

# Asian Baseball Research Committee

Newsletter | Spring 2014

## 1914-2014: Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Seattle Asahi Goodwill Tour of Japan

The 2014 season marks the 100th anniversary of the Seattle Asahi Tour to Japan. Led by Nikkei (Japanese-American) baseball pioneer **Tokichi “Frank” Fukuda** (b. 1886), the Asahi’s 1914 tour is historically significant because it marked the first time for a mainland Nikkei ball club to tour Japan. Nikkei ball clubs played a major role in helping to building this U.S.-Japan baseball bridge by participating in 25 of 97 tours (see chart on pg. 3) between 1900 and 1940. With Japanese baseball stars like Masahiro Tanaka, Yu Darvish and Ichiro changing the face of MLB today, the Trans-Pacific Goodwill Baseball Bridge between the U.S. and Japan clearly has had a significant impact on the game. And for mainland Nikkei ball clubs, it all began with the Seattle Asahi and their 122 day journey to Japan (Sept. 14, 1914 to Jan. 15, 1915).



*Photo: The 1914 Seattle Asahi. Team manager Frank Fukuda (standing, back row, far left)  
Source: David Eskenazi Collection*

## 1914 Seattle Asahi Roster

First Name	Nickname	Last Name	Birth Date
Shuji	John	Ikeda	1/5/1891
Yoshiaki		Marumo	1890
Fusasaburo		Takahashi	11/3/1890
Masao		Yasuda	1895
Fukuo		Sano	2/19/1891
Shikajiro		Kawachi	1890
Hidekichi		Kobayashi	2/2/1897
Shozo		Nagari	1892
Yoshigoro		Yamada	12/5/1883
Saburo		Otamai	1898
Katsuji	George	Nakamura	10/1/1884
Tokichi	Frank	Fukuda	8/8/1886
Ryoichi		Karashima	5/5/1884

*Source: Ancestry.com: Washington, Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1961 for Tokichi Fukuda*

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## Former PCL Pitcher George Engel Joined the Seattle Asahi for '14 Tour to Japan



*Photo: Pitcher George Engel (standing, third from left) with the 1917 Seattle Mikados.  
Source: David Eskenazi Collection*

**George M. Engel** was a right-handed pitcher from Cincinnati, OH (b. 1875) who compiled a 127-80 record over 11 seasons with teams in the west including the Vancouver Beavers, Seattle Giants, Seattle Turks, Sioux City Packers and Denver Grizzlies. After his playing career ended in 1912 he assisted the local Nikkei teams in the Seattle area. He joined the Seattle Asahi for their tour of Japan in 1914 but appears to have returned to the U.S. on October 23, 1914, several months before the remaining members of the Asahi ball club (January 15, 1914).

Source *Washington, Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1961 for George M Engel*

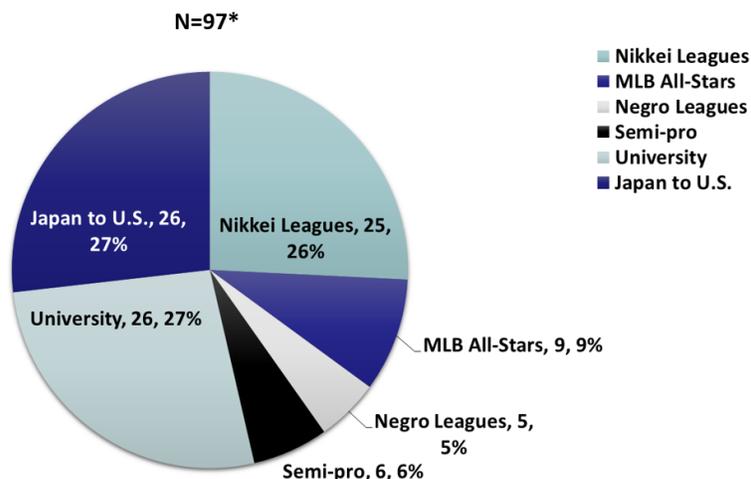
Source: <http://www.baseball-reference.com/minors/player.cgi?id=engel-002geo>

## Nikkei Baseball Goodwill Tours of Japan, 1900-1940

Seattle ball clubs represented 7 of the 25 Nikkei tours between 1900 and 1940, touring in 1914, 1915, 1918, 1920, 1921, 1923 and 1933.

