Volume 10 | Issue 45 | Number 2 | Article ID 3850 | Nov 04, 2012

Darvish in Texas: Haafu identity and athletic celebrity□□テキサスのダルヴィッシュ―ハーフであることと球界の寵児であること

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In early December 2011 the Nippon Ham Fighters of Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB) "posted" Yu Darvish, making him eligible to field contract offers from Major League Baseball (MLB) teams in the United States.[1] Darvish, a tall, handsome then 24 year old who, from 2005-2011, was the team's ace pitcher, had been the frequent subject of speculation: would he, and if so when, leave Japan for American baseball. By December 19 the Texas Rangers had won the posting process with a bid of $51.7 million dollars, paid entirely to Nippon Ham, payable upon the successful negotiation of a contract with Darvish. Several weeks later a six year, $60 million dollar agreement was signed and the next round of Darvish's athletic endeavors was set to unfold outside Japan. The month long process assumed its place alongside other moves by prominent Japanese baseball players to the United States, with baseball fans in both countries discussing and dissecting how he would fare against MLB competition.

If the details above told the complete tale, the movement of Darvish, as well as Hideo Nomo, Ichiro Suzuki, Hideki Matsui, Daisuke Matsuzaka, and other dominant Japanese baseball players to the United States, would be but another piece in the "global circulation of professional athletes, a phenomenon of increasing importance at this historical juncture" (Besnier 2012: 494). Darvish, however, adds a new and important twist to this global circulation of elite athletes, specifically their flight to the US baseball Mecca, and all the cultural, nationalistic, and political implications embodied therein. The popular curiosity and media-driven celebrity around Darvish stems in part from his association, as the son of an Iranian father and Japanese mother, with the label *haafu* (half) as a major component of his public identity. My position here is that while Darvish's *haafu*-ness complicates an already jumbled picture of conflating racial, cultural, athletic, and nationalistic categories, the attention it generates on either side of the Pacific is ultimately superficial. As I show below, Darvish's fame has not induced conversation in Japan or the United States on ethnicity and athletics, or substantially curtailed the often essentializing and overly deterministic interpretations of cultural difference frequently invoked by sports media in the two countries. In short, Darvish's already celebrity in Japan, and growing popular attention in the United States, has done little to impact larger social issues linked to discussion of *haafu* in Japan or the interplay between global identity politics and sports.

Darvish's celebrity derives from his unusual biography made public through athletic success in a sport popular in two of the world's wealthiest nations. This attention inserts Darvish into a wider conversation on the role and purpose of celebrity, particularly when understood as the source of culturally significant symbols to systems of advanced capitalism (Rojek 2012: 16). Celebrity within this framework is a cohesive social force, generating "by its dramas the structure and the strength with which to hold things in their proper place" (Inglis 2010: 8). As such, the myriad mechanisms of celebrity haul Darvish's biography out into the light for public consumption, but ultimately do little to

confront the underlying issues of identity, racism, or discrimination that persist within Japan and circulate globally.

Additionally, *haafu* as a descriptive category of identity must also be put into a wider cultural context. *haafu* classifications root categories of difference in popular understandings of blood and ethnicity, a decidedly unscientific measure of the amounts of Japanese and non-Japanese sanguinity thought to be running through an individual's veins. By calculating and compartmentalizing the individual as in-between, *haafu* recognition works against other overt forms of individual identity assertion. Thus, Darvish's claims to "being Japanese," supported by his linguistic competence and place of education and residence, are potentially diluted, but also challenged, through *haafu* designations. Such categorizations are by no means a distinctly Japanese trait. Murphy-Shigematsu notes how the "ethnic and racial politics in the US and UK exert pressure on individuals to identify with only one group" (2000: 197). The author adds that "the *haafu* image also does not include those who are physically indistinguishable from majority Japanese" (ibid 213). Thus, Darvish challenges such identity assertions as certain aspects of his physical appearance, his height and striking features, are attributed to his *haafu* background. What remains lost in this sea of conflicting claims is the irrelevance of Darvish's pronouncements on who he feels he is - an attempt to express individual identity that I contend is of fundamental importance to understanding sport and identity in a global setting. Within the context of *haafu* identity politics, Darvish the international celebrity overshadows Darvish the individual.

