

Otani likely to sign with MLB in costly move

By Jim Armstrong
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Shohei Otani is likely to leave Japan and sign with a Major League Baseball (MLB) team after this season, multiple reports in Japanese media say, a move that would cost the 23-year-old pitcher and outfielder more than \$100 million.

In his fifth season with the Nippon Ham Fighters, the reigning Pacific League MVP is prized as both a pitcher and hitter. But under restrictions in MLB's new collective bargaining agreement, his signing bonus would be limited to about \$3 million to \$4 million, a fraction of the \$155-million, seven-year deal that pitcher Masahiro Tanaka received from the New York Yankees before the 2014 season. Otani would have to wait until after the 2019 season to receive a comparable deal in MLB.

"I think he wants to compete against the best, and I think that's great," New York Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "I think that's what's in every competitor's heart. They want to match up against the best to see how they fare."

Under the MLB labor contract agreed to last November, Otani is defined as an international amateur because he is not 25 years old and does not have six years of service in any professional leagues. Because of that, he must sign a minor league contract to enter MLB, an amount subject to a team's signing bonus pool.

MLB teams are prohibited from circumventing the restrictions, such as with an unannounced agreement for future seasons, and would receive harsh punishment if caught by the commissioner's office. Because of that, Otani has economic incentive to wait two years before leaving for MLB. He would then be considered a professional.

If Otani is made available under the posting system



agreement between MLB and the Nippon Professional Baseball, the maximum a team could bid is \$20 million, and if the \$20 million is accepted, all teams bidding that amount would be eligible to sign him.

In the signing period that began July 2, 12 teams are prohibited from giving signing bonuses of more than \$300,000 as penalties for exceeding their bonus pools under the previous labor deal: Atlanta, the Chicago Cubs and White Sox, Cincinnati, Houston, Kansas City, the Los Angeles Dodgers, Oakland, St. Louis, San Diego, San Francisco, and Washington.

COMPETITION VS. COMPENSATION. Japanese baseball player Shohei Otani of the Nippon Ham Fighters dashes to first base after hitting a grounder in the first inning of a game against the Orix BlueWave in Osaka, western Japan, in this April 8, 2017 file photo. Otani is expected to move to Major League Baseball in 2018. (Yohei Fukuyama/Kyodo News via AP, File)

Teams start with a signing bonus pool of \$4.75 million to \$5.75 million and can trade allocations and acquire them in amounts totalling up to 75 percent above their original figure. Many already have spent significant amounts on Latin American amateurs.

Only eight clubs as of now have the ability to give a signing bonus of more than \$1 million through next June: Texas (\$3,535,000), the New York Yankees (\$3.25 million), Pittsburgh (\$2,266,750), Minnesota (\$1,895,000), Arizona (\$1,867,500), Miami (\$1.74 million), Detroit (\$1,072,000), and Seattle (\$1,057,500).

If added to an active big-league roster, Otani would receive a 2018 salary at or just above the major-league minimum of \$545,000. He would not be eligible for salary arbitration until after the 2020 season and for free agency until after the 2023 season. Any long-term contract later agreed to would be scrutinized by MLB.

Otani has a 39-15 record with a 2.60 ERA and 601 strikeouts in 522 1/3 innings, and a .286 batting average with 47 homers and 163 RBIs. He has been limited to 51 games this season by thigh and ankle injuries, and he has pitched just twice for the Ham Fighters this season.

"He's definitely intriguing," Girardi said. "Could a guy pitch and DH some? I think it's possible, I do. I think you'd be concerned a little bit maybe the day before his start, but it does create a unique situation where if he's able to DH, it kind of opens up another spot on your roster. So to me, times if you needed to go to a six-man rotation, it becomes a lot easier with the spot open."

AP Baseball Writer Ronald Blum in New York contributed to this report.

No strangers to displacement, Vietnamese recover from Harvey

By Janie Har and Gregory Bull
The Associated Press

HOUSTON — As Hurricane Harvey's floodwater rose quickly above cabinets, counters, and toward the ceiling, Viet Dao scrambled to figure out how he would save his young children, wife, and in-laws if the water wouldn't stop. What if he couldn't rescue them all?

