



JAPAN INFORMATION
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TEACHING TUESDAY

NAHA OO TSUNAHIKI

Hokkaido may have its giant snowball fight, but Okinawa has its own special sport: tug-of-war! The Naha Oo Tsunahiki (那覇大綱挽まつり), better known as the Naha Grand Tug-of-War Festival, is a popular yearly event in Okinawa.

The Naha Great Tug-of-war is a traditional event dating back over 400 years. Historically, the tug-of-war was for dueling purposes, where villagers from east faced off with villagers from the west in honorific battle to determine which side would offer the prayers for a good rice harvest. Historically, tug-of-war competitions were said to help clear rice fields of insects for planting. It also fostered a friendly competition, instilling peace on the small islands. The tug-of-war lasts 30 minutes as team captains stand on the rope, commanding their sides. Ultimately, the result is determined by measurements from the judging team.

The rope used in the tug-of-war is about 650 feet long this year, weighs 90,500 pounds, and is about 5 feet in diameter. This rope holds the Guinness Book of World record, and Okinawa continues to re-claim the title each year. An estimated 25,000 people participate for either the East or West team, with an additional 280,000 spectators. Everyone is welcome to join in the fun, and staff hand out parts of the giant rope as good luck charms afterwards!