As *haafu*, Darvish is widely discussed and dissected in both Japan and the United States, albeit with differing and racially tinged interpretations of his relevance. This malleability of Darvish's public persona, itself firmly entrenched within "a culture of celebrity that emphasizes image, dissolves distance and forges familiarity," introduces greater layers of nuance and conflict than typically attributed to sports stars from Japan who entered the global mediascape (Smart 2005: 14). In Japan he is often depicted as a rebellious and exotic outlier evaluated through "blood ideology," yet one who staunchly insists on identifying himself as "100 percent Japanese" (Robertson 2002: 191, Weiner 2009: 2). However, Darvish is also presented by Japan's sport and celebrity media as a dutiful son and hard-working Japanese pitcher now trying to succeed in America, the latest on a growing list of expensive and incessantly discussed players posted by NPB teams and bought by wealthy MLB counterparts.

Shifting focus to the United States, and specifically Texas, Darvish exists as a highly scrutinized athlete made representative of, and burdened with "hyperbolic generalizations" concerning his national relevance to Japan (Joo 2012: 85). Such scrutiny is filtered through media narratives that allow sports stars to "become known as public figures and have qualities of 'personality' attributed to them" (Smart 2005: 16-17). Further, and more generally, he is a point of spectacular confluence around which varying claims to pieces of his affection, attention, endorsement, and aptitude are directed by a range of global viewers. As such, I look at Darvish as a "socially constructed phenomena, the product of both [a] particular historical moment and broader, cumulative discourses of celebrity that become transnational in reach," and that seek to transform individuals into global commodities for popular consumption (Frost 2011: 3).

Interpretations and appropriations of Darvish can be divided between the two nations, parading his "non-threatening" exoticism and celebrity in Japan, alongside a more enigmatic position in the United States as an Asian athlete who does not fit neatly into sometimes

racialized interpretations of athletic potential. Darvish's unusual background, coupled with his own insistence on his Japanese-ness, creates an intriguing but ultimately trivial persona insouciant to Japan's ethnic diversity or conflict. However, those in the United States charged with reporting and interpreting Darvish's athletic prowess offer another lens of interpretation. As a Japanese athlete, the American sports media is inclined to cast him in the mold of past Asian baseball players who moved to MLB. In such an environment, nuance and appreciation for difference fare poorly against sometimes racialized interpretations of Darvish's potential and chance at athletic success in America. The result is a jumble of racial and nationalistic interpretations laden with celebrated distraction, yet yielding little in the way of change concerning ethno-racial understandings of Japan, the United States, or perceptions of athletic capability.

Darvish Grows Up

Darvish's parents, Farsad and Ikuyo Darvish, met as international students, he from Iran and she from Japan, while attending Eckerd College in Florida in the 1970s. Yu was born in Hibikino, a suburb of Osaka, in 1986. He spent nearly all of his life prior to signing with the Rangers in Japan, traveling to Iran twice for short visits as a child and playing in various baseball tournaments around the world, but always residing in Japan (Cable n.d., Passan 2008). Despite his international parentage, Darvish has always unhesitatingly identified himself as Japanese, often presenting his linguistic skills, or lack thereof, as the principal evidence.

Darvish as a high school star

Prior to arrival in Texas he was viewed by most, especially the American sports media, as monolingual, speaking Japanese and using an interpreter to communicate with Rangers' staff and reporters. He did, however, feature in a Texas Rangers promotional television commercial, where the frequently invoked Abbott and Costello possibilities of his first name are fully exploited, and is said to be learning English and Spanish in order to better communicate with his teammates and coaches.[2] However, Farsad, a fluent English speaker, commented that his son understands the language well, and he is often observed communicating easily with coaches and teammates.

