

# The Asian Reporter

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## Hawai'i, Japan unexpectedly battle for third place at Little League World Series



**BREATH-taking BASEBALL.** Yuto Misaki of Japan delivers a pitch during a game against Wailuku, Hawai'i, at the Little League World Series tournament in South Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Japan won the game, 5-0, to earn third place. (AP Photo/Tom E. Puskar)

By Mike Street  
Special to The Asian Reporter

The last time the Little League World Series (LLWS) didn't have an Asian team in the championship final was 2004. Since then, a Japanese team has appeared in eight finals, a team from Hawai'i has appeared in four, and eight champions were from either Japan or Hawai'i.

After both Japan and Hawai'i went undefeated in their first three games, the stage appeared set for just the third all-Asian final in tournament history. Instead, both teams met in the third-place game, shattering the expectations of Asian-American sports fans.

Chofu City, Japan, certainly seemed to have a clear path to another LLWS final appearance, emerging as the winner from the Japan region after outscoring its

opponents 37-1. That dominance continued after they reached the tournament in South Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

In its first game, Japan cruised past Italy, scoring six runs in the first four innings before blowing the game open with 14 runs in the fifth. As they would all tournament, two Yutos — Yuto Misaki and Yuto Kakeba — led the team. Against Italy, they drove in five runs apiece while their opponent could only muster two hits.

The final score was 20-0.

Japan also held Guadalupe, its second opponent, scoreless. The team notched just one run in the first two innings before capitalizing on walks and errors to score four in the third inning. The two Yutos again showed their heroism, this time on the mound, combining for about four innings of shutout, one-hit ball while striking out nine batters. Japan again won easily, 5-0.

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