YEAR	NIKKEI TEAM	YEAR	NIKKEI TEAM
1908	St. Louis School (Hawaii)	1924	Fresno Athletic Club
1914	Seattle Asahi	1925	San Jose Asahi
1915	Honolulu Asahi	1926	Honolulu Asahi
1915	Seattle Asahi	1927	Aratani Guadalupe Packers
1918	Seattle Asahi	1927	Fresno Athletic Club
1920	Honolulu Asahi	1928	Stockton Yamato
1920	Seattle Mikados	1931	Kono Alameda All-Stars
1921	Hawaii All-Stars	1931	LA Nippon
1921	Hawaii Hilo	1933	Seattle Taiyos (Suns)
1921	Hawaii Nippon	1935	Nipponese All-Stars
1921	Seattle Asahi	1937	Kono Alameda All-Stars
1921	Vancouver Asahi	1940	Honolulu Asahi
1923	Seattle Asahi - Mikados		

## U.S.-Japan Baseball Tours, 1900-1940



\*Includes 2 instructional tours by individual MLB players.

## 1964-2014: Celebrating Masanori Murakami and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first Japanese Major Leaguer

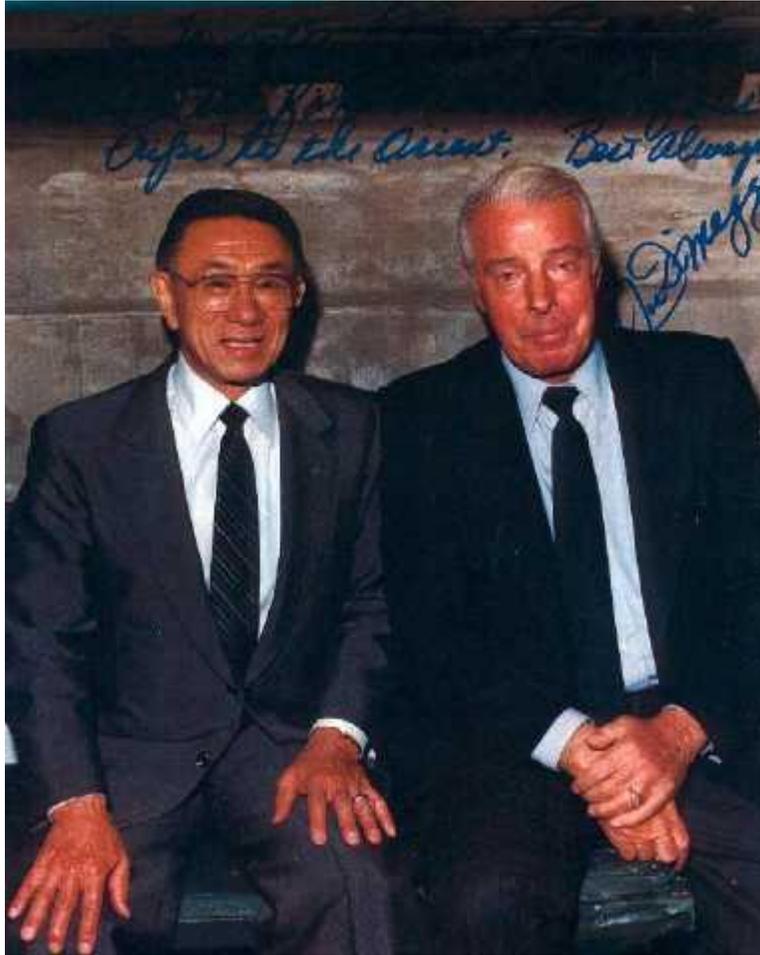


*Photo: Rookie Masanori Murakami (center) is greeted by Nikkei baseball pioneers in Fresno, CA, at the start of the 1964 season. Left to right: Kenzhi Zenimura, Sam Yamasaki, Murakami, Johnny Nakagawa, Fred Yoshikawa. Source: Fresno Bee*

Sept. 1, 2014 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary when 20-year-old Giants' left-hander Masanori Murakami took the mound at Shea Stadium and became the first Japanese player to reach the Major Leagues. Six months before Murakami broke this barrier, his journey began in Spring Training in Arizona in March 1964. Rodney Johnson, president of the Arizona SABR Chapter, detailed Murakami's first spring training and quest for the majors.

