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# AUTODUEL 日本

**By Mike Montesa**

*"Good evening, autoduel fans! This is Mad Mike coming to you live from Japan via the World Sports Network's satellite link-up. We're glad you tuned in today to catch the first ever live autoduel broadcast from the Tokyo Imperial Autoduel Arena! What!?! You thought there was no autoduellling in Japan? The streets are too small for duelling cars? Think again! The Japanese absolutely love autoduellling!"*

Last year the Japan Autoduel Association Emperor's Cup competition drew 125,000 spectators and had a whopping 34% overnight TV rating, beating out baseball and combat sumo. And of course, there's Amateur Night. Autoduelling is the one sport in Japan that doesn't require a lengthy apprenticeship or training.

But Japanese autoduellling is different from stateside duels. The development of autoduellling in Japan has some unique influences leading to the situation today. Japan, a country with nearly half the population of the U.S and livable land the size of California, has never been an "automotive" culture. The reasons for this date back to the end of the second World War. After the war, most populated areas of Japan found themselves leveled. Rebuilding was undertaken in an unplanned and haphazard manner, resulting in cities where the road networks were spiderwebs of narrow, twisting streets and alleys. There are, of course, a few long, straight and wide highways and roads, but the majority of roadways in Japan are barely wide enough to drive a car through. Most streets have no names and having an address is no guarantee that you'll find the place you're looking for.

This situation was not too detrimental in the immediate post-war years. Japan's populace needed efficient public transportation and most people couldn't afford a car. The train and subway systems were developed and today are among the best in the world. The road situation, on the other hand, was a nightmare.

When Japan's economy boomed and Japan became an economic powerhouse, more people began buying cars. The roads were never designed to handle so much traffic, and traffic jams tens of kilometers long became commonplace. Driving a car somewhere often took longer than riding the train.

In Japan, cars are considered more to be luxury items than necessities. In the U.S, you have to have a car just to get around, but in Japan you don't. Still, many people want to have a car despite the lack of space and severe costs. Japanese car owners pay well over \$1,000 just to get a license. Parking spaces can cost anywhere from \$400 to \$700 a month. The yearly mandatory safety inspections can cost up to \$1,000, all for procedures that most Americans do themselves (changing the oil, spark plugs, etc.) Yet even with these restrictive costs, people continue buying

cars.

Autoduelling in Japan was banned until just a few years ago. Most Japanese autoduel fans had to watch U.S. duels via satellite. A few *bosozoku* (motorcycle gangs) tried a few impromptu duels in the streets, but were unsuccessful in generating any interest (mostly because of innocent bystander casualties). Basically, there just wasn't any space to build an autoduel arena. Then came the Great Quake of 2009.

Large areas of Tokyo were inundated by Tokyo Bay after the earthquake. Those areas left standing were abandoned. But, as many soon found out, these empty streets proved perfect for Japanese-style autoduelling. At first, the police cracked down on the autoduellists, but after the Marunouchi Riots, autoduelling had become so popular that the deserted downtown area was walled off, and duelling was allowed in the new arena. Sponsorship came from the big Japanese auto makers, and soon the Japan Autoduel Association was formed.

The Tokyo Imperial Autoduel Arena is unlike any other arena in the world. Since it is simply a walled-off part of Old Tokyo, no changes were necessary beyond adding press bunkers and installing cameras in various places among the ruins. Driving these streets is a unique challenge. Most are barely wide enough for one car, and 90° turns are common.

Japanese autoduel cars are small, with engine size rarely over 2000ccs. Active suspensions, ABS brakes and other high-performance options are necessities. Generally, Japanese Mini-cars mount one or two weapons max, and are not too heavily armored. But these cars can take these corners at speeds no larger vehicle could ever hope to.

Foreign drivers have only recently begun to make inroads into the JADA. The system of hiring foreign drivers in Japan is more like the free-agent system used in baseball. Since Japanese autoduelling teams are very close knit, it is not easy for foreign drivers to carve a niche for themselves. There are many cultural differences to overcome, and driving the unique Japanese autoduel cars in the Japanese arena sends many aspiring foreign drivers back home with their tails between their legs. Some however, have made quite a splash. J. J "Ratsmoker" Thomas won an upset victory over the Japanese favorite last year, causing officials to tighten restrictions on foreign drivers. "If he didn't want to burn, he shoulda had an extinguisher," Thomas shrugged after the championship.

It takes nerves of steel, and maybe a head full of rocks, to strap into one of these go-carts. But the action is fast and furious. If you've got the drive and the guts, you too can take a crack at the Japanese circuit.

### ***Japanese Mini-Car Design Restrictions***

Japanese mini-cars favor speed and maneuverability over firepower. In the twisting streets of the Imperial Arena; you've got to move fast and turn quick. Armor tends to be thickest in the front and rear, and on the bottom. In a close chase, with an enemy on your tail, a mine dropper or similar weapon is very deadly as there is nowhere to go except straight over the mines.

