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February BaseballAttic Report

Japanese Baseball Players= New kind of investment.

Do you remember 2007 when Japanese Ace Dice-K signed a \$51 million contract with the Boston Red Sox? The media coverage was on par with the likes of the 1985 Bears Superbowl. Super agent Scott Boras held an impromptu press conference in the parking lot of his office at 230 AM to discuss his client with 70 members of the Japanese media in attendance.

A total of 41 Japanese born players have played in the MLB thus far. Many now consider Japan a poaching ground for new raw talent. Surprisingly enough, most fans in Japan support the defection of their stars' to the MLB. Playing in the MLB is an accomplishment that the Japanese are proud of. They have their country represented in the esteemed pre-imminent league in the world.

The American Dream is playing baseball in the MLB. The players' sleep in the finest hotels, dine at the fanciest restaurants, play in the best ballparks, and get paid a kings ransom to play baseball. Hideo Nomo was the first big modern-era star to make the jump from Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB) to the MLB in 1994. Nomo paved the dirt on the diamond for other countrymen to follow. Many of the Japanese supporters' bring posters of the Japanese flag to the ballgames in support of their favorite Japanese athlete.

Several baseball purists' believe that the migration of Japanese all-stars to the MLB is permanent. Therefore, some investors' have been purchasing memorabilia of Japanese baseball imports as investments. This idea is not without merit, but very risky. Many are seeking ways to invest in steroid-free baseball. Most of the imports are still unproven and putting all your eggs in one basket is never a good thing. Many investors are cautious about re-investing in the U.S. stock market. Therefore, alternative investment vehicles are actively being pursued. One caveat, Are Japanese ballplayers a fad or are they here to stay? According to Paul Archey, Senior VP of International Business Operations for MLB, "The great thing that separates MLB from every other sports league around the world is that we look for the best players no matter what country they come from. We want the best players and there have been so many great players from Japan

that not only do we welcome them, but they are definitely here to stay. They play at such a high level, that we will always welcome them with open arms."

As with any investment, you must do your homework first. Regardless, the Japanese transplants are fun to watch and most are fan favorites. They have great personalities, work hard, and are steroid-free."

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