

This weekend I added driving a 10-person van to Nagano for a soccer tournament to my long list of experiences in Japan. After work on Friday I went to pick up the biggest van I've ever seen, and we were off.

I've never driven a car much bigger than a medium-sized Japanese car. Even though I come from the United States, the land of huge vehicles, I haven't even been behind the wheel of a van before. So when I realized that I was the only person in the North of Mie with a Japanese driver's license, I started to get a little bit nervous about the idea of driving everyone to Nagano. When I picked up the van, its size was exaggerated by the sight of my teeny, tiny k car right beside it. I was pretty nervous, but once I started driving, it actually wasn't so bad. By the time I picked up all of my passengers at Kuwana station, I was feeling good behind the wheel of the "bus." We had a fun and uneventful ride there, but when we got there around 1 in the morning I was really ready to go to sleep!

The next morning we were up early to get ready for our first soccer games. We went to breakfast with hundreds of other ALTs from around Japan who were there to play in the tournament, and I was pleasantly surprised that it actually felt pretty cold! We were up in the mountains so I really enjoyed the cool air. We got warmed up and started to play our games and had a really fun day. It was actually the first time that I had ever played soccer, and though I didn't score any goals, I still think I did pretty well. Overall, we weren't the worst teams there, but we definitely weren't the best either. At least the Mie girls won one game—the boys didn't win any!

On Sunday, we had our last game. If we would have won, we could have continued to play through the day. But I think that everyone was happy that we lost so that we could eat lunch and come back to Mie! It was a really fun weekend but we were all pretty tired from playing so much. Almost everyone slept in the car on the way home (except for me!).

In my first two years, I didn't join the soccer team because I thought I wasn't good at sports and I didn't think I could help the team. But my attitude has changed in the past few years and I decided that I might as well give it a try. I'll try anything once! As it turns out, I'm not really that bad at soccer. I'm not the star of the team, but with the help of the other players, I think we could all do well together. If there's one thing I've learned in Japan it's that it is important to try new things. I'll definitely be playing in the spring tournament next year. Who knows what I'll try next!