Weapons are mounted front and rear, and turrets are uncommon for all the weight and space they take up. It is difficult to get a side shot unless you are on a wide street or are taking a crossing shot. With often only split seconds to take a shot, hi-res targeting computers are a necessity.

Despite the dangers of dropped weapons, most drivers go for a rear shot since once you get on someone's tail, it is very difficult for them to shake you. In escaping, the key is speed. Take a

corner faster than your opponent can and he's likely to end up going through a wall.

### Body Size

Body size is limited to compact and sub-compact only. Mid-sized bodies may be used, but are classified as mini-vans.

### Armor

Metal armor is illegal. All other types are allowed.

### Modifications

All body modifications are allowed.

### Chassis & Suspension

Off-road suspension is illegal. All other modifications are allowed.

### Power Plant

Whatever you can fit under the hood. The Japanese love gasoline engines. They're real crowd-pleasers when they blow.

### Tires

All types allowed.

### Weapons

Weapons are limited to types that do 2d (+ mods) damage. One-shot weapons that do more than 2d are legal. This makes weapons like the Vulcan very popular. If you can imagine a 20mm Vulcan jammed inside an eight-foot mini-car, you'll understand why Japanese drivers are so crazed.

### Accessories

The Japanese love lots of useless gadgets and decorations in their cars. Anything goes, including more useful and lethal gadgetry. Kamibombs are crowd favorites!

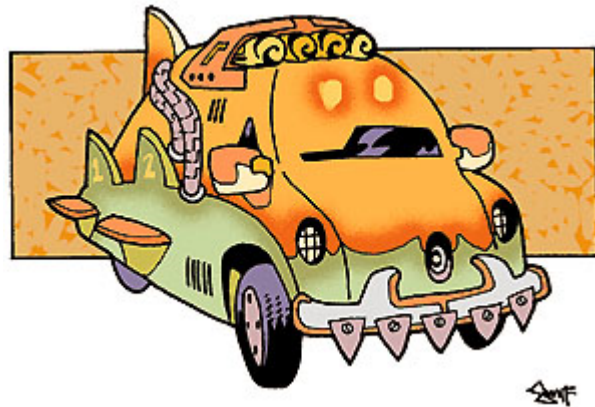
## *A Note on Collisions*

During play, you'll find that many vehicles will be trying to negotiate very sharp turns on very narrow streets. When making such turns, the edge of the vehicle counter may touch a wall or curb. This does not count as a collision unless the actual depiction of the vehicle itself touches the obstacle. Fishtails and skids resulting from failed Control Rolls will often result in another collision as the vehicle swings back to hit the other side of the street. Japanese duellists become very proficient at eyeballing where to begin their turns; starting one a fraction of a second early or late can spell the difference between a trip to the Winner's Circle and the cemetery.

## *Mini-Car Teams*

*"OK, we're back and with me tonight is our special guest, last year's champion **gaijin** driver, Mark "Warchild" Scurlock. Nice to have you on the show, Warchild, and it's great to see you out of therapy!"*

*"Wha . . . ?"*



*"Tonight we'll be seeing a rematch of last week's team competition between the Roppongi Banana Boyz and the Shinjuku Metal Army. It looks like a real grudge match tonight doesn't it, Warchild?"*

*"Uh . . . yeah, that's right Mike. I'll think we'll probably see at least one kill tonight, following Kengo "Flipstick" Takamura's big meltdown last week. SMA's anchor driver is looking for payback."*

*"Right. That was his brother he lost in that wreck wasn't it?"*

*"Affirmative, Mike. Losing Flipstick and the gas engine in Gojira ACE was a major setback for the team. Too bad there wasn't anything left to save."*

*"You mean of Flipstick?"*

*"No, the engine!"*

*"Oh, okay . . . Warchild, you drove a gas guzzler here last year. How do they stack up in Tokyo?"*

*"Just fine. They cost a bit if they blow, but what the hell, it ain't my money! That's what sponsors are for right?"*

*"Of course. Speaking of which, how do you think Keihin's Hot Legion will do tonight?"*

*"Hmph! They oughtta go back to hosing out the pits! If I had that crew working for me, I'd just set the car on fire and save everyone some time and ammunition. Forget about it!"*

*"You're still upset about last year's semi-finals, when Keihin pulled out as your sponsor just before the opening heat?"*

*"GRRRRRRRR!"*

## ***Getting It Together***

An autoduel team in Japan is much like its American counterpart. There is a manager, his staff, a team of drivers and a support staff. In Japan, however, the team is not owned by an owner backed by a sponsor. The team is owned by the sponsor.

The drivers on Japanese teams benefit from the stability of the system. A well-trained and cohesive unit can give a driver that extra edge he needs to win. The expense accounts and other perks are also quite good.

But "losing your ride" in Japan can mean that not only you, but the whole team is out of a job. Disgruntled sponsors are well-known for firing entire teams if they perform badly, then bringing in a whole new crew and simply changing the team name.

And speaking of team names, Japanese autoduel teams have some of the craziest names you've ever heard. Famous teams like the aforementioned Roppongi Banana Boyz and Shinjuku Metal Army share the limelight with others like Big Rhino Noise (a mostly foreign team) and Funky Daruma Style.

