

# Iwaki Mayor's Visit to Samoa

We have finally entered 2019 – the year that Japan will host the Rugby World Cup! With just over half a year until the World Cup begins, Iwaki is already gearing up for the arrival of Samoa's national rugby team, Manu Samoa, to the city for their pre-tournament training after they officially qualified for the tournament back in July 2018.



On 29 October, 2018, the mayor of Iwaki visited Samoa in order to congratulate the Samoan rugby team for their qualification and officially sign a mutual agreement for the training camps. Although this was the first time the mayor has visited the Pacific Island nation, you may recall that Iwaki City sent several high school students to Samoa for cultural exchanges back in 2017.

During his brief time in the country, Mayor Shimizu met with Prime Minister Tuilaepa, whom he had previously met during the PALM8 Summit. After the signing ceremony, he then met with other government ministers and officials from Samoa Rugby Union (SRU). The visit wasn't solely dedicated to rugby though as the mayor also spent a portion of his time in Samoa experiencing the local culture and visiting areas that were affected by the tsunami that struck the country in 2009.



Just over a month after the formal visit by the mayor, Iwaki welcomed two officials from SRU as mentioned in further detail on the next page.

## Photos:

**Page 6 Top:** The mayor of Iwaki and the prime minister of Samoa holding the signed statement of agreement for the Rugby World Cup preliminary training camps

**Page 6 Bottom:** The mayor observing the preparation of Samoa's traditional umu cuisine

**Page 7 Top:** Aloii Alesana (left) and Zane Hilton (right) presenting a Manu Samoa jersey as a gift for the mayor of Iwaki

**Page 7 Bottom:** The SRU officials inspecting Iwaki Green Field with officials from Iwaki Rugby Union

# Samoa Rugby Union Delegation's Visit to Iwaki

As part of the preparations for this year's preliminary training camps, two coaching staff from the SRU visited Iwaki to inspect the facilities that the Manu Samoa players are likely to use during their time in Iwaki.



Over two days from 6 to 7 December, 2018, Zane Hilton, then high performance manager, and Aloii Alesana, team manager, inspected potential training venues such as Iwaki Green Field and its neighbouring indoor facility Iwaki Green Base as well as the facilities in Iwaki FC Park and Spa Resort Hawaiians.

Overall they were quite impressed with the quality of Iwaki's sports facilities, in particular, they complimented the staff of Iwaki Green Field for having a "world-class" rugby ground.



Apart from inspecting the training grounds, the officials were also able to meet Mayor Shimizu and hear about his experiences in Samoa when he visited earlier in October (as mentioned on the previous page).

Manu Samoa will arrive in Iwaki in September 2019 in the lead up to the Rugby World Cup and are scheduled to play against Japan on 5 October. However, it is anticipated that there will be many opportunities for Iwaki residents to enjoy cultural exchange with the Samoans during their time in the city.