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Japan welcomes home Olympic medallists with big celebration

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Japan's swimming team brought home 11 medals from the 2012 London Olympic Games (three silver and 8 bronze). It is the second largest number of medals in Japanese Swimming history at the Olympics, together with the equally successful tally of 11 medals earned at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany. Japan picked up their biggest medal tally, 12, at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, USA. The Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) and fans reserved a big reception for the national athletes who collected altogether 38 Olympic medals - 7 gold, 14 silver and 17 bronze - when they returned home after the Games in mid August. This is Japan's biggest overall medal tally in the history of the Games.

The JOC organised the London Olympic medallists parade in Tokyo's Ginza district on August 20. For an hour, more than 500,000 fans gathered to cheer on the national athletes in what was a noisy and happy celebration. 71 medallists (out of 76) took part in the Olympic victory parade. Sahori Yoshida, Team Japan's captain and a gold medallist in women's wrestling for the third time in a row, led the medallists parade with pride.

Japanese swimmers who captured medals in London included Satomi Suzuki, Aya Terakawa, Natsumi Hoshi, Yuka Kato, Haruna Ueda, Ryosuke Irie, Takeshi Matsuda, Ryo Tateishi, Kosuke Hagino and Kosuke Kitajima, who stood up on a bus roof and waved their hands as wide as possible to thank the supporters of Japan cheering from both sides of the Ginza street. It was the first time an Olympic victory parade was organised by the JOC, representing a milestone in the history of the Japanese Olympic Committee.

Little time to rest as Japan's young swimming elite - among which Kosuke Hagino, bronze medallist in the men's 400m IM in London, and Akihiro Yamaguchi - took to the high-school championships organised in Niigata-ken, Japan from August 17-20. Hagino broke the national high-school record in the men's 200m backstroke, clocking 1:55.81 while Yamaguchi set two new national high school records in the men's 100m and 200m breaststroke (59.56 and 2:07.84).