### **The First Japanese Player in MLB Arrived via the Arizona Cactus League** *by Rodney Johnson*

**Masanori Murakami** started pitching professionally in 1962 with the Nankai Hawks while he was still in high school. In 1964, Murakami was one of three Japanese players (the other two were catcher **Hiroshi Takahashi** and third baseman **Tatsuhiko Tanaka**) loaned to the San Francisco Giants to get experience playing in the American minor leagues. The deal to bring the youngsters to the United States was engineered by **Cappy Harada**, a Japanese-American WWII hero living in Tokyo. Before they hit camp in Casa Grande, Arizona, the Japanese imports were treated to a trip to Disneyland. Murakami, who spoke the best English of the three, said that the Jungle Cruise was their favorite ride.



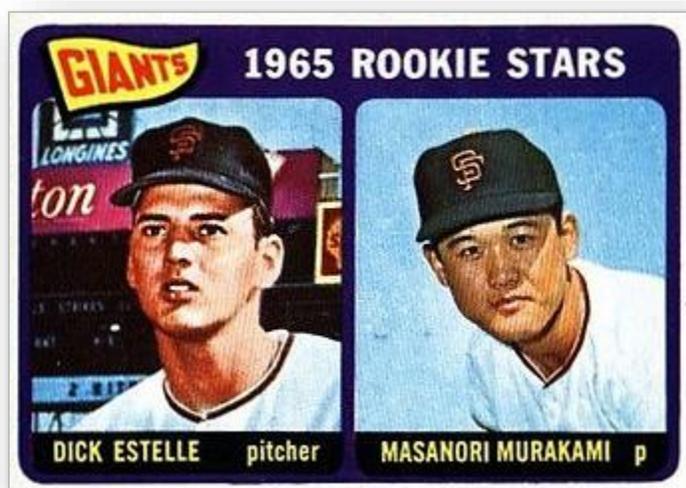
*Photo: Cappy Harada (left) engineered the signing of Masanori Murakami in 1964. Here he is with Joe DiMaggio, both U.S.-Japan baseball ambassadors and veterans of World War II. Source: Nisei Baseball Research Project.*

On March 14, Murakami, Takahashi and Tanaka, all reported to minor league camp in Casa Grande. The three Japanese high school stars entered the United States under the immigration law involving “aliens of distinguished merit and ability” and had to make the team in order to stay in the country. This was the first time that Japanese nationals had been admitted to American organized baseball. In Casa Grande, they watched and marveled at the monster home runs hit by Willie McCovey and at the velocity of Juan Marichal’s pitches. Murakami noted some differences from baseball in Japan. “The playing fields are so large,” he observed. “Mostly in Japan is only about 300 feet along foul lines and 360 feet to center.” Another difference he notices was in the bats. “American bats seem so unbreakable.” He went on to observe that although Japanese bats are also made of ash, they must not be cured and treated as long as the bats used in America.

At the conclusion of camp, Takahashi and Tanaka were shipped to Magic Valley (Twin Falls, ID) of the rookie level Pioneer League. Assigned to Fresno of the California League, Murakami made an immediate impression. In 8 1/3 innings over three appearances, he allowed but one hit while striking out 16. Originally Murakami was to return to Japan in June, but he was not recalled by the Hawks so he remained in Fresno for the entire California League season.

On May 19, he made his lone start of the season in the second game of a double header against Reno on Japanese-American Night in Fresno. In between games, Murakami, Takahasi and Tanaka, who were brought in from Idaho, were honored with plaques and other gifts recognizing them as the first Japanese natives to play in organized baseball. In front of 1,593 fans, Murakami was the winning pitcher going seven innings, giving up his first two runs of the season (one earned) and striking out 14 in the 3-2 victory. Takahasi and Tanka returned to Twin Falls where they hit .250 and .267 respectively. Giants' coaches assessed the two players' abilities, as "they never will be able to hit big league pitching." They went back to Japan after the season and never returned to play in the United States.

On the night that Fresno clinched the Cal League pennant; Murakami pitched the last four innings of a 6-5 win and struck out nine of the 12 hitters that he faced. In all, the 6', 180 lb. lefty appeared in 49 games, all but one in relief; had a 11-7 record; struck out 156 in 104 innings; walked just 34 (six intentional); and fashioned a 1.78 earned run average. His performance in the California League so impressed the Giants who were in a heated four-way pennant race that they called the 20-year old up from their class-A affiliate on September 1.



