



Opus 46

Kishi Kurokawa, Oita Stadium, Oita, Japan

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Known as the »Big Eye«, the Oita Stadium is one of the chosen venues for the next World Cup in 2002. It will be reused for the second stage of the Japan Inter-Prefectural Athletic Competition in 2008 after the World Cup, continuing to grow in the future to become a large-scale all-purpose sports park for Oita.

The whole site covers an area of 225 ha and has several facilities outside the main football stadium. These include general fitness, training and accomodation facilities, a botanical pool, two multi-purpose athletic fields, two rugby and soccer practice pitches, a softball field, tennis courts and other game areas.

The main stadium features an open track for athletic events as well as the football pitch. Seats are placed right up to the edge of the pitch to bring spectators close to the action at soccer matches. To change over for track events a retractable seating system was developed. The retractable roof means that the stadium can be used all the year round.

The stadium sits elegantly on its site, enhanced by the gentle curves of its spherical design. The choice of the sphere, Kurokawa says, is »an expression of abstract symbolism«. This spherical shape also enables the retractable portion to move along its curved surface. The use of Teflon membrane panels with 25 % light permeability obviates the need for artificial lighting during daylight hours. In order for the pitch to get proper exposure to sunlight the elliptical roof opening runs along the north-south axis. A main arch with perpendicular horizontal sub-members follows the elliptical shape of the roof opening. Between the roof and the spectator seating below the surrounding mountains can be seen from a slender ventilation clerestory set just below the roof line. This slit of space is designed to create a feeling of openness inside the stadium. Since the original design, an idea emerged of fitting a moving camera on the main beam to deliver special dynamic images for television audiences around the world.

Dennis Sharp studied architecture at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London and architectural history at Liverpool University. He was curator and designer of the Kurokawa exhibition by the Royal Institute of British Architects in London in 1998. Koji Kobayashi is famous for his distinguished photographs of contemporary architecture; previously he worked as a photographer for the architectural Japanese magazine *Shinken-chi-ku*.

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