The distinctiveness of Darvish's biography is inescapable in accounts of his athletic success.

He is never just a dominant NPB pitcher now trying to replicate that success in the United States. Instead, in Japan he was always the son of a doting yet foreign father, frequently shown during Darvish's televised Nippon Ham games in cutaways between innings. Darvish has actively suppressed discussion of his *haafu*-ness, saying "I'm Japanese. I grew up as a Japanese. I'm 100 percent Japanese" (Passan 2008). Despite such assertions, race and subtle racism have shaped his professional career. In spite of being one of the highest evaluated pitchers in the 2004 NPB draft, several teams passed on selecting Darvish. Bobby Valentine, then manager of the Chiba Lotte Marines and manager of the Boston Red Sox in 2012, said he wanted to draft Darvish in 2004, but was told by his scouting director that he "didn't think [Darvish] was what our fans really would like to root for." Valentine smugly added during the same interview when he was still managing the Marines, "that scouting director is no longer with us" (Cable n.d.).

Darvish's "Japanese-ness," indisputable in his linguistic competence, place of birth and residence, and cultural literacy, matters little when confronting entrenched notions of foreignness (Sugimoto 2010: 192). The novelty of Darvish is his distinct parentage and background, enveloping his extraordinary athletic talent. Further, an insistence on extending racial qualifiers to attempt explanation for his popularity morphs into a process of confrontational and conflicting claims, where even Darvish's dismissal of such statements becomes irrelevant. As a result, I argue that it is productive to think of Darvish as both an Iranian-Japanese superstar pitcher and sports celebrity in Japan, as well as a now high priced Japanese baseball talent in MLB. In this absence of solidity, the image and appropriation of Darvish becomes a nodal point where "the impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning" is easily observed (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 112).

Interpretation and appropriation of Darvish's image, what is visible during games, either live or on television, as well as through his growing number of endorsements and advertisements, interviews, and social media campaigns in Jap*An An*d the United States, reveal a pliable persona shaped by the forces of global capitalistic flows rooted in the popularity of sport and his "non-threatening, 'spectacular difference'" (Frost 2011: 192).[3] Darvish's difference, his *haafu*-ness mixed with athletic skill and marketed charisma, exists in a manner that helps "mask lingering inequalities and tensions in post-war

A Darvish billboard for Asahi Black Beer in Tokyo, June 2012.

Japan" between a still prominent discourse on national ethnic homogeneity and a far more complex reality (ibid). As such, he cannot "be viewed as a product solely of his own creation, but neither can he be seen as simply a product of societal construction. He - and by extension other sports stars - play a part in molding not only his own image, but also the very society that is, in turn, molding it" (ibid). The flexibility

of Darvish as popular and marketable athletic persona, sutured chaotically upon the rigidity of local and global racial categories, suggests the possibility of a market driven malleability to such categories of identity and inclusion or exclusion. A malleability however that is ultimately vapid as it is "the industrialization of celebrity which holds these games in their position of social prominence" (Inglis 2010: 226). It is, in short, a process little interested in addressing *haafu* categories of identity if links to the creation and expansion of global profit cannot be formed.

Darvish's unusual biography has also resulted in claims upon his success from a new and disparate range of groups. Iranian-Americans, as reported in The Dallas Morning News, are "embracing" Darvish because his presence on the team helps "humanize Iranian-Americans" (April 8, 2012). Despite leaving Japan, his popularity there has also grown, spurred in part by prominent endorsement contracts, including one for Asahi Black Beer. His Texas Ranger coaches frequently praise Darvish for being "hard working" and "diligent," terms often used to describe previous Japanese players who moved from NPB to MLB. Finally, to ESPN and other American sports media outlets, who are always in search of anything resembling controversy - no matter how manufactured, he is the latest star player from Japan burdened with impossibly high expectations, due chiefly to the more than $100 million dollars the Rangers committed to spend in order to acquire him. Darvish the athlete has been consistently labeled a "work in progress" by baseball's American punditry. While possessing phenomenal baseball talent and an extraordinary array of pitches, he must in their view get "stronger" and "tougher" if he is to find sustained success and prove worthy of the Ranger's substantial financial investment. The 6 foot 5 inch pitcher nevertheless finished the season with a 16-9 record and a 3.90 earned run average, including a 3-0 record in September.