Giants' Vice President Chub Feeney made the announcement at San Francisco's Roosevelt Hotel. "We brought him up here to pitch," said Feeney, "and he'll pitch whenever (Giants manager) Dark wants him to."

Murakami arrived in New York where the Giants were taking on the Mets. It was there that he signed a Major League contract although he couldn't read a word of it. The Giants purchased his contract from the Hawks for \$10,000. On September 1, the Giants were honored guests at the New York World's fair. Each player, including Murakami, received a bronze medal bearing the official emblem of the fair. That night, the Japanese hurler made his big league debut.

In front of 39,379 at Shea Stadium, Masanori Murakami became the first Japanese player in the Major Leagues. He pitched the bottom of the eighth inning a 4-1 Giants loss. The Mets got one hit and Murakami struck out two in a scoreless inning. For the 1964 season, the lefty appeared in nine big league games posting a 1-0 record with one save. He had a 1.80 ERA and 15 strikeouts in 15 innings.

Although he threw only in the mid-80s, Murakami possessed a devastating screwball, which he delivered sidearm. He also threw a curve and changeup although he was hesitant to throw the changeup to Major League hitters.

“I throw fast ball and curve, but no change” said Murakami. “Relief pitcher come in, men on bases. Throw change. Boom! Long ball. No good. Here, all players big and strong and throw ball hard and hit long ball. In Japan, players not so big, don’t throw so hard, not so often hit long ball.”

Following the season, the southpaw returned to Arizona to pitch for the Giants’ Instructional League club in Scottsdale. He pitched in 11 games, eight starts, and posted a 5-3 record with a 1.61 ERA and 41 strikeouts in 56 innings. He also showed he could handle the bat as he hit at a .409 clip (9 for 22) and was even once used as a pinch hitter.

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## **Goro Mikami, All Nations Teams, 1914-1916**

*by Gary Ashwill*

SABR member Gary Ashwill’s great research covers both the Negro Leagues and Japanese baseball. The following is an excerpt from one his latest entries from his blog, *Agate Type*, that clarifies which All Nations teams Goro Mikami played for and when. Mikami recognized as the first Japanese pro player.

*Blog excerpt:*

So Goro Mikami (*photo, right*) appeared, at least briefly, with Wilkinson’s All Nations in both 1914 (as an outfielder) and 1915 (as a shortstop), as well as the All Nations of New York in 1916 (as a second baseman).

And, despite what has been frequently said (including by me), I don’t think I have actually seen him billed as “Jap Mikado” anywhere.

Moreover: it is commonly stated (again, including by me) that Goro Mikami was the first Japanese ballplayer to play professionally in the United States. This, it turns out, may not be true. Read on >>



[http://agatetype.typepad.com/agate\\_type/2014/01/goro-mikami-1914-1915-all-nations.html](http://agatetype.typepad.com/agate_type/2014/01/goro-mikami-1914-1915-all-nations.html)

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## Masahiro Tanaka Impresses in MLB Debut

We would be remiss if we did not mention the latest Japanese ace pitcher to join the majors, **Masahiro Tanaka** (*right*). In the first week of spring training, Tanaka has impressed his teammates and opposing players. Known for his accuracy, Tanaka has yet to walk a batter in 5 inning. He has however given up his first home run (as of 3/9/14). Phillies leadoff man Freddy Galvis hit the first home run off Tanaka on a 3-1 pitch. Phillies Marlon Byrd doubled off of Tanaka, but still respects the Japanese ace. "His fastball is explosive," Byrd said. "Balls that are low that look like they are going to stay balls they are strikes."



