

Giants fan who caught home run ball gives it back

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A lifelong San Francisco fan had a piece of team history in his hands: the home run ball in Game 5 that sent the Giants to the World Series.

Then he gave it back.

Frank Burke, who owns a transmission repair business in Oakdale, said that he wanted the hitter, Travis Ishikawa, to have the ball.

"I believe in karma," he told The Associated Press. "I didn't hit that ball ... if anybody's going to have that ball in their game room or trophy case, it's going to be the guy who hit it."

Burke said he hadn't planned on keeping the ball. He keeps home run balls from his high school days in his own trophy case.

"They're still important to me, they're part of my memories," he said. "So why would I think that he (Ishikawa) wouldn't want the same thing?"

So after having the ball authenticated by a Giants official, and being told that Ishikawa wanted it back, Burke went down to the clubhouse area and handed it

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UNANIMOUS DECISION. Japanese champion Shinsuke Yamanaka, right, fights against Thai challenger Suriyan Sor Rungvisai in the fourth round of their World Boxing Council bantamweight title match in Tokyo. Yamanaka defended his title by a unanimous decision. (AP Photo/Toru Takahashi)

Yamanaka retains WBC bantamweight title

TOKYO (AP) — Shinsuke Yamanaka of Japan retained his World Boxing Council (WBC) bantamweight title last month with a unanimous decision over Suriyan Sor Rungvisai of Thailand.

Yamanaka sent Suriyan to the canvas with a left to the head in the seventh round and floored the challenger twice more at Yoyogi National Gymnasium to improve to 22-0-2 with 16 knockouts. Yamanaka has successfully defended his title seven times, winning five of them by knockout.

Suriyan, the former WBC superflyweight champion, fell to 37-6-1.

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Olympic speedskating rink underway in Pyeongchang

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Olympic organizers in Pyeongchang have broken ground on the speedskating rink for the 2018 Winter Games and say all six new competition venues are on track to stage test events on schedule.

Pyeongchang organizing committee president Cho Yang-ho visited the site, saying "all our competition venue preparations are in full swing and I am confident that there is good momentum in our progress."

The 2018 Games will utilize 13 competition venues, including four existing and three refurbished facilities.

The \$125-million, 8,000-seat speedskating rink, in the Gangneung Coastal Cluster, is the last of the six new venues to get started. It is expected to be completed by January 2017, a month ahead of the Olympic test event.

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Cubs decline option on Fujikawa

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago Cubs have declined their option for next season on reliever Kyuji Fujikawa, making him a free agent.

A longtime closer in Japan, the right-hander signed with the Cubs before the 2013 season but never delivered the way the organization hoped. He tore a ligament in his pitching elbow in his first year with the Cubs and underwent Tommy John surgery.

Fujikawa returned in August. He was 1-1 with a 5.04 ERA and two saves in 27 appearances over two seasons with the Cubs.



A GIANT REWARD. Travis Ishikawa of the San Francisco Giants hits a walk-off three-run home run during the ninth inning of Game 5 of the National League baseball championship series against the St. Louis Cardinals on October 16, 2014 in San Francisco. The Giants won 6-3 to advance to the World Series. The San Francisco fan who caught the ball gave it back to Ishikawa. (AP Photo/Jeff Roberson)

tickets after the Giants won the National League Division Series.

Ishikawa's drive came their way as they sat above the stadium's right field wall in the ninth inning with two Giants on base.

As the ball sped toward him, Burke thought to himself: "Soft hands, soft hands. Don't let this thing bounce back on the field."

The ball went off his left hand but he was able to grab it with his right.

"The whole place erupted," Burke said. "It was a walk-off home run. We were going to the World Series!" Other fans clustered around.

"I couldn't move from where I was because everyone around me wanted to touch the ball, take pictures with the ball. I must have taken 300 selfies in 15 minutes," he said.

After meeting Ishikawa and turning over the ball, Burke and Leutza walked out of the clubhouse "like two little kids, hootin' and hollerin'," he said.

But Burke said the ball and the bat weren't the things he treasured most.

"Just the memory for me and my buddy, that's priceless," he said. "That meant more to me than anything else will."

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