"It hits you right there: We have nowhere to escape," Dao, 48, said by phone. "If it was just me, it's OK, I can survive. But I just don't know how can I help my children and family get out. It's really frustrating."

Decades ago, it was Dao's parents who were trying to get him out of harm's way by sending him away from Vietnam on a crowded fishing boat when he was 18 years old so he could make a better life for himself in America. The two situations are incomparable, but Dao says he now better understands the desperation of wanting to protect family.

Some of the more than 110,000 Vietnamese in the Houston area are among the tens of thousands of people whose homes were damaged or destroyed by Harvey. They share a common heritage in the United States that stems from leaving a homeland and starting anew.

Houston, an official resettlement site for refugees after the Vietnam War, is home to the largest concentration of Vietnamese Americans outside of California. The population includes recent newcomers whose limed English is dotted with "ma'am," and those who came decades ago after a city then called Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese in 1975.

Like the rest of the region, they have been shovelling debris from ruined homes, mopping up wet floors, and pitching in however they can to help with recovery efforts from the devastating storm that killed more than 70 people after landing on the



DISPLACED AGAIN. Viet Dao walks through debris in the foyer of his home in Spring, Texas. As Hurricane Harvey's flood water rose quickly above cabinets, counters, and toward the ceiling, he scrambled to figure out how he would save his young children, wife, and in-laws if the water would not stop. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)

Gulf Coast of Texas on August 25 as a Category 4 hurricane.

The Lien Hoa Buddhist temple in Houston bustled with dozens of upbeat adults and teenagers who unloaded crates of bottled water and filled a table with plastic supply bags to send to needy families. The teens cracked jokes. The elders finished lunch. Everyone worked.

People came by to pick up donated cleaning supplies and to seek help from English-speaking volunteers, said manager Lang Bui. Chau Ho, for example, was helping 48-year-old Lisa Nguyen file for unemployment after her nail shop in the town of Refugio flooded and lost electricity.

"She doesn't know. She doesn't know what she'll do," said Ho, 35, of Houston.

A popular local chain of restaurants, Kim Son, reopened its downtown location after minor damage, offering free buffet meals to first responders. It delivered egg rolls, crab puffs, and broccoli chicken to hundreds of evacuees and police off-site.

The restaurant, which serves Chinese and Vietnamese cuisine, was

founded by a couple who landed in Houston with seven children in 1980. Among them was Tina La, now 43, who says she is proud to give back to the city that took in her family.

"I've been here all my life and if it weren't for any of these people we wouldn't be where we are," she said.

Experts say the numbers of Vietnamese ramped up in the Houston area after early refugees gained U.S. citizenship and sponsored family members to live in America. They opened restaurants and other businesses catering to the community. By 2000, they numbered about 60,000 in the area.

Today, growing numbers of South Asians and Chinese are moving to Houston for jobs in mathematics and science, but Vietnamese remains the third most-spoken language in Texas, said state demographer Lloyd Potter. It is a far distant third after English and Spanish.

Jannette Diep is executive director of Houston's chapter of Boat People SOS, an organization founded in the 1980s to rescue refugees escaping Vietnam. A refugee herself, she fled
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Analysis confirms grass carp eggs in Lake Erie tributary

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (AP) — Scientists say they've confirmed the discovery of grass carp eggs in a tributary of Lake Erie.

Grass carp are among four species of Asian carp that pose a threat to the Great Lakes. The most feared are silver and bighead carp, which eat plankton and could destabilize food chains. But grass carp are also a problem because they eat huge amounts of valuable plants.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission says state, federal, and university scientists analyzed eggs collected from the Sandusky River in Ohio earlier this summer.

They've now concluded they were grass carp eggs. The commission says the number of grass carp in the area is "extremely low," which offers a chance to prevent the invasive fish from gaining a foothold.

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Difficulty level: Hard #26578

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 #75439 (Medium)

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

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