## Does Wakamatsu Give Royals the Edge vs. Tanaka as New Bench Coach?



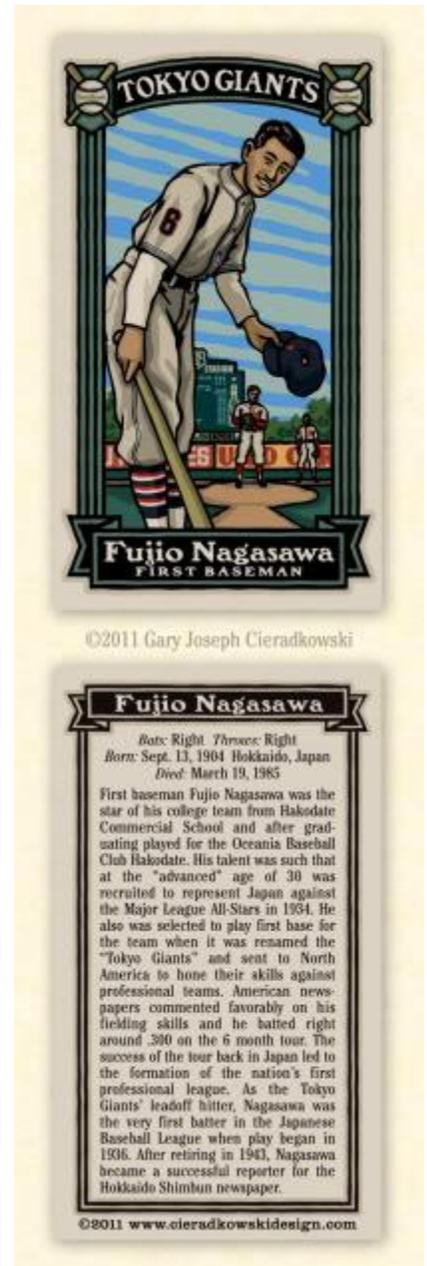
Congratulations to **Don Wakamatsu**, (*featured left, with manager Ned Yost*) who was named the bench coach of the Kansas City Royals during the off season.

Wakamatsu holds the distinction of being the first Asian-American manager in MLB history. In 2009 the Seattle Mariners selected Don as their skipper, a role that lasted until his firing in late 2010.

During the 2011-12 seasons Wakamatsu has served as a bench coach with John Farrell's Toronto Blue Jays and in 2013 was named a Special Assignment scout for the New York Yankees. **His special assignment? Scouting Masahiro Tanaka in Japan.**

In late September 2013 the Yankees sent Assistant GM Billy Eppler and Don Wakamatsu to scout most of Tanaka's starts in Japan. Now that Wakamatsu is with Kansas City, it will be interesting to see how the Royals' hitter perform against the Yankees ace right-hander. Maybe the Royal's will have the edge against Tanaka with Wakamatsu as their bench coach?

## A Tip of the Cap to Baseball Artist Gary Cieradkowski



Baseball artist **Gary Cieradkowski** is working on a new book to feature full-page illustrations of the unique baseball cards he creates for his blog, The Infinite Card Set. Above is a beautiful depiction of **Fujio Nagasawa**, one of the Tokyo Giants players that toured North America in the spring of 1935. According to Gary's blog, "One of the curious things the team would do was that before every player batted, he would remove his cap and bow at the catcher and umpire to show respect. It was something the American fans latched on to and the press ate up. My previous drawing portrayed the scene I envisioned (*upper right*), but now that I am doing the book, I knew that this idea had to be given the full-page treatment. The book will be 7 1/2" square (slightly bigger than my previous little book), so each full-page illustration will be a nice-sized piece, perfect for the Nagasawa scene."

Learn more about Fujio Nagasawa, Gary's blog and his new book at:

<http://infinitecardset.blogspot.com/2014/01/a-quick-book-preview-fujio-nagasawa.html>

# Nippon Professional Baseball League Offers English Only Site

Like Japanese baseball but only speak English? No problem, the Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB) League offers an English-only web site. Check it out: <http://www.npb.or.jp/eng>

日本語 Regular Season | Farm Leagues | Teams | Players

**NPB.or.jp** Nippon Professional Baseball Official Website

[2013パ・リーグ] ベストナイン(一塁手) 浅村 栄斗 (埼玉西武)

3.28 プロ野球開幕

2014 Schedules

- [ Pre-Season Games ]  
Feb. 16 (sun) - Mar. 23 (sun)
- [ Regular Season ]  
C.L. Opening Day : Mar. 28 (fri)  
P.L. Opening Day : Mar. 28 (fri)
- [ Interleague ]  
May. 20 (tue) - Jun. 22 (sun)
- [ All-Star Games ]  
Jul. 18 (fri) Seibu Dome  
Jul. 19 (sat) Koshien
- [ Climax Series ]  
First Stage : Oct.11 (sat) -  
Final Stage : Oct.15 (wed) -
- [ Nippon Series ]  
Game 1 : Oct. 25 (sat)
- [ Fresh All-Star Game ]  
Jul. 17 (thu) Nagasaki
- [ Farm Championship Game ]  
Oct. 4 (sat) TBD

2014 Season

- Calendar
- Schedules/Scores
- Standings
- Stats
- Farm Leagues - Schedules

Teams

- Players
- 2013 Season
- 2012 Season
- 2011 Season

PBL Pacific League GoldenEagles Lions Marines SoftBank HAWKS Buffaloes Fighters

Central League Giants Tigers Carp Dragons BAYSTARS Swallows



Visit <http://stores.ebay.com/Robs-Japanese-Cards> to purchase Japanese Baseball Cards from SABR member, award-winning author, and avid Japanese card collector, Rob Fitts.



