[University entrant selections shall judge knowledge and aptitude suitable for receiving a university education in a multifaceted manner, and the selection method is to be conducted in a fair and valid manner.] [The selection of new entrants is done by rationally compiling and passing judgment on reference materials, which include the details in the transcript, the scholastic achievement test, interview, short essays, scores on other tests related to the student’s skills/aptitudes, health examination conducted by the university as needed, and other resources that the university deems to be necessary. In this process, it is desirable for activities in the various fields of sports and culture to be appropriately evaluated.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


9. Future tasks: Clarification of the expansion of admissions based on sports recommendation since the 1990s

In order to clarify how admissions based on sports recommendation have expanded since the 1990s, several tasks remain.

After the end of the Pacific War, the population of those aged 18 grew uniformly, reaching a peak of 2.049 million in 1992 before entering a period of rapid decline the following year. Consequently, in its report “Planned Preparation of Higher Education from 1993 Onward”, the University Council, an advisory organ to the Ministry of Education, predicted a harsher management environment for universities. The report asked each university to aim for qualitative enhancement rather than quantitative expansion, to address changes in social needs, and to strive for university management with a long-term perspective (University Council, 1991).
The report was viewed as a Ministry of Education Policy announcing the arrival of the free competition era of the university (Asahi Shimbun, 1991). In conjunction with the relaxing of the University Establishment Standards that occurred at around the same time, each university's survival strategies became a significant topic for its university management.

From the 1990s, policies to diversify the selection method were emphasized more than anything else in the university entrance exam and reform of the admissions system. This paved the way for the introduction of selection criteria other than the students' scholastic abilities due to the diversification of scholastic ability evaluation (Amano, 2006). As university entrance exams underwent a major period of transition, it can be presumed that many universities started to introduce admissions based on sports recommendation. Furthermore, the birth of new admission systems (e.g., the AO system), as well as an increase in the number of universities conducting this test, led to greater diversification in admissions based on sports recommendation.

Besides such institutional factors, since the Ad Hoc Council report, the debate about diversification of abilities was a major theme during reform of the university admissions system. This was a major factor in expanding admissions based on sports recommendation. With regard to the university entrance exam, which in the past was skewed toward scholastic ability, the Ad Hoc Council requested that entrants be selected on the basis of the principle of emphasizing individuality (Ad Hoc Council on Education, 1985b). This led to exceptional sporting talent being recognized as a relevant skill as universities searched for selection criteria related to the evaluation of comprehensive and multifaceted skills. Future studies will need to explore how sport was positioned using the rise of the skills-based argument as a factor, alongside the institutional transition of admissions based on sports recommendation.

One cannot overlook a new set of problems created by the institutional establishment and expansion of admissions based on sports recommendation. Cheating in the exams occurred frequently in the 1990s. It has been pointed out that private universities went to extreme lengths to strengthen their athletic clubs in order to survive (Asahi Shimbun, 1992). Admissions based on sports recommendation continued to expand while interacting in a complex manner with university governance and the state of college sports. The authors would like to examine the implications for the future of admissions based on sports recommendation by focusing on the set of issues that emerged after such admissions gained official approval.

Finally, the authors would like to develop further the various studies of admissions based on sports recommendation by using findings from this study and with the above tasks as factors.

Notes
* 1: The term "student athletes" in this study refers to athletes belonging to athletic clubs of university athletic associations.
* 2: In this study, 1988 is regarded as the year in which admissions based on sports recommendation were established, since this was when the Ministry of Education included "appropriate evaluation of sports" in the University Admissions Selection Implementation Guidelines.
* 3: Deregulation of University Standards refers to the revision of the University Establishment Standards that occurred in July 1991. Due to this revision, each university was able to revise its organization and education curriculum in a distinctive manner. For this reason, it is also referred to as the "relaxation of university establishment standard". The University Establishment Standard, the University Division, Higher Education Bureau, Ministry of Education (1991) explained the gist of this revision thus: 1) for each university to aim to make its system flexible so that it might develop a distinctive education and research approach based on its educational principles and objectives; 2) to aim for the diversification of learning opportunities in the university from the perspective of promoting lifelong learning; 3) for each university to conduct self-assessment/evaluation to improve and maintain its standards. This allowed the institutions to reorganize various types of faculty and school, as well as to abolish course categories, such as general arts subjects (Ministry of Education, 1992).
* 4: In 1966, 293,000 students were admitted out of 1,517,000 applicants (Minister's Secretariat Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Education, 1967). Thus, 5.2 students competed for each place.
* 5: In the Ad Hoc Measures for the Management of University established on August 7, 1969 (Bill Act 70), the campus unrest was defined as a "state in which education, research, and management of universities is being obstructed by the occupation and shutdown of facilities managed by the university, classes being abandoned, and other irregular actions by the students" (House of Representatives, 1969, p. 2).
* 6: The rate of advancement to university and junior college was only about 10.1% in 1955, but it was 17.0% in 1965 and 38.4% in 1975, showing a rapid increase within 20 years (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2016).
* 7: Twelve private universities had a faculty of physical edu-
The reasons why the special selection system for physical education majors was implemented in 1983 at Waseda University was not clarified by the university as far as the authors can see. The only relevant account that was found was an interview in 1986 on the initial objective of the implementation conducted with Sadao Tsutsumi, then-director of the faculty of education: “To put it bluntly, the entrance exam became difficult, making it difficult for athletes to be admitted, causing the physical health major to stagnate” (Waseda Sports, 1986). However, it can be deduced that the special selection system for physical education majors was introduced as a result of the entrance exam cheating incident, which led to the entrance exam system at Waseda University being reviewed and initiatives to improve the exam being introduced.

*14: The Ad Hoc Council was a council under the control of the cabinet set up by then-Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in 1984. After the submission of four reports, it dissolved in 1987. This Council was established by law, with committee members appointed by the Diet.

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171
Yuta Ono, et al.

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