



Center for Japanese Studies 50th Anniversary *Hybrid Japan*

U.S.-Japan Baseball: History and Prospects December 6, 2008

[US-Japan Baseball: History and Prospects](#)

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On Saturday, December 6th, 2008, the Center for Japanese Studies presented a symposium on baseball in Japan and the United States. The symposium focused on how Japanese baseball and baseball players continue to make a dramatic impact on the increasingly global nature of this sport. Whether it's Japanese players in Major League Baseball, American managers in the Nippon Professional Baseball leagues, or Japanese American managers of MLB teams, the connections and interactions between U.S. and Japan baseball have never been more robust. Exploring the nature of Japanese baseball and its fan culture, the impact of Japanese players on the MLB, and the history of Japanese American baseball, this symposium featured key figures, both academics and player/managers, from the baseball field.

The symposium began with a screening of *The Zen of Bobby V*, an ESPN documentary about former MLB manager Bobby Valentine and his current job managing the Chiba Lotte Marines in Japan. This was followed by individual talks and a panel discussion with speakers William Kelly (Professor, Yale University), Warren Cromartie (former Yomiuri Giants player and MVP of Japan's Central League), Andrew Gordon (Professor, Harvard University), and Masanori Murakami (Japan's 1st MLB Player, former San Francisco Giants pitcher). Kelly spoke on the fan culture of a Japanese baseball team, the Hanshin Tigers, and described the team politics and melodrama that typically surround Japanese baseball and sports culture. Cromartie spoke about his experience signing with and playing for the Yomiuri Giants in Japan, and the joys and difficulties he faced living in Japan and adjusting to Japanese culture and Japanese baseball. Gordon spoke on the identification process facilitated by and around baseball in American and Japanese society where, historically, people have built and formed their identity around the ethnic, national, or religious background of players. However, he suggests that this process is now complicated by the increasingly global nature of the sport, with Japanese players coming to the U.S. and U.S. players going to Japan, and the changes in the way that players are recognized by their home country. Murakami spoke about his experience coming to the U.S., eventually signing with the San Francisco Giants, and the cultural barriers he faced as well as the things he learned and enjoyed while playing in the major league.

Event Program: December 6, 2008

Location: Lipman Room, Barrows Hall, UC Berkeley

Time: 9:00am-12:00pm

OPENING REMARKS

Duncan Williams (Chair, Center for Japanese Studies)

FILM SCREENING

The Zen of Bobby V. (ESPN Documentary, 2008, 86 min)

COMMENTS

Jack Sakazaki (President, Japan Sports Marketing, Inc.)

PANEL DISCUSSION

William Kelly (Anthropology/Japanese Studies, Yale University)

Author of *The Hanshin Tigers and Professional Baseball in Modern Japan*

Warren Cromartie

Former Yomiuri Giants player and MVP of Japan's Central League, author of *Slugging It Out in Japan*

Andrew Gordon (History, Harvard University)

Author of *The Unknown Story of Matsuzaka's Major League Revolution* (in Japanese)

Masanori Murakami

Japan's 1st MLB Player, former S.F. Giants pitcher, Director of the All Japan Baseball Foundation

Co-sponsored by: Yomiuri Shimbun, Department of Athletics



From left: Jack Sakazaki, William Kelly,
Andrew Gordon, Masanori Murakami,
Warren Cromartie, Duncan Williams