## New Baseball Movie “Kano” A Must See

The movie "Kano" was released on January, 24, 2014 in Taiwan. Set in 1931, when Taiwan was a Japanese colony, Kano — an abbreviation for the Chiayi Agriculture and Forestry Public School — tells the true story of the high school's baseball team that traveled to Japan that summer to play in the Koshien tournament, a renowned high school baseball contest.

Trailer (1:29; with English subtitles) | [LINK](#)

Behind the scenes (6:16, no subtitles) | [LINK](#)



## SABR Korea Chapter Highlights



The new SABR Korea chapter, founded by co-chairmen Patrick Bourgo (*photo, left*) and Thomas St. John, was recently featured in *The Korea Times*. In the article Bourgo shared his vision for the chapter. “I’m hoping that we’re going to be able to facilitate much more of an exchange between what have previously been separate, English and Korean language baseball discussions. We don’t want language to be a barrier.”

“If there are Korean researchers who need help in English language research, then we can do that; if we need some help with Korean-related research we may see if we can get help that way,” he said.

Bourgo said that meetings are open to the public and that the chapter has already grown to 11 members. Group membership is comprised of scouts, bloggers, journalists and fans. Future chapter projects include constructing comprehensive Wikipedia pages for Korean players, helping the research community, and hosting a conference in 2015. Read the full article >>

[http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/sports/2014/01/136\\_149845.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/sports/2014/01/136_149845.html)

# SABR Asian Baseball Web Resources

<http://research.sabr.org/asianbb>

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Home United States Japanese South Korean Taiwanese Chinese Research

**WHY JOIN SABR?**

"SABR is the Phi Beta Kappa of baseball, providing scholarship which the sport has long needed ... An excellent way for all of us to add to our enjoyment of the greatest game."

**Ernie Harwell,**  
Broadcaster,  
Detroit Tigers

"SABR is baseball's best-kept secret ... its benefits are many for the advanced fan, the aspiring professional, or simply those who cannot get enough good baseball talk and text."

**John Thorn,** Official Historian

You are here: Home

## SABR Asian Baseball Committee

### Welcome to the Asian Baseball Committee website

Written by Staples, Jr. & Daigo Fujiwara  
Saturday, 16 July 2011 00:00

Welcome to the website of SABR's Asian Baseball Committee (ABC). The goals of the committee are to:

- Research, preserve and share the long history of interaction between American and Asian baseball
- Foster a sense of community among those with a shared passion for Asian Baseball
- Introduce Asian baseball to the North American public
- Serve as a valuable resource for those seeking more information about Asian Baseball

It is our sincere hope that the information and activities offered by the Asian Baseball Committee will achieve the above goals.

<https://www.facebook.com/asianbaseball>

Asian Baseball Community

You are posting, commenting, and liking as Asian Baseball Community — Change to Bill Staples

Asian Baseball Community Timeline Recent Admin Panel

ASIAN BASEBALL

Asian Baseball Community

Update Page Info Liked Following

Community

The Facebook community for Fans of Asian Baseball supported by the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) Asian Baseball Research Committee.

About Photos Likes Events



**SABR Asian Baseball Committee:**

The primary goal of the Asian Baseball Committee is to introduce Asian baseball to the North American public. Although there have been several notable books published on Japanese baseball, most American fans are still unfamiliar with the Japanese game. Furthermore, the lack of sources in English make details of Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese and Filipino baseball nearly unknown in the United States.

The Asian Baseball Committee hopes to increase awareness of Asian baseball by producing and distributing a committee newsletter; encouraging serious studies of Asian baseball by helping researchers network; encouraging members to publish their studies in the SABR journals and elsewhere, host research symposiums and connect with peers through SABR-sponsored events.

**Committee contacts:**

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Daigo Fujiwara, Vice-Chair ([daigo@daigofujiwara.com](mailto:daigo@daigofujiwara.com))