

Ki-Zu-Na – A ball binds family together
“Parent-and-Child Dodgeball School” was held in Koriyama City, Fukushima
(November 9, 2012)

“Run, run!” “Oh no, I’ve got hit.” – Children’s cheerful voices echoed in a gymnasium. Looking closely at their children throwing a ball and then running, mothers and fathers just couldn’t help smiling. “This is nice because we don’t have many opportunities to play with children,” said Naomi, a mother of 5-year-old boy Takeru who loves dodgeball. She showed a smile on her face, seeing her son running around the court. Fun exercise can energize us all. This event gave us an opportunity again to recognize the power of sports.

Three times, on September 29, October 6, and October 13, “Parent-and-Child Dodgeball School” was organized in Koriyama City, Fukushima Prefecture, by the Koriyama City Education Support Center, one of the departments of Koriyama City Board of Education. Save the Children Japan (SCJ) supported the program. Since the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima No.1 nuclear power plant accident of March 2011, children of Fukushima have fewer opportunities to play outside as parents are concerned about the effects of radiation on the children. The so-called “3 hours rule,” which restricts outside activities in Koriyama City, was dissolved April 2012, and life for people of the city was gradually back to normal again. Yet, there are still many parents and children who are still concerned about running around outside like they used to before the disaster/accident. We often hear that children stay inside and play TV games throughout the day, even if both parents are at home or during the holidays.

Concerned about children and their limited play time and decreased exercise, Koriyama City Board of Education developed this plan; they wanted to offer a place where children can freely play and move their body as much as they want. The city also wanted not only children, but also their parents do some exercises together. SCJ supported the idea and decided to provide technical assistance. SCJ had to think of a sport that people of all ages can play, both adults and children know how to play and can enjoy together, and if possible, indoors. When thinking about this type of activity, what came to our mind instantly was the game of dodgeball.



Over 20 years ago when I was an elementary school student, the most popular sport to play after school was dodgeball. I still remember so clearly that we played it every day until it got dark. Today, it is said that dodgeball is still the most popular sport among elementary school students. We thought this sport must be the appropriate one for men, women, and children of all ages to enjoy playing indoors together.

In addition, according to the Japan Dodge Ball Association, various ball games besides full-scale competitive dodgeball are ideal for parents and children to enjoy playing together.

On October 13, the last of three dodgeball programs was held at a children center Niko-Niko Kodomo-kan in Koriyama City, Fukushima Prefecture. The participants included 20 infants, 1st & 2nd graders, and 15 mothers and fathers.



Ms. Kazuko Nomura, the vice-president of Fukushima Dodge Ball Association started the activity with warm-up exercises.

Participants first did jogging and then some exercises. Ms. Nomura said, “By having physical contact like this, you can strengthen the tie between a parent and a child.” Everyone enjoyed bending forward together.



Then, a parent and a child pulled each other! Everyone looks so happy!



Finally participants used the balls. Ms. Nomura said, “Mothers and fathers, please become a slide,” and then parents stretched their body at an angle to form a human slide. On the slide, children roll a

ball.



The balls rolled down beautifully. A three-year-old boy, Ayato, was so happy about his great success. His mother, Miho, showed a bittersweet smile, maybe because she got a little tired. Next, let's become a horse and carry a ball. Can you do it well?



Oooooops... It seems quite difficult.

Then, let's hold hands to carry a ball.



We feel warm when holding hands.

After being warmed up, they played a “bomb game.” Adults standing in a line on each side rolled the balls in and children tried to run through to the goal without getting hit by the balls. When you are hit, you are out. Can you escape from these balls? Ready, Set, Go!



Children made beautiful steps and escaped from balls thrown one after another. The children are fast.



The adults run this time. "Hit your mothers with the balls!" Unconsciously adults are startled by children's energy.



Finally, they played dodgeball, something that they had been waiting to play. Today, there were only small children so the rules were changed. Children got in a square court and adults around the court rolled balls into the court. Children ran away from the rolling balls, and if they touch the balls, they are out. They looked so cute wearing the "zekken" (a uniform with a large number)!



Now, the game starts.



“Come on, I will hit you!”



“A ball!” Some children stepped over the balls well,



while others show beautiful jumps.



They sweat a lot, throwing balls, running, and getting hit by balls. One feels fresh by sweating like this. Both children and adults showed a smile on their face here and there.



“It was good because we don’t usually play like this using our body. My daughter also enjoyed it,” said Yayoi, a mother of 4-year-old girl Hikari from Koriyama City. Participants kept running around for one and half hours. Everyone seemed to have quite enjoyed it. Well, children have to play a lot. Only with a ball and some space, parents and children can play dodgeball together anywhere, at any time. Please utilize this experience for daily “plays” with children.

I am sure that beautiful smiles will spread there again.

(Reported by Yuya Nakamura, Aizuwakamatsu)