What is clear is that Darvish the individual matters little alongside Darvish the brand, icon, spokesperson, or team representative. The complexity of Darvish - his well-known *haafu* biography, athletic talent, and celebrity status - create disjuncture and discordant opinion on the cultural and popular significance of his accomplishments. While it is purely speculative to ask if Darvish will fundamentally alter racialized readings of Asian baseball players in America, or popularize the sport in Iran or among Iranian-Americans, his image functions as an example of Japan's post-war cosmopolitanism and capitalistic power that facilitates dismissal of persistent racial and economic inequalities, both in Japan and globally. As such, Darvish's dismissal of his *haafu*-ness fits with the larger historical pattern of Japanese athletes, including most prominently Sadaharu Oh - the global home run king born to a Taiwanese father and Japanese mother, minimizing their divergent identity claims within the interplay between individual athletic success and the popular interpretations it engenders.

Kōshien, cigarettes, and shotgun weddings

Japan's National High School Baseball Tournament at the iconic Kōshien Stadium outside Osaka reverberates every year with a cultural importance extending far beyond the athletic achievements of high school boys. At Kōshien a select group of players are forged into young men through a crucible of dirt, sweat, tears, defeat and, for only a select few, victory, all in games televised to the entire nation. As Kelly notes, "for decades… the single word, Kōshien… has called up in much of the national population the poignant display of idealized virtues by the nation's male adolescents" (2011: 484). Darvish's pitching earned him a place in this pantheon of young men who performed valiantly, particularly in defeat, at Kōshien, as well as the heavy moralistic responsibility and expectation such a performance heralds and obligates for the rest

of his athletic career.

Darvish's pitching dominance at both the spring and summer tournaments in 2003 and 2004 also marked the beginning of his celebrity. Tohoku High School, Darvish's team, did not win at Kōshien in either year, but his exemplary pitching was nationally broadcast during the popular tournaments. Ranked and scouted with the top Japanese high school baseball talents during his 2004 senior year, he was selected in the middle of the first round by the Nippon Ham Fighters. Controversy followed quickly in February 2005, when Darvish was photographed smoking a cigarette outside a pachinko parlor while 18, under the legal age for smoking and gambling (The Japan Times). After apologizing at a press conference, he was sent temporarily away from Nippon Ham spring training in Okinawa, and was not allowed to attend his high school graduation. A precedent for perceived disinterest in and disobedience toward the forces of mainstream morality was established. Darvish's stellar performance at Kōshien cloaked the seemingly trivial incident in thicker layers of moralizing judgment. As playing at Kōshien is conflated with a series of values that showcase "purity of motive, teamwork, obedience to authority and effort over talent," Darvish's youthful insolence allowed him to be interpreted in a fundamentally different, and *haafu* rooted, manner in contrast to previous "heroes of Kōshien" (Kelly 2011: 487). Such interpretations of baseball, the tournament and stadium, and its impact on shaping young Japanese men into proper adults, give the trivial conduct of a teenage Darvish greater resonance as the impact upon appropriations of and to his image as a professional player are considered further.

