

Marlins finalize \$2-million, one-year deal with Ichiro Suzuki

MIAMI (AP) — Ichiro Suzuki has passed his physical and finalized a \$2-million, one-year contract with the Miami Marlins.

The Marlins made the announcement late last month. His deal includes \$2.8 million in performance bonuses based on plate appearances: \$400,000 apiece for 300 and each additional 50 through 600.

Suzuki signed the deal in his native Japan. A news conference was held with five Marlins executives present, including president David Samson, president of baseball operations Michael Hill, and general manager Dan Jennings.

The 41-year-old Suzuki, a 10-time All-Star and 10-time Gold Glove winner, is expected to be the team's fourth outfielder behind Giancarlo Stanton, Christian Yelich, and Marcell Ozuna.

"We are thrilled to have Ichiro Suzuki in a Marlins uniform," Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria said in a statement. "He is the ultimate professional on and off the field, and will make an excellent addition to our ballclub."

Suzuki is the first Japanese player to sign with the Marlins. He hit .284 and stole 15 bases for the New York Yankees last season.



A GREAT CATCH. Ichiro Suzuki poses for photos with his new jersey for the Miami Marlins, in Tokyo. Making a rare appearance at a press conference in his native Japan, Suzuki said, "When I met (Miami) team executives yesterday, I felt incredible enthusiasm, so I wanted to respond to their enthusiasm, and I believe that is something I have been looking for the last two years." (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Suzuki is a career .317 hitter in the majors and a two-time American League (AL) batting champion. The former AL MVP has 2,844 career hits.

Coco: Potentially China's next Li Na

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After Xu's loss in singles at the Australian Open junior tournament, she played a girls' doubles match against one of the homegrown players, 16-year-old Zheng Wushuang, who trains at the 1123 Junior Tennis Academy in Beijing and is now China's second-ranked junior girl. Xu and her Australian partner Sara Tomic won that match, but lost in straight sets in the semifinals.

Sitting courtside, Yi Ping, the founder of the academy, said she has only taken on seven of China's most promising players in order to maximize the resources she can provide them. One of China's largest insurance companies, Ping An, is the academy's main sponsor.

"With the academy becoming more famous, there are more junior players who want to come in," Yi said. "But we want to see the great potential in players and decide if we want to have them. We want to have all the top junior players in our club."

Xu, who now has a Belgian coach, believes her father made the right decision for her development.

"I think it's very different than going down the traditional Chinese route," Xu said. "I got a lot of good experience from that time (in Florida)."



GREAT AT EIGHT. China's rising talent Xu Shilin makes a backhand return during the junior girls' doubles semifinal at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. Xu's progress so far has been attributed to her decision to train at top private academies in Florida. (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)

Rhoads said Xu is already fielding questions from the media about becoming the next Li Na. But he said it's going to take some time before Xu is anywhere close. Li won her first major at the French Open in 2011 at the age of 29.

"I think if the Chinese fans and the media are patient, they're going to see something special," he said. "Li Na didn't hit her stride until she was 24, 25 years old."

And although she admires Li's career, Xu doesn't want to be compared to anyone.

"I respect her a lot. I like her a lot. But I just want to be myself, obviously."



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		1	9				
		9	1	4		8	3
4							
	8				7		
	2	6				1	7
			2				8
							9
7		4		8	5	2	
				6	5		

Difficulty level: Hard

#19914

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last week's puzzle

Puzzle #81254 (Medium)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

6	9	8	7	1	4	2	5	3
2	4	1	9	5	3	7	6	8
7	5	3	8	2	6	9	4	1
4	6	2	3	9	1	5	8	7
3	7	9	4	8	5	1	2	6
8	1	5	2	6	7	4	3	9
5	2	7	1	3	8	6	9	4
9	8	4	6	7	2	3	1	5
1	3	6	5	4	9	8	7	2

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