## ***Buying Your Team***

You have \$50,000 to build as many cars (or bikes) as you can using the Mini-car design restrictions. You also have an additional \$10,000 which can only be used to buy body armor and spare parts (tires, engines, etc.).

Vehicles are matched in duels by cost, just like in the States, but the Japanese divisions are different:

**Class 1** - \$7,499 or less.

**Class 2** - \$7,500 - \$12,499.

**Class 3** - \$12,500 - \$17,499.

**Class 4** - \$17,500 - \$22,499.

**Class 5** - \$22,500 - \$27,499.

**Class 6** - \$27,500 or more.

Now you need a team of drivers and gunners. You automatically have one driver for each car and a gunner for each car that needs one. You also get a chief mechanic. Make these using the character generation rules in the *Car Wars Compendium*. Backup drivers and gunners may be hired for \$500 each (payable with the spare parts money only).

Once your team enters the arena, its fate lies in the hands of the drivers. Drivers rack up Prestige points for themselves and for the team as a whole. A driver with -5 points or less is cut from the team. A team with -15 points is fired! This means everyone, including the race queens. A new team takes over using the same vehicles. Roll up new characters.

Your team is out of play when:

1. It is fired.
2. You can no longer put vehicles in the arena.
3. All your drivers are dead.

Between tournament rounds you may repair your vehicles, hire or fire crew members and wreck the karaoke bars!

### ***Team Names***

Go ahead and get crazy with this. The only rule is that team names are always made up of three words, and they don't have to make sense (although they might in some weird abstract way).

### ***Tournaments***

Japanese tournaments are a series of seven heats, one heat for each class, and a final open heat. If a team has a vehicle of the right class for a heat, only that vehicle may be used. If a team does not have any vehicles of the right class for a heat, it may use any combination of vehicles as long as the total value doesn't exceed the limit for that class. This often results in teams running two, three or even four vehicles in the Class 6 heat.

In the final, open heat, each team chooses one vehicle and its best driver, and sets them loose on each other.

The tournament winner is the team with the most wins. How do you win a heat? Simple. Destroy the enemy vehicles or render them immobile. Forcing an enemy to retreat to the pits is also a win.

#### Awards

The overall winning team receives the *Yusho*, the grand prize. This prize is worth \$50,000. Other typical awards are:

*Ginoshō*: for the highest speed attained while taking a corner of more than 45°.

*Kinboshi*: for an upset win over a higher-classed vehicle.

*Kantoshō*: for fighting spirit (awarded at players' discretion)

*Shukunshō*: outstanding performance (number of kills)

Each of these awards is worth \$10,000, except the *Kinboshi*. This award is worth the value of the more expensive vehicle.

### *Sample Vehicles*

**Widowmaker** - Class 1, Sub-compact, hvy. chassis, std. suspension, large power plant, 4 HD tires, driver, 1 HR front linked to bumper trigger, ramplate, SD rear. Armor: F20, R10, L10, B20, T5, U10. Safety seat. Accel. 5, top speed 98.5, HC 3; 2,435 lbs., \$4,505.

**Pandemonium Fencer** - Class 2, Sub-compact, x-hvy. chassis, hvy. suspension, 100 cid engine w/tubular headers and turbocharger, 3-gallon duelling tank, 4 PR radial tires, ABS brakes, driver, VMG front, SD rear, FOD rear. Armor: F20, R18, L18, B20, T10, U14. Portable fire extinguisher. Accel. 10/15 w/turbocharger, top speed 92.5, HC 5, 2,715 lbs., \$12,366.

**Rice Burner** - Class 3, Mid-size (counts as mini-van), x-hvy. chassis dual axle, six wheels, hvy. suspension, large power plant, 6 PR tires, HD brakes driver, safety seat, HDFT front, MD rear. Armor: F45, R30, L30, B45, T25, U25. Fire extinguisher. Accel. 5. top speed 95.5, HC3, 5,525 lbs., \$12,750.

**Pandemonium Fencer II** - Class 4, Compact, x-hvy chassis, active hvy. suspension, 150 cid engine, 4-gallon duelling tank, 4 HD steel-belted radial tires, ABS brakes, driver, roll cage, safety seat, RL front, 2 HR rear. Armor: F40, R35, L35, B40, T15, U15. Air dam, spoiler, hi-res SWC (RL). Accel. 10, top speed 121, HC 5(6), 3,770 lbs, \$20,565.



#### *Tokyo Imperial Arena Map*

Shaded areas represent buildings of 1 to 4 stories in height and have 6 to 20 DPs, with the majority of the buildings being 12 DP structures. The area with the JADA logo is an open courtyard with the logo painted on the ground.

Combatants usually start in one of the corners and then proceed



into the maze of streets.

It is possible to circle the arena maze on the outside track, waiting for an opening, but this is seen as

cowardice and is frowned upon by most drivers and wildly booed by the fans. Cameras are mounted on every corner and a sky-cam hovers over the arena for aerial shots.

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