

Five Japan players to watch at the World Cup

By **Jim Armstrong**
AP Sports Writer

TOKYO — Keisuke Honda and Shinji Kagawa will be called on to play key roles as Japan attempts to reach the next level at the World Cup.

Honda is slowly adjusting to life at AC Milan while Kagawa has seen limited playing time under David Moyes at Manchester United, but both have been effective for the national team under coach Alberto Zaccheroni.

Japan surprised critics in 2010 by advancing past the group stage with wins over Cameroon and Denmark before losing on penalty kicks to Paraguay in the knockout stage.

Japan's team this year will feature many young players and Zaccheroni will be counting on Honda and Kagawa for leadership.

Here are five players to watch:

Keisuke Honda

Widely regarded as Japan's best player, Keisuke Honda scored in a 1-1 draw with Australia in June to secure the country's fifth straight World Cup appearance.

Brash and confident, the 27-year-old AC Milan attacking midfielder said Japan won't be intimidated by any opposition at the tournament in Brazil from June 12 through July 13.

He set up two goals in Japan's 4-2 win over New Zealand in a friendly in March playing in his preferred central position.

Honda is off to a slow start at AC Milan, where coach Clarence Seedorf has been using him on the right side or as a defensive midfielder.

Shinji Kagawa

Despite struggling to find his form under David Moyes during Manchester United's troubled season, Shinji Kagawa has been a major contributor to Japan's qualifying campaign.

Kagawa scored twice in the friendly win over New Zealand, proving that his lack of playing time at Old Trafford hasn't slowed him down.

The 25-year-old midfielder scored 21 goals over two seasons with Borussia Dortmund. And on March 2, 2013, Kagawa scored three times for United in a 4-0 home win over Norwich to become the first Asian player to score a hat trick in a Premier League match.

Shinji Okazaki

Japan's top striker, Shinji Okazaki has scored 11 goals in 24 games for German club Mainz this season.

The 27-year-old forward moved to Stuttgart in 2011 and scored 10 goals across two seasons before his transfer to Mainz.

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My Turn: Retiring phrases

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Writers and Colbert fans blasted Park and her followers, accusing her of bullying and drawing attention away from the real issue of eliminating the Redskins name. While I wholeheartedly agree that no Native American should be denigrated or used as a mascot for a sports team, many Asian-American writers have chosen to castigate Park, and some Colbert fans resorted to threats of death and rape against her.

The whole incident has polarized the Asian-American media community. But I believe many have missed the real point: Why was it okay for Colbert to use the phrase "Ching Chong" in the first place? I suspect if there was an Asian American in the writer's room, there would have been a discussion about how hurtful that phrase is even when used in satire.

The history of the phrase reflects what English-speaking Americans thought the Chinese language sounded like to

them. We've all heard some variation in a nursery rhyme. Korean immigrant Mary Paik Lee in San Francisco documented one in her 1906 autobiography:

"Ching Chong, Chinaman.

Sitting on a wall.

*Along came a white man
And chopped his tail off."*

Words hurt. Words can also change people in a positive way. When someone tells you that a certain phrase or name hurts them, listen. Often, people outside of an ethnic or racial group have a difficult time understanding why their word usage would have to change and are resentful that people of color might take offense at what they said. Yet language changes continuously and new words are created and adopted every day. Our words have to evolve just as we do as human beings. I would be happy if all the derogatory phrases and names I've listed here would simply be retired. Perhaps one day they all will, only to live on Wikipedia as a memorial of a time that no longer exists.



AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama, File



AP Photo/Koji Sasahara, File

WORLD CUP WATCH. Japan's national team surprised critics at the 2010 World Cup of soccer by advancing past the group stage with wins over Cameroon and Denmark before losing on penalty kicks to Paraguay in the knockout stage. The team hopes to reach the next level at this year's World Cup in Brazil with player such as Keisuke Honda (left) and Yuto Nagatomo (right).

who also played for Cerezo.

A strong performance in Brazil could garner more interest from clubs in Europe.

Yuto Nagatomo

Yuto Nagatomo joined Inter Milan in January 2011 from Cesena and has been an integral member of the back four since then.

The speedy 27-year-old left back has made 18 league appearances for Inter this season while scoring five goals.

A regular member of the national team, Nagatomo has played in 63 games for Japan with three goals.

TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA



■ Polo

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