Darvish cover story from *An An* magazine

In 2007 Darvish posed nude, but did not reveal his genitalia, in the popular women's magazine *An An*. He also married Japanese television personality Saeko the same year, after she became pregnant with the couple's first child, followed by a second son several years later. Japan's celebrity media labeled their union a *dekichatta kekkon*, or "shotgun wedding," and their divorce in early 2012 generated little controversy. All of these events have combined to create in Darvish a celebrity persona markedly different from other prominent baseball players, particularly the meticulous and media reclusive Ichiro Suzuki, or the stoic and unquestioningly masculine Hideki Matsui.[4] Darvish, both through his own actions and the undulating currents of a technologically driven celebrity mediascape in Jap*an an*d abroad has became a rebellious, exotic, and athletically dominant figure (Appadurai 1996).

MLB's Racialized Multiculturalism

In May, 1995 Hideo Nomo began pitching for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Nomo left the Kintetsu Buffalos at the end of the previous season in a move that surprised many in the NPB establishment, becoming the first Japanese MLB player in thirty years.[5] His immediate success, leading the National League in strikeouts and winning the 1995 Rookie of the Year award, resulted in a slew of laudatory newspaper articles and media attention. This coverage was well summarized in the Los Angeles Times headline from July 1995, "Nomomania Grips L.A. and Japan" (Nightengale 1995). Yet underneath this applauding coverage lurked disdain and racialized critiques on the limits of capability for Japanese players in America. Nomo's success, while popularly intriguing, was increasingly labeled a "gimmick," due to his exaggerated, twisting, "tornado" windup that initially baffled MLB hitters as thoroughly as it had those in NPB. Baseball commentators on ESPN and other major sports media outlets quickly gravitated to this flaw in Nomo's pitching as hitters adjusted to the windup and his statistics waned in the 1996 and 1997 seasons. Additionally, Chan Ho Park, Hideki Irabu, Kazuhiro Sasaki, and a steady stream of other pitchers from Jap*an an*d South Korea further cemented the view that only pitchers, where reliance on "technical ability" and "intellect" are possible, could find athletic success in America. This success, however, was typically tempered by questions of the player's strength and durability over the course of a slightly longer MLB season.[6] As Mayeda succinctly notes, Asian athletes in the United States continue to be "stereotyped as less athletic but hard working and more intelligent," a tendency still evident today, particularly in the television commentary of MLB games (1999: 208).

Texas Ranger fans express their support for Darvish.

The signing of Ichiro Suzuki by the Seattle Mariners in late 2000, an outfielder and still the most prominent Japanese player to move to MLB at the height of his career, brought a new round of racialized critiques of Asian baseball players. Ichiro, in the initial assessment of many American managers, television commentators, and reporters was too weak, frail, and in one New York Times account "gaunt-looking" to compete as a hitter and fielder in MLB (Verhovek 2001). As The Seattle Times noted, questions persisted into the start of Ichiro's first MLB season if he could "hit it with any muscle" (Sherwin 2001). Similar racial and bodily critiques of Japanese players have persisted into the present, sometimes fading slightly, as with the arrival of the power hitting Hideki Matsui to the New York Yankees at the start of the 2003 season, but never completely evaporating. Daisuke Matsuzaka's struggles with the Boston Red Sox, particularly as the 2008 and 2009 baseball seasons drew to an end in September and October, were consistently attributed to Japan's shorter season and the perceived physical weakness of Japanese players against MLB competition. As Frost notes in addressing lingering global

perceptions of Japanese athletes, "one of the reasons commonly cited for athletic failure… is a physical inadequacy that comes not from lack of preparation or even human frailty, but from being Japanese" (2011: 235).

This is not to suggest that race is the only, or even the dominant, global designator and descriptor of Japanese baseball players or international sports figures. I contend however that race remains one of the easiest, and thus widely used, descriptors of difference by the Western sports media. Such practices are particularly evident in discussion of Asian athletes, where heavy reliance on the demanding and overly-hierarchical imaginings of baseball in Japan or South Korea are constant fare for television commentary, reporting, and fan-generated analysis online.[7] Such practices help perpetuate culturally essentializing views of athletes leaving Japan for competition abroad, racializing, albeit in sometimes subtle ways, the presentation and interpretation of their sporting prowess.

