

Asians in American sports • Asian Americans in world sports

# Asian players now in nearly every division in the majors

By Mike Street  
Special to The Asian Reporter

After more than 20 years of imports from Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB) and the Korean Baseball Organization (KBO) to Major League Baseball (MLB), the 2017 season features Asia-born players in nearly every division.

We start in the National League East, where the Miami Marlins have three Asian players. At 43 years old, outfielder Ichiro Suzuki hopes to play in MLB until he's 50, adding to his more than 3,000 career hits. With his renowned workout regimen, he just might.

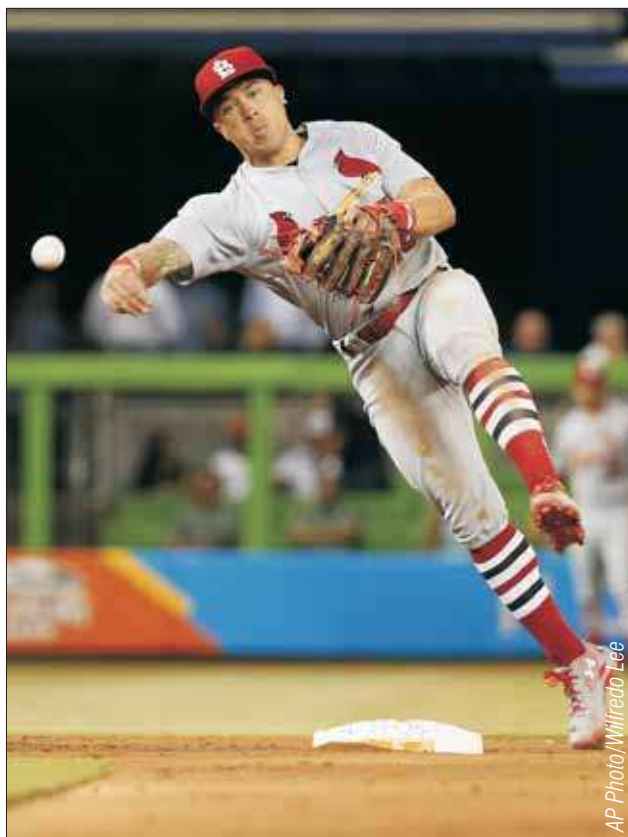
On the mound for Miami, Taiwan's Wei-Yin Chen began his MLB career in 2012. After pitching respectably with the Baltimore Orioles for four years, Chen signed with Miami in 2016. Though he won't ever be a top-flight pitcher, Chen should pave the way for future Taiwanese MLB talent.

Lately, Marlins bullpen addition Junichi Tazawa hasn't looked like the pitcher who made waves by skipping the 2008 NPB draft. From 2012 to 2014, Tazawa was Boston's supremely successful setup man until he started walking batters and giving up homers. If he regains his control and keeps the ball down, Tazawa could become a high-leverage Miami reliever.

In the National League Central, Chinese American Kolten Wong is the only player featured in this MLB roundup who was born in the United States. Wong has played intermittently for the St. Louis Cardinals over the past five seasons, but he's now their starting second baseman. He strikes out rarely, draws walks well, and picks up a homer now and again. That won't make Wong, who was born in Hawai'i, a star, but it will bolster the St. Louis offense for a playoff push.

Of more importance to the Cardinals will be closer Seung-hwan Oh, who came to St. Louis last season. In the KBO and NPB, Oh was called "Stone Buddha" and "Final Boss" for his unshakeable demeanor and amazing ability to close games.

Oh lived up to both nicknames last season, stepping into the closer's role and reeling off 19 saves with a 1.92 Earned Run Average (ERA). Despite his heroics, the Cardinals missed the playoffs for the first time in six seasons. If St. Louis returns to the postseason, they'll need Oh to repeat his dominant 2016 season.



**PRODUCTIVE PLAYERS.** Asian baseball players are making a difference across Major League Baseball (MLB). Hawai'i-born Kolten Wong (left photo) has played intermittently for the St. Louis Cardinals over the past five seasons, but he's now their starting second baseman. Wong strikes out rarely, draws walks well, and picks up a homer now and again. Prized Nippon Professional Baseball import Kenta Maeda (right photo) arrived to MLB with high expectations last season, and he did not disappoint. Maeda started hot before cooling off, but he still finished with a 16-11 record, striking out more than a batter per inning.

The Cardinals finished last season behind the Chicago Cubs, who went on to win their first World Series since 1908. This year, Chicago bolstered its bullpen with Koji Uehara, who has pitched for four different MLB clubs since coming from NPB in 2009.

