



## ***Mexico Gains Revenge And Bronze Medal***

Mexico gained revenge for last year's 8-7 Bronze Medal game lost despite Japan scoring two touchdowns in 43 seconds in the first quarter. Mexico ran off 18 unanswered points in the second half to earn third place.

Japan's spread offense drove the ball down the Mexican defense quickly on their first possession. They capped off their six-play, 60-yard drive when quarterback Hiroshi Matsuda dumped the ball off to his mobile running back Satoshi Kawahara and he dashed 18 yards to his way to the end zone to score the first points of the game.

Leading 7-0, Japan's defense took advantage of their great start. On Mexico's second play from scrimmage, quarterback Ariosto Cruz was intercepted by Japan's multi position player Shinnosuke Kamo and he returned it for a 32-yard touchdown to increase the score to 14-0.

Mexico settled their nerves on their second possession when backup quarterback Gabriel Meneses found Fabian Gonzalez down the middle for a 33 yard gain to place them in Japan territory. The drive was stopped three plays later when Meneses was stripped of the ball by Japan's Hiroyuki Kozawa and was recovered by Ikuo Kitamura.

Japan's first mistake of the game came with 00:52 left in the first quarter. Matsuda, who was 4-4 so far in the game, threw a jump ball for a receiver and the ball found the hands of Mexico's defensive back Juan Carlos Hernandez at the Mexico 5-yard line.

A Mexico punt pinned Japan within their own 15-yard line, but Japan suffered another turnover when Kawahara mishandled the option pitch from Matsuda and Mexico's defensive linesman Romel Sanchez recovered the fumble at Japan's 8-yard line. The ensuing play, Alexis Magallanes pushed his way through the Japanese defenders to score Mexico's first points of the game to make it 14-7, with 7:02 left in the second quarter.

After having back-to-back turnovers on their last two offensive possessions, Japan's offense regained their rhythm. Their eight-play, 46-yard drive consumed 4:32 and ended with a 30-yard field goal by kicker Yoshitaka Imae.

Mexico's attempt to counter ended in a turnover of their when Meneses fumbled the ball into the grasp of Kitamura for his second fumble recovery of the game. With eight seconds left in the half, Matsuda forced another pass and was picked off by Arturo Martinez in the end zone to finish an exciting first half.

Mexico started the second half with the ball and some fight left in them, using a mix of run and pass to set up a nine yard touchdown dash by Alfonso Espinoza to cut the Japanese lead to three.

Japan's offense sputtered out of the gate to begin the second half. Matsuda was called for an intentional grounding penalty in the end zone, which resulted in a safety and the Japan lead was suddenly only one point, 17-16 with 5:43 left in the third quarter.

Mexico's rushing game took over as three straight runs for 53 yards lead to Magallanes' second touchdown of the game to give Mexico their first lead at 22-17. Mexico's two-point conversion attempt was unsuccessful.

Adrian Incapie connected on a 34-yard field goal to give Mexico a 25-17 lead with 9:32 in the fourth quarter, then Japan's Matsuda, who started the day off brilliantly, threw his third interception of the day to give Mexico a chance to seal the game with 7:06 remaining. Japan's defense held on fourth and short to give their offense a chance to equalize, but that dream vanished when Matsuda tossed his fourth interception on the next play.

Japan did have one more chance to tie the game. The offense had the ball at their own 19-yard line with 2:09 on the clock. Matsuda stayed calm under pressure leading the team to Mexico's 29-yard line with 00:55 left. Facing a fourth and 10 with 00:39 left, Matsuda was forced out of the pocket and scrambled for five yards, but came up five yards short of the first down marker.

Meneses finished the day 7-9 for 114 yards and Magallanes rushed for 96 yards on 18 attempts and two touchdowns. Mexico's defensive linesman Daniel Canul was named the team's MVP for the tournament, while defensive back Naosuke Kikkawa was named Japan's MVP.