As such, a reliance on racialized and culturally descriptors of Asian, as well as Latino players by the media of American baseball, confronts in Darvish an enigmatic figure.[8] Racially rooted interpretations of Japanese players extend as far as the manner in which baseball is played in Japan. "Indeed, the dominant image of Japanese baseball is that of a society that has actively and forcefully reshaped baseball's original forms and spirit to fit a set of purposes that turn play into pedagogy, that subordinate the excitement of contest for the demands of character building. Americans gleefully play baseball; Japanese grimly work baseball - and they are worse for it" (Kelly 2007: 196). Group homogeneity, reverence to managerial authority, grueling practice regimes, purity - both of purpose and sometimes self, and reliance on "fighting spirit" are the Western sports media's inescapable descriptors in popular accounts of Japanese baseball. Inserted into such a mix, Darvish is a disruptive, but not destructive, force. A widely circulated Yahoo! Sports article noted that "in a country with a black-and-white attitude, Darvish is the color" (Passan 2008). He is an intriguing sports celebrity, but as a celebrity he is intriguing because he unsettles and adjusts, but does not substantially challenge, racialized notions of the athletic status quo in Japan or the United States.

Darvish introduced to Texas Ranger fans

The commentary surrounding these racialized interpretations of Darvish as sports celebrity constitute what theorist Guy Debord has called "purely spectacular rebelliousness" (2008: 38). Darvish's "dissatisfaction" with pitching in Japan, the rules high school students and professional athletes are told to follow, and shifting interpretations of actions rooted in racialized interpretations of self, make him a spectacular force of contemporary sports celebrity and capitalistic consumption. His simultaneous transgressions - smoking while underage, divorced, foreign - and compliance - hard working, filial, Japanese when cast against his current American competition - with the constructed norms a media star should embody, cast interpretations and appropriations of Darvish as among the "most advanced forms of commodity consumption" (ibid). He is a compelling, yet ultimately facile sports celebrity presence with negligible

outward interest in engaging larger concerns linked to his *haafu* background.

Challenge and change

In the conflation of so many identity components - the sheer unusualness of who he is - Darvish bumps up against the intermittently racialized reporting of baseball in the United States, incites disagreement and co-option from disparate groups previously disinterested or largely disengaged from baseball, and twists understandings of "Japanese-ness" from Tokyo to Texas. Iranian-Americans want to claim him as one of their own, a humanizing presence for a group too often demonized. Baseball's American media often wants to paint him with the convenient yet culturally essentializing strokes periodically used to describe other Japanese players in MLB. For many seeing Darvish pitch, either a baseball or a product, challenges understandings of what a Japanese person "should" be. Rangers' fans may simply want him to throw strikes and win games, yet have also turned to racialized means of expressing their fandom and support. Thus, the *haafu* equation for Darvish resists simplistic conclusions, offering instead a multifaceted persona intriguing for its potential to shift understandings of Japan in ways that better reflect contemporary complexity, but ultimately hampered by disparate and divergent interpretations of his celebrity and its possibilities.

Larger conclusions can also be drawn from Darvish's first seasons in MLB. On August 28, 2012 Darvish returned to pitch for the Rangers after missing his previously scheduled start with muscle tightness. The game was against the Tampa Bay Rays and Darvish struck out ten in a tense game that the Rangers' won 1-0. In a revealing post game comment the Rangers' manager, Ron Washington, said Darvish was pitching better because "he was carrying a lot of baggage and I think he's dumped the baggage, so we've got Yu Darvish here now" (Associated Press 2012). The "baggage" is the expectations heaped upon Darvish by so many, both in Jap*an an*d the United States, that he not only prove worthy of the Rangers' financial investment, but that he also become the standard-bearer for Japanese baseball abroad. When pausing to consider such expectations, the "spectacular" distraction of contemporary sports media and celebrity come into sharper focus. The potential of *haafu* to challenge understandings of diversity, identity, and athletic potential dissolve when filtered through the market forces and mechanisms that make baseball, and sport generally, a global commodity. In Darvish the label *haafu* becomes a vehicle to market and sell Texas Rangers' souvenirs, tickets, advertisement space and commercial time slots - particularly to Japanese consumers, as well as a host of other products globally. More th*An An*ything else Darvish has been made *haafu* as a commodity form to be deployed within a system of global athletic capitalism.

