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# FOOTBALL

## Chinese riot after Japan win final

Saturday, August 7, 2004 Posted: 11:13 PM EDT (0313 GMT)

**BEIJING, China -- Hundreds of Chinese soccer fans clashed with riot police for several hours outside Beijing's Workers' Stadium, pelting them with bottles and obscenities after their team lost 3-1 to Japan in a politically charged Asian Cup final.**

The governments from both nations had pleaded with fans for calm in the days before Saturday night's potentially politically explosive encounter.

But those calls were largely ignored. Loathing for Japan spewed from many in the 65,000-strong crowd that witnessed a disappointing effort from the host nation.

Japanese flags were burned, there were calls for boycotts of Japanese goods and boos and jeers greeted Japan's every move.

Any mistake by a Japan player earned cheers, while a tide of derision hit the defending champions every time they fell to the ground or feigned injury.

They booed so loudly that Japan's national anthem was drowned out, but the biggest outpouring of jeers came with the final whistle.

After Japan's third goal, the atmosphere in the stadium turned hostile and the stadium's PA system blasted static at full volume to drown out a constant wave of obscenities from the crowd during the cup presentation ceremony at the end of the match.

Around 6,000 riot police, troops and security staff were deployed for the match and some of them had to disperse angry fans outside the stadium.

For several hours after the game Chinese fans blocked traffic outside the stadium and set fire to Japanese flags, threw bottles and hurled abuse before riot police made their move.

The trouble outside prevented around 2,000 Japan fans -- who were separated from Chinese fans by rows of plainclothes police -- from leaving the stadium for several hours.

Hundreds of Chinese fans then gathered outside the hotel where the Japan team were staying, shouting nationalist slogans.

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Emotions run high in Beijing.

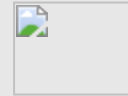
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There was a major police presence at the hotel and also at the Japanese ambassador's residence. The road outside the Japanese embassy was cordoned off.

"I think Chinese fans are not very civilized. With the Olympics coming up, it gives people around the world a very bad impression," Reuters quoted Jian Sexiong, a Japanese fan born in China who is studying at Tsinghua University.

Any match between rivals is always set to be heated, but the two nations' history gave Saturday's encounter a bigger edge.

Many Chinese still resent Japan's invasion and occupation of parts of their country from 1931 to 1945. Tens of millions died.

However, other issues still rile ordinary Chinese. Both nations regularly bicker over the sovereignty of a chain of islands in the East China Sea.

Last year, relations nose-dived further after a three-day sex romp involving hundreds of Japanese tourists and Chinese prostitutes at a hotel in south China.

State media on Saturday urged spectators to separate sport from politics at the final.

This plea followed poor crowd behavior at earlier Japan games in which hostile Chinese crowds jeered Japanese players, threw rubbish on the pitch and rushed Japan's team bus.

One 35-year-old man who described himself as a patriotic educator told Reuters it was important to remind the Japanese not to forget history.

"We're seeing their old fascism starting to come back a little. For example, they are sending troops abroad," he said.

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