

Japan celebrates as Ohtani becomes the first major leaguer to reach 50-50 milestone

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Shohei Ohtani’s feat of becoming the first major leaguer with at least 50 home runs and 50 stolen bases in a season was met with extra editions of newspapers for fans to read on their way to work in Japan.

Ohtani raced past the 50-50 milestone as he hit three homers and stole two bases in a game during the 20-4 rout of the Miami Marlins on September 19, securing a playoff berth for the Dodgers.

The news topped morning headlines, and “Ohtani-san” was the No. 1 trending topic of social media platform X.

There was also praise from the Japanese government. “We would like to express our heartfelt congratulations on his achievement of this giant record,” chief cabinet secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said as he responded to the first question at his regular news conference. “We look forward to seeing more successes from Ohtani, who has already achieved numerous feats and pioneered new grounds.”

Ohtani, who debuted in Major League Baseball in 2018 with the Los Angeles Angels, has become Japan’s national icon and pride.

Yu Tachibana, a 44-year-old office worker, was lucky to get a copy of the special newspaper edition for her 18-year-old son who plays baseball. She says nobody had thought a Japanese player would do well a decade ago. “It is very encouraging,” she said, as she noted a saying where there is a will, there is a way.

A wave of congratulatory messages were posted on social media.

“Japan’s record-making machine has done it again,” U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel said in his message on X. “Congratulations to Shohei Ohtani on an incredible baseball achievement. A true global ambassador of the game.”

Why does Shohei Ohtani’s 50-50 feat resonate so much in baseball?

By The Associated Press

Among the roughly 23,000 men who played Major League Baseball over the past century-and-a-half, none had a season with 50 home runs and 50 stolen bases — until now.

Shohei Ohtani became the first 50-50 player when the Los Angeles Dodgers star hit his 50th and 51st home runs and stole his 50th and 51st bases.

Why does Ohtani’s feat resonate so much among fans?

Home runs and steals are among the more popular baseball records — if not the most revered in the history of the game — whether it be most home runs (73) in a season or the modern-day mark for most stolen bases (130) in a season. So when one player reaches the once-unthinkable half-century mark in both, it stands out.

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FIRST-EVER 50-50. Pedestrians in Tokyo, left photo, read an extra edition of the Sports Nippon newspaper reporting on Shohei Ohtani of the Los Angeles Dodgers becoming the first player in major league history with 50 home runs and 50 stolen bases in a season. In the right photo, Ohtani (#17) steals third base for his 50th stolen base of the season on September 19, 2024 in Miami.

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