Multilingual Electronic Newsletter – Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings (Vol. 126)

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I get asked about Japanese baseball players who play in the Major League quite often. As an American living in Japan, and especially as Coordinator for International Relations for Kagoshima Prefecture, I meet a lot of new people, and get a lot of questions from people I meet. Of course, one of the first questions I always get is “where are you from?” and when I reply I’m ‘from Seattle’, almost everyone without fail says ‘ah, Mariners!’, and some people even do the bat swinging motion and say ‘Ichiro’. It always seems like people know Seattle when they say that, so I say ‘ah, you know Seattle’, and they say ‘yeah, well you know, the Mariners are famous’, and then it’s clear the only thing they know about Seattle is the Mariners. Some people I meet surely know a lot about Seattle, but most people don’t know where it’s at, or anything other than that’s where the Mariners are. I’ve had a lot of these conversations when I first meet people, so I came to not expect much when I meet people, but I think its amazing that because of athletes like Ichiro and others, the name Seattle is so well known by Japanese people. And I also realized that Japanese people really like baseball.

I get asked ‘how about Japanese baseball players? Are they popular over there (in the U.S.)?’ The Japanese players who played MLB (Major League Baseball) in the past and those who are currently playing there are certainly popular baseball players. There are many great Japanese players who over the past 20 years, have garnered much popularity not just among Mariners fans, but American fans nationwide including: Ichiro, who achieved so many records in the baseball world, as well as Matsui, Nomo, Darvish; Mariners such as Jojima, Hasegawa, and Sasaki; and of course Otani who made such an impressive debut this season.

Despite that, I’m not certain how much American fans are aware of baseball players’ nationalities in general, but my guess is probably not very much. The reason is there are a lot of foreign MLB players, and since there are athletes from so many different countries, being a foreign player is nothing out of the ordinary; I tend to think MLB players are recognized more for what team they play for, and less for what country they are from. According to the MLB homepage, there are 238 overseas players from 18 countries/regions for this year’s season (2018), tying the 1998 season record for the most nationalities in the league’s history. Players with Asian nationalities are 8 players each from Japan and Korea, and 4 from Taiwan for a total of just 20 players. In comparison, the number of players from Central and South American countries is overwhelmingly large. The most numerous nationality in MBL is Dominican
(Dominican Republic) at 82 players, next is Venezuelan at 63 players, and Cuban is 3rd at 23 players. There are also MLB players with Australian and European nationalities, and on top of that the U.S.A. is a polyethnic country, making for diverse ethnicities and backgrounds for MLB players. As a result I think players are seen more for what team they play for, and less for what country they are from. Without a doubt, plenty of fans know that Japanese players’ nationality are Japanese, but in general team, position, and stats get the attention.

Baseball is big in Japan, and it’s a sport that many people participate in, from little league to pro level. The number of players aiming for the Major League to realize their potential are certainly more than just a few. I think it is precisely because of the fact that the Major League in the U.S. accepts talented players from all over the world that it is the highest stage in the baseball world, but I don’t think players go there for the purpose of representing their country, like athletes at the Olympic Games, they more likely go to the majors to perform on the world’s stage for high level baseball. The Japanese athletes who go to the majors are a source of pride and national representation in Japan, but in the U.S. they are seen less as Japanese players or foreign players, and more as professional baseball players regardless of ethnicity or background.

Kagoshima International Exchange A-Z

The “Hong Kong-Kagoshima Conference” was held on September 5 (Wed)

Kagoshima Prefectural Government welcomed the arrival of the Hong Kong delegation and held the 21st Hong Kong-Kagoshima Conference on the 5th of September, Wednesday. Representatives from Hong Kong include Ms Shirley Yung, Principal Representative of the Hong Kong SAR Economic and Trade Office in Tokyo and Ms Shirley Yuen, CEO of Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce.

Since 1980, this conference is held biennially and reciprocally with the aim of discussing mutual exchanges.

Both parties reached an agreement covering 7 topics of exchange including economy, tourism, and youth exchange.

At the round table meeting as well as the governor-hosted dinner reception held later in the same day, Kagoshima Prefecture also requested Hong Kong’s assistance in promoting the export of Kagoshima Wagyu beef – Japan’s number one Wagyu beef – and other agricultural, livestock, seafood products and shochu liquor to Hong Kong.

Kagoshima Prefectural Government will continue to actively engage in exchanges with Hong Kong.
Kagoshima International Exchange A-Z
The 2018 Kagoshima Overseas Technical Trainees Arrived in Kagoshima

Since 1981, Kagoshima Prefecture has been accepting overseas technical trainees to learn vocational skills in the prefecture. As of last fiscal year, 237 people from 27 countries have come to Kagoshima to study specialised skills in various fields.

This fiscal year, a trainee each from Brazil, Argentina and Jiangsu Province in China arrived in Kagoshima on the 6th of September. The 3 trainees will respectively study wedding planning, herbal medicine, and early childhood education.

They will undertake Japanese language studies at the Kagoshima Asia-Pacific Intercultural Countryside Center till the end of October, after which they will undertake training in their field of specialisation at their respective organisations from November to February next year.
A Note from the Editors (Kagoshima Prefecture International Affairs Division)

What did you think of this month’s “Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings”? The editors will continue to strive to make this prefectural foreign language newsletter a source of information and a bridge to connect all of you to Kagoshima. We’d like to ask our readers to provide their opinions, suggestions, article contributions and Kagoshima-related news.

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