Uehara enjoyed his greatest success with Boston, amassing 79 saves in four seasons, including 2013, one of the best seasons ever by a reliever. That year, Uehara finished with a 1.09 ERA and a nearly untouchable 0.565 Walks & Hits per Innings Pitched (WHIP), retiring 37 straight batters at one point. Uehara helped Boston win its eighth World Series championship, and Chicago hopes he will help them win their second straight.

In the National League West, the Los Angeles Dodgers boast two great Asian talents in Hyun-jin Ryu and Kenta

Maeda. The first KBO starting pitcher to come to MLB, Ryu won 28 games in his first two seasons with a combined 3.19 ERA and 293 strikeouts. Elbow and shoulder surgeries shelved Ryu for parts of 2015 and 2016. Hopefully 2017 will be his first full season in three years; the Dodgers need him to resume his winning ways.

Prized NPB import Maeda arrived with high expectations last season, and he did not disappoint. Maeda started hot before cooling off, but he still finished with a 16-11 record, striking out more than a batter per inning. These two Asian arms are part of a deep Dodgers rotation that's among the best in baseball.

Over in the American League West, outfielder Shin-Soo Choo and pitcher Yu Darvish return to the Texas Rangers.

*Continued on page 11*

## 1 in 6 spouses of newlyweds is of different race or ethnicity

By Jesse J. Holland  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More and more Americans are marrying people of different races and ethnicities, reaching at least 1 in 6 newlyweds in 2015, the highest proportion in American history, a new study shows.

Currently, there are 11 million people — or 1 out of 10 married people — in the United States with a spouse of a different race or ethnicity, according to Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.

This is a big jump from 50 years ago, when the Supreme Court ruled interracial marriage was legal throughout the United States. That year, only three percent of newlyweds were intermarried — which means they had a spouse of a different race or ethnicity. In 2015, 17 percent of newlyweds were intermarried, a number which had held steady from the year before.

"There's much greater racial tolerance in the United States, with attitudes having changed in a way where it's much more positive toward interracial marriage," said Daniel T. Lichter, director of the Institute for the Social Sciences at Cornell University, who studies interracial and interethnic marriages. "But I think that a greater reason is the growing diversity of the population. There are just more demographic opportunities for people to marry someone of another race or ethnicity."

Asians were most likely to intermarry in 2015, with 29 percent of newlywed Asians married to someone of a different race or ethnicity, followed by Hispanics at 27 percent, blacks at 18 percent, and whites at 11 percent.

There also were differences between men and women.

Asian and Hispanic women were the most likely to marry someone of a different race or ethnicity in 2015, while Hispanic and black men were the most likely among men, the data showed. Thirty-six percent of Asian women and 28 percent of Hispanic women intermarried in 2015, while 26 percent of Hispanic men and 24 percent of black men married someone of a different race or ethnicity.

White and black women were the least likely to consider someone of a different race or ethnicity in 2015. Only 10 percent of white women married outside their race or ethnicity, while only 12 percent of black women were involved in intermarriage — half the rate of black men.

White men were the least likely among males to consider intermarriage, with only 12 percent involved in interracial or interethnic marriages.

Despite those numbers, intermarriage is rapidly becoming more popular among blacks and whites. Since 1980, the number of blacks who chose to marry someone of a different race or ethnicity rose from five percent to 18 percent. Whites also have become more accepting of intermarriage, with the rates increasing from four percent to 11 percent during that same time period.

Interracial marriage became legal throughout the United States in 1967, when Richard and Mildred Loving took their case to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Lovings were thrown into a Virginia jail in 1958 for violating the state's ban on interracial marriage. The Supreme Court struck down the Virginia law and those in roughly one-third of the states in 1967.

The study also found:

- The most common intermarriages were between a Hispanic and a white spouse at 42 percent. The next most common was between a white and an Asian spouse at 15 percent followed by a multiracial and a white spouse at 12 percent.

- Interracial and interethnic marriages are more likely to happen in cities. Eighteen percent of newlyweds in metropolitan areas were intermarried compared with 11 percent living elsewhere.

- Roughly half — or 49 percent — of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents see intermarriage as a good thing for society. For Republicans and GOP-leaning independents, less than 1 in 3 — or 28 percent — saw marriages between races and ethnicities as a good thing for society.

*Jesse J. Holland covers race and ethnicity for The Associated Press.*

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Difficulty level: Medium #31573

**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 issue's puzzle

Puzzle #64879 (Easy)

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

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