

REFEREE'S CALL:

My Pride Adventure: Day Three

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Good morning! Given the 17-hour time difference between California and Japan, it's difficult to remember that I've been here only a little over 40 hours. Given the number of people I've met and the number of meetings attended, I feel like I've been here for the better part of a week.

If I'm not mistaken, today is Saturday, my third day in the "Land of the Rising Sun". According to the Pride schedule, the only meeting today is the official weigh-in at 2:00 pm. Outstanding! That means, I'm going to breakfast and then hit the sack again.

As usual, breakfast was great! Listening to the well-known cut-man, "Stitch" Duran, and the comedy team of Bas Rutten and Mauro Ranallo, telling off the record stories about previous fights and fighters, had me laughing so hard that my sides were hurting.

After grabbing some more sleep, I decide to pass on the weigh-in. Given the fact that only heavyweights and light heavy weights compete in Pride, everyone makes weight. When they realize that they will have to forfeit their entire purse if they don't make weight, they become highly motivated to do so.

Since all work and no play make Doc a dull boy, I've decided to visit a museum and the Dome City. To avoid getting lost, I talk to the hotel concierge, and take a map and stationary bearing the address and phone number of the hotel. I have the doorman hail a cab and tell the driver where I want to go. I know that once I leave the hotel it is unlikely that I will encounter anyone speaking English.

First stop, Edo-Tokyo Museum; here I get a glimpse into the history of Tokyo and its culture. The shoguns and post-war reconstruction and the Nihombashi 'Bridge of Japan' are on display, revealing a fantastic look into the city's past. It's quite a contrast to present day modern Tokyo and its 12 million residents. After a couple of hours, I decide to move on.

The Tokyo Dome Stadium, affectionately known as the "Big Egg", is a state of the art enclosed stadium, built in 1988; it is home to the Yomiuri Giants professional baseball team. As amazing as it is, it is only one of the attractions comprising Tokyo Dome City. In addition to the stadium, there is the Tokyo Dome Hotel, which opened in 2000. It has 43 floors and 1006 guest rooms. The Dome City also houses the La Qua Spa, which provides real hot springs baths.

Probably the most surprising attraction found in the Dome City is the Korakuen Amusement Park. In addition to a huge Ferris wheel, it has the Thunder Dolphin Roller Coaster, which hits speeds of 70 mph, and a hanging type roller coaster, the "Linear Gale", which drops riders from 80 meters. The entire complex is not only huge, but, amazingly, the Dome City is located right smack in the center of Tokyo.

Another cab ride and I'm back at the hotel just in time to grab dinner with "Stitch" and Matt Hume. After a half-hour walk into the city, we grab some noodles Raman, and then walk to the Shinjuku district. This area of the city is known for its central rail station, the Kabukicho, and having the largest red light entertainment area. The street atmosphere is very festive. Crowds of very dissimilar people: businessmen, nightclub pitchmen, street hustlers both male and female, and young people in all type of outrageous dress are out for a good time.

We get back to the hotel around 10:30 p.m. and all of us are ready to hit the sack. Tomorrow is the big day! I'll get together with you in the morning, get some rest, it'll be a long day.