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Recommended citation: Paul Christensen, "*Darvish in Texas: haafu identity and athletic celebrity,*" The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Volume 10, Issue 45, No. 2, November 5, 2012.*

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[1] NPB mandates that a player can only be a free agent, and eligible to sign with any team they desire, after playing nine seasons. A consequence of this for players wanting to move to MLB is that their best seasons are often behind them by the time they are eligible to field contract offers from American teams. The posting system, whereby a Japanese team receives compensation from the winning American bid upon successful negotiation of a contract with the player, was initiated my NPB ownership to ensure they received financial compensation for the loss of their star players. Players wanting to be posted asked their team for permission and, once granted, bids to the team from MLB could be accepted. The MLB team with the winning bid team then has 30 days to reach an agreement with the player. Increasingly many see the system as antiquated and unfair to both Japanese players and MLB teams, while only benefiting the corporate owners of NPB teams. However, a solution that ensures prominent Japanese players do not immediately leave Japan for the United States has not been devised.

[2] The commercial has Yu and Mike Napoli (the team's catcher) watching a Rangers game with fans. Seated between Darvish and Napoli is a thirteen year old fan who asks "didn't the Rangers sign a new pitcher this year?" Napoli's response is "yes, Yu," which the boy interprets as "you." He then asks Darvish to clarify and everyone laughs at the confusion. It can be viewed online.

[3] The "Yu is my homeboy" website is one of the more prominent examples of fan-generated social media efforts to forge connections to Darvish since his arrival in the United States. The t-shirts, created by a Rangers' f*An An*d sold online, have become popular with Yu's teammates. Mike Napoli, the team's catcher, wore one during the post-game press conference after Darvish's first start.

[4] Japanese baseball observers will likely recall Daisuke Matsuzaka's legal transgressions, including an incident in 2000 where he drove without a valid driver's license, illegally parked outside his then girlfriend's apartment, and had a Seibu Lions team official take the blame after the car was ticketed and towed. I argue that Matsuzaka's behavior was widely interpreted in a different manner. He was more irresponsible lout than rebellious and exotic heartthrob, a bruising power pitcher with a personality to match.

[5] Masanori Murakami played for the San Francisco Giants in 1964-1965 and was the first Japanese player in MLB. Used primarily as a relief pitcher by the Giants, Murakami returned to Japan after the 1965 season and continued playing for several teams until 1981. Sadly, he was promptly forgotten by followers of baseball in America after leaving San Francisco (Mayeda 1999: 203).

[6] The MLB season is 162 games. NPB's season is 144 games and South Korea's KPB season is 133 games.

[7] Outside the scope of this paper, but still of note, is the practice of labeling Japanese and South Korean soccer players "shirt-sellers" or

"jersey players" by those who report on European soccer. Manchester United was quick to emphasize that their recent signing of Shinji Kagawa was motivated solely by his soccer skills, while possible benefits from greater Japanese interest in the team are an additional and unsolicited bonus.

[8] As the title suggests, Carter's *The Quality of Home Runs: The Passion, Politics, and Language of Cuban Baseball* (2008) looks in part at the other prominent vein in the racialized vocabulary of MLB's reporting network. Latino players are consistently described as "passionate," "fiery," and in the pejorative, "undisciplined." Ozzie Guillén, most recently manager of the Miami Marlins, best exemplifies such media constructions with his frequent and "controversial" comments on topics ranging from his team's hitting to his feelings on Fidel Castro.