

# Pool impresses Japan team



P.J. Borja/For Pacific Daily News

**Cheers:** Athletes from the Japan national swimming team take part in a toast at a dinner welcoming them to Guam last night at the Westin Resort Guam.

## New swimming facility described as 'unbelievable' by coach

By Akash Shringi

For Pacific Daily News

The head coach of the Japan national swimming team thinks the new Olympic-standard, Olympic-size swimming pool at the LeoPalace Resort is "simply unbelievable."

"I think it's the best outdoor swimming pool I've seen in a while — much better than the outdoor swimming pools we have in Japan," Yusuke Takahashi said after a press conference held for the Japan national swimming team last night at the Somnak Room in the Westin Resort Guam.

The Japan national swimming team — made up of 26 swimmers — will be on Guam for one week training at the swimming pool. The team is preparing for the 2003 World Swimming Championships, which begin July 7 in Barcelona, Spain.

"We actually made our cuts last week in Japan and (yesterday's) practice was our first practice as a full team," Takahashi said. "So basically, it was a real important practice for us."

The Japanese swimming team got its first taste of the swimming

### SWIMMING

pool, which took 10 months to build, according to Joe Manzon IV, LeoPalace Resort director of administration.

The island is invited to come and watch the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Olympic-standard swimming pool 11 a.m. today at the resort. First lady Joann Camacho, who gave a 15-minute introduction speech last night at the press conference, will help cut the ribbon at the ceremony, Manzon said.

### Pool promotes Guam to Asia

Tony Lamorena, general manager of the Guam Visitors Bureau, said the new pool at the resort is just another example of sports tourism on Guam.

"It's not much about the revenues, because really, we can't say how much the island can gain in terms of money from this pool," Lamorena said. "But the most important thing about a facility like this is we're promoting Guam to Japan and the rest of Asia."

Lamorena said it's hard for the government of Guam to actually build a Olympic-standard facility because of other obligations in terms of finance.

"It's always nice to see a private company help the government by investing money and building a facility like what LeoPalace did," he said. "But this isn't it. They have the baseball field, which more than likely will be used again by the Yomiuri Giants, and then they have the soccer field, which has also been used in the past by a professional soccer team in Japan. It's really great to see this happening on Guam."

### Japan team plans to return for training

The Japan national swimming team already has plans to train in Guam next spring prior to the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece, Takahashi said.

"We like Guam because the people are very warm and so is the place," he said. "We're basically here to work on endurance, and we're probably going to do the same next year."

Kosuke Kitajima, a world

### IF YOU GO

- ▲ **What:** Ribbon-cutting ceremony for Olympic standing swimming pool
- ▲ **Where:** LeoPalace Resort
- ▲ **When:** 11 a.m. today
- ▲ **Info:** Contact Hiroji Kasamatsu at 471-0001

record holder in the 200-meter breaststroke and a fourth-place finisher in the event at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia, is one of the 26 Japanese swimmers on Guam.

### Local swimmers may use the pool

Manzon said LeoPalace Resort is in the process of working out a deal to allow competitive swimmers to have access of the pool. As of now, the cost of the price to use the pool has not been announced, he said.

"But we will be willing to work with the (Guam Amateur Swimming Federation)," he said.