



JAPAN INFORMATION
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TEACHING TUESDAY

YUKIGASSEN

Yukigassen (雪合戦: ゆきがっせん) can literally be translated as “snow battle,” but it is so much more than a regular snowball fight. Started in 1987 in the small Hokkaido town of Sobetsu, the tournament now has its own international federation and close to 30,000 visitors a year.

Played on the slopes of a small volcano, Mt. Showa-Shinzan, Yukigassen got its start when locals spotted some tourists having a playful snowball fight. The game was quickly adapted and modified into a complicated combination of snowballs, dodgeball, and capture the flag. Snowballs are crafted by a specialized snowball machine, and each team is allotted 90 per 3-minute match. Two teams of seven players then lob them at each other on a snow-covered field, in hopes of tagging the entire other team out, or capturing the other team’s flag on the opposite end of the field. The team that wins two out of three matches advances in the tournament.

Although started in Hokkaido, the sport has transcended international lines and you can now catch games in Canada, Alaska, Finland, Russia, and more. And if you’re not in any of those regions, you can check out all the Yukigassen action on YouTube!