

## **APLU APPOINTS HEAD COACH FOR WOMEN'S UNITED TEAM ASPACs 2017**

**By Executive Director Fiona Clark**

The APLU is delighted to announce the appointment of Minami Kikuchi as Head Coach of the Women's United Team to compete in the Asia Pacific Championship in June 2017. This event shall be held on the beautiful island of Jeju in its second largest city Seogwipo, situated on a rocky volcanic coastline dotted with lush parks, a deep gorge and two waterfalls. Sounds perfect for a lacrosse event comprising six men's and six women's teams from the Asia Pacific region! Hosts South Korea shall be joined by Australia, China, Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan in the Men's competition, and Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand and a United Team in the Women's competition..... So let's meet the Head Coach of the recently named United Team, Minami Kikuchi.

I first met Minami in 2016 in Western Australia. Although both of us had been playing all season we had not met on the field as we were competing in different grades with Minami playing for Bayswater in WA's elite A Grade competition. It was at the end of season Lacrosse WA Awards Night when our paths first crossed, and I was lucky enough to be at the same table to witness first-hand the surprise and elation on Minami's face when she was named Runner-Up in the A Grade competition. About her win Minami said *"I didn't expect that I could get a prize, so when my name was called in the ceremony, I was really astonished! But also, absolutely delighted."*

Minami is from Tokyo and she epitomizes the Japan Lacrosse Association's motto *"Lacrosse Makes Friends"* so after getting to know a little about Minami I wanted to know more! From this Q&A session it became evident that Minami was capable of furthering her lacrosse journey. In April of 2017 she was appointed Head Coach of the Women's United Team which will comprise players from Japan, Taiwan, China and South Korea.

### **Q1 When did you start playing lacrosse and why?**

*I started to play lacrosse in 2011. Before that I had played softball for 6 years. When I threw and caught a ball using a stick I immediately fell in love with the game. The reason why I started to play lacrosse was that I was able to use the skills which I had learned from softball; for example, throwing or scooping a ball. And what's more, I thought I can be a top player in Japan!! Normally seniors in University teach basic skills to juniors or sometimes coaches come to training to tell us what we need to improve or some plans for games.*

### **Q2 Which team do you play for in Japan?**

*I used to play in the Tokai University team from 2011 to 2015. In 2009 Tokai Uni was on top of the ladder and this was the reason I joined this team as I also wanted to be on top! However when I was a Captain of this team, our best result was around eighth. In 2015 I belonged to the club team called MISTRAL for one year.*

### **Q3 Have you played in any International Competitions or Tours?**

*In 2012 I went to Adelaide (South Australia) to do training games as a selected team member of the Kanto area. It was not a competition but we did play games against SA local teams.*

*In 2013 I went to Santa Barbara, California. This was a tour that Meiji University organized to do training games.*

*And in 2013 I went to China (Beijing) for ASPACs. I was a member of the Under 21 Japanese National Team who won the Championship!*

**Q4 Why did you come to Perth and when?**

*I came to Perth at the end of March 2016 to improve my English. I've been in Perth for a year, and I shall return to Japan at the end of May 2017.*

**Q5 What has been your lacrosse experience in Perth with Bayswater Lacrosse Club?**

*I played for the Bayswater Lacrosse team in the 2016 season as Goal Keeper for their top A Grade side. My lacrosse life with the Bayswater team was amazing. Communicating in English was the hardest part for me, but they always tried to understand what I wanted to say, and while playing lacrosse I felt really comfortable with them. The thing that I really enjoyed most was our growth. We were getting better every game and although we didn't win I know we made a lot of effort this year.*

**Q6 What are your future lacrosse goals?**

*I'm not sure if I shall play lacrosse in Japan again but I want to contribute something good to lacrosse, for example teaching lacrosse to the new generation, or helping make lacrosse a famous sport in the world. And my strong hope currently is that my Uni team is going to win the title as the top Japanese Team!*

**Q7 How do you like Perth?**

*The environment around me in Perth is absolutely wonderful, and I'm really happy to meet you, my team mates and players from other teams. Especially, I'd like to say a big THANK YOU to Bayswater Union team. They were always very nice to me and supported a lot of things. And Thank You so much for giving me an opportunity to speak to you and write this article.*

Fiona is the Executive Director of the APLU and a former President of the WA State Association, the Australian Association and the International Federation of Women's Lacrosse Associations. Fiona was Event Coordinator of the 1989 Women's World Cup and the 1999 Women's U19 World Championship both in Perth. Fiona became Executive Director of the APLU in 2011. She shall be in Seogwipo with Minami and looks forward to seeing her on the sidelines in her new Coaching role – yes, *Lacrosse Makes Friends!*