

Speech at the Hurricanes Vs Sunwolves Pre-Match Reception

26 April 2018

Hon. Grant Roberston, Minister for Finance,
Mr Avan Lee, CEO of the Hurricanes,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kia Ora, and thank you for inviting me to this reception, it is a great pleasure to be here. I await tomorrow's match with great excitement and anticipation.

As I'm sure you all know, Japan will be hosting the 2019 Rugby World Cup next year and partly due to this, Japan's interest and involvement in rugby has increased in recent years. Since the Sunwolves' debut in 2016, this is the third time Japan has taken part in Super Rugby. When you think about the "wolf", it represents our team's play style very well: wolves may be small in stature, but they are swift and work well together as a pack; finding great strength in their teamwork.

I can't say that I am very knowledgeable about rugby, but even I have been able to see the progress the Sunwolves have made. They are improving gradually in both defence and offence. Even so, the Super Rugby is not so kind a sport: one small mistake, one foul play, and a try can be taken from you! The Sunwolves still have much to overcome.

It is an honour for Japan's team to be able to play here in New Zealand. Of course, playing against the Hurricanes will also be incredibly tough, but nevertheless, the Sunwolves could not be in a better environment to hone their skills, and for that we are very grateful.

The Sunwolves' tour of New Zealand is shaping up to be a difficult one, with the Sunwolves up against the Hurricanes and the Crusaders, winners of the 2016 and 2017 Super Rugby seasons respectively, and also the top 2 teams of the standings in this year's NZ Conference.

In Japan, when a team loses by a large margin, it is expected that they learn from their failure and play a far better game when they next get a chance to play the winning team. The winning team creates a strong motivation for the losing team to better themselves and at their next match, show how much they have improved as a result of their previous loss. We like to call this "Having a debt of gratitude". By playing a better game, regardless of the outcome of the match, showing that improvement is seen as paying back the debt of gratitude.

I have high expectations for tomorrow's match; that it will be a good game, and that the Sunwolves will be able to show the Hurricanes their gratitude by playing to the best of their abilities, and showing proof of just how far they have come since the last game.

In closing, I would like to thank the people of the Hurricanes for the hospitality they are showing at this reception, and also express my gratitude for the hospitality and kindness being shown to the Sunwolves during their stay in Wellington.

Thank you.