



Writers:
**Alexander
Martin**



THE
**BRITISH
SCHOOL**
IN TOKYO

Naoto Tobe International High Jumper and Tokyo 2020 Hopeful

On Friday the 23rd of November, the Year 12 A-level Japanese students had the pleasure of welcoming Naoto Tobe (戸辺直人), a well-known Japanese athlete and a winner of a range of high-jump competitions (with a personal record of 2.31 metres) who is planning to participate in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. Mr. Tobe kindly brought the bronze medal he recently won in the Asian Games, and allowed us to touch and hold it. We were all intrigued by the intricacy of the engravings on the medal, and surprised by the heaviness of it. Mr. Tobe readily answered our miscellaneous questions - both pre-prepared and spontaneous - regarding his rather extraordinary career, training habits and motivation, as well as the interesting history of high jump. When asked about whom he looks up to the most, Mr. Tobe said that although he finds it difficult to choose one person, he would definitely mention his parents and his teachers as significant role models. Many of us were probably surprised by his claim, that if he had not become an athlete, he would have wanted

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to work as a policeman. As for his plans for the future, Mr. Tobe says that would like to complete his research in biomechanics - a field which is strongly linked to his career as an athlete - at Tsukuba University.



Mr. Tobe's visit was indeed a very interesting and inspiring one, during which we were exposed to the not-so-glamorous reality of being a national level athlete. We learnt of his gruelling training and diet regimen involving constant debilitating muscle aches and insubstantial carb-centric meals. His weekly schedule consists of 6 high-jump training sessions, daily muscle enhancement sessions, but also working on his PhD research on sport biomechanics. In fact, during his visit to our class, he said (humorously) that the mere act of rising from his chair was difficult, due to intense recent focus of training on his leg area. The questions posed to him were of a wide variety and ranged from whether he

could perform a slam dunk in basketball, to whether the sport of high-jump has changed historically. We were intrigued to hear that jumping styles evolved from the physically challenging but ultimately impractical scissors method, to the rather comical Western roll, and finally settled on the now conventional Fosbury flop. In this manner, Mr. Tobe's visit to the school was a deeply interesting and educational one, where students were left with a feeling of admiration and appreciation for a talented athlete who took time out of his packed schedule to impart words of wisdom and knowledge to our Japanese A level class.

