

1 Article : EDITORIAL | Bravo, Shingo Kunieda, on Opening New Horizons in a Legendary Career

Directions: Read the following article aloud.

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that Wheelchair Tennis legend Shingo Kunieda opened the eyes of the Japanese people to the allure of para-sports.

He was the strongest of them all and a universal icon. It is doubtful that a champion of his caliber will ever again appear. Shingo Kunieda, the king of men's wheelchair tennis, has announced his retirement.

Kunieda thanked his many fans in a social media message. It read in part, "I felt that I had done all I had [set out](#) to accomplish and concluded it was the right time to retire."

He added, "I enjoyed the best possible life in wheelchair tennis."

During his fabled career, Kunieda won 28 men's wheelchair singles Grand Slam titles. He also won three Paralympics gold medals in the men's singles events. And one in the men's doubles category.

Kunieda was ranked number one in the world for a total of 582 weeks and as of January 16 was still the top-ranked male in the sport.

In his message Kunieda also wrote, "forgive me if you think I'm being too cool" for hanging up his racket while he was still the "strongest" player in the world.

Defining Moments in Kunieda's Career

One of the men's single gold medals Kunieda won came at the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021. And the way in which he was so overcome with emotion that he closed his eyes remains fresh in our collective memory.

It is regrettable that no spectators were on hand to witness his historical triumph. That was due to COVID-19 restrictions at the Tokyo Olympics. We would have liked to see a huge crowd witness the tears of a real man upon reaching the summit of achievement.

Kunieda first became a world champion back in 2006. There's a well-known story from that time. When asked by Japanese media outlets why Japan did not produce any world-class tennis players, the great Roger Federer of Switzerland replied without hesitating. "Well, there's Kunieda, isn't there?"

Raising Awareness for Para-Sports

It would not be an [exaggeration](#) to [claim](#) that Kunieda singlehandedly opened the eyes of the Japanese people to the allure of para-sports. That includes members of the media.

Kunieda is the man [credited with](#) elevating the sport from a "sport for the handicapped" to a highly technical sport. After turning professional in 2009, he proceeded to break new ground as a para-athlete. He was blazing a path for those who would follow in his footsteps.

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The International Tennis Federation (ITF) is the governing body for wheelchair tennis. And Kunieda likes to point out that the "sport has a low barrier between healthy and disabled people."

The higher prize money brought to the sport by the four Grand Slam tournaments means that a more competitive environment is being created for the participating athletes.

That is a good example of how to open new horizons for para-competitions. Sports organizations in sports other than tennis should also learn from this precedent.

Japan's sports community must [draw on](#) Kunieda's knowledge. We hope that Kunieda will continue to promote the appeal of wheelchair tennis and para-athletics and point the way for future generations.

2 Key phrases and vocabulary

Directions: First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

- 1. set out** ~しようと目指す・決心する、出発する、(事業などを)始める、計画する、設置する
・They **set out** to discover a cure for the disease.
- 2. exaggeration** 誇張、大げさ
・It's no **exaggeration** to say that he is the Edison of this century.
- 3. claim** (事実・真実・当然のこととして)断言する・主張する、(正当な権利として)要求する、(補償などを)請求する
・The company **claims** that they are not responsible for the accident.
- 4. credited with** ~の功績があると認められている、~で高い評価を得る
・She is **credited with** developing the innovative technology.
- 5. draw on** (知識やスキル・経験などを)利用・活用する
・Actors often **draw on** their own life experiences to give a good performance.

3 Questions

Directions: Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. How did he know it was the right time to retire?
2. How did his all these achievements have an impact on Japanese people?
3. Have you watched any parasports?
4. What are your thoughts on how we can make parasports more accessible?

4

日本語関連記事:【主張】国枝の引退 記録と記憶に残る王者だ

誰よりも強く、誰からも慕われた。これほどの王者は、二度と現れないのではないか。

車いすテニス男子の第一人者、国枝慎吾が引退を表明した。

自身のSNS(交流サイト)には「もう十分やりきったという感情が高まり、決意した次第です。最高の車いすテニス人生でした」と、ファンに向けて感謝の思いをつづった。

四大大会のシングルス優勝は28度、パラリンピックのシングルスでも3度、頂点に立った。世界ランキング1位は通算582週に及び、今月16日付でも1位だ。

「最強」のままコートを去ることに「カッコつけすぎと言われるかもしれませんが、許してください」とも書いた。

「俺は最強だ」を口癖に何度も逆境をはねのけた姿は、人々の胸に刻まれたに違いない。記録にも記憶にも残る王者だった。

一昨年夏の東京パラで金メダルを獲得し、感極まって目頭を押さえた姿は記憶に新しい。惜しまれるのは、新型コロナウイルス禍で無観客開催となったことだ。できることなら、大観衆の前で男泣きしてほしかった。

国枝が初めて世界のトップに立ったのは2006年だった。当時、日本の報道陣から「なぜ日本から世界的な選手が出てこないのか」と問われたロジャー・フェデラー(スイス)が、「クニエダがいるじゃないか」と即座に返答した話は知られている。メディアを含め、国民のバラスポーツを見る目は、国枝の活躍によって見開かれたといっても過言ではない。

車いすテニスを、「障害者の競技」から高度な技術を要する競技へと昇華させたことも国枝の功績である。09年にはプロに転向し、パラアスリートとしての地平を切り開いた。その軌跡は、後進の道しるべとなったはずだ。

車いすテニスは国際テニス連盟(ITF)が統括しており、国枝は「健常者と障害者の垣根が低いスポーツ」だと指摘する。四大大会で実施されることで賞金が高額となり、参戦する選手の競技環境は整備が進んだという。

パラ競技の活路を開く好例だ。テニス以外の競技団体も参考にすべきだろう。

日本のスポーツ界には、国枝の知見が必要だ。これからも車いすテニスとパラ競技の魅力を発信し続け、後進を導いてほしい。