

“BY MEANS OF SPORTS”: U.S.-JAPAN BASEBALL EXCHANGE AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF POST-WAR JAPANESE IDENTITY

A thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
in Asian Studies

BY

John Seymour, B.A.

Washington, D.C.
November 15, 2019

“BY MEANS OF SPORT”: U.S.-JAPAN BASEBALL EXCHANGE AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF POST-WAR JAPANESE IDENTITY

John Seymour, B.A.

Advisor: Kristen Looney, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Scholarship has recognized that a shared passion for baseball between the United States and Japan helped facilitate reconciliation between the two states after World War II, but not enough focus has been put on the role the long history of U.S.-Japan baseball cooperation played in this change. U.S.-Japan baseball exchange, which started in the nineteenth century, enabled Japan to pivot away from its wartime identity during the U.S. occupation after World War II in two key ways. First, the return of domestic Japanese baseball institutions, built through exchange and communication with the American baseball community, provided a bridge to Japan’s pre-war history and values. Second, U.S. occupation and Japanese authorities promoted baseball in the post-war period to facilitate better U.S.-Japan relations, using the sport to encourage the spread of democratic values and favorable opinions of the United States in Japan, while also repairing Japan’s image in the United States. Through these mechanisms, baseball played a major role in building a post-war Japan disassociated with its wartime militarism and situated for long-term alignment with the United States.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....1

Pre-War U.S.-Japan Baseball Exchange and Institutional Growth.....3

World War II: Baseball Militarism Replaces Baseball Exchange.....6

A Bridge to the Past: The Return of Baseball to Occupied Japan.....7

A Bridge to the Future: Baseball’s Impact on U.S.-Japan Alignment.....14

Conclusion.....22

Bibliography.....24

Introduction

The attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Empire in 1941 brought significant avenues of U.S.-Japan economic, diplomatic, and cultural exchange to a halt, but another one of the primary connections affected was baseball. America's national pastime features heavily in the history of U.S.-Japan relations. American expats introduced the sport to Japan in the late-nineteenth century, and baseball promptly exploded in popularity throughout the country, leading to the establishment of Japanese baseball institutions such as amateur and professional leagues. These institutions, and their American counterparts, formed the basis of a unique and powerful source of cultural exchange across the Pacific. In the first half of the twentieth century, baseball-centered people-to-people connections developed parallel to rising tensions between these two Pacific powers, and though the outbreak of fighting would freeze this process, not even total war could erase the deep ties entrenched by baseball. After the Japanese surrender in August, 1945, college, high school, and professional leagues returned and captured the public's attention as they once did before wartime conditions restricted play of the sport. The post-war period and U.S. occupation also helped create a new wave of popular interest in the sport through the means of spectacle, media, and recreation. These baseball institutions and trans-Pacific connections would prove invaluable to Japan's post-war rehabilitation, enabling both continuity with pre-war traditions and a new political, economic, and social trajectory for Japan as it stepped beyond its militaristic past.

Several examples of recent scholarship have examined the role of baseball in U.S.-Japan relations and its usage during the occupation period by U.S. leadership as a means of reconciliation with Japan. There has also been strong work done on both the growth of baseball institutions in Japan as well as the renewed development of baseball in the post-war period.

However, a gap exists in examining the identity of the post-war Japanese state in the context of the unique history of cooperation between the United States and Japan in building baseball institutions and traditions. This essay synthesizes several strains of research related to U.S.-Japan baseball to present an argument focused on Japanese identity construction during the U.S. occupation. While other studies have focused on a few of this essay's constituent elements, this paper presents an argument that builds on several key themes from research done on U.S.-Japan baseball.

Japanese domestic baseball traditions and institutions, constructed with the involvement of key American partners in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, helped develop platforms for Japan to pivot from its wartime identity in two distinct ways. First, the reintroduction of baseball and U.S.-Japan baseball exchange after World War II provided a means for Japan to establish continuity with pre-war values and institutions. By refocusing on baseball traditions created in the Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa periods, players, spectators, and consumers of baseball could all connect with Japanese values such as self-sacrifice that many associated with the sport, washed clean of any tinge of militarism for the post-war era. The Japanese Imperial Family in particular played an important part in this process, as their endorsement of the sport and attendance of games linked the sport with their role as a source of continuity and stability during Japan's sudden transition from colonial empire to occupied territory. Second, the return of baseball institutions and interactions with the United States facilitated the reconstitution of Japanese society for a new trajectory in post-war Asia. Japanese domestic leaders and U.S. occupation officials, including Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) Douglas MacArthur, viewed baseball as a means to promote ideas that would become central to Japan after the Treaty of San Francisco and the end of U.S. occupation in

1952. Baseball provided a way to encourage democratic values and even long-term alignment with the United States as mutual exposure through baseball helped change negative images of each other caused by wartime propaganda. Furthermore, baseball had a hand in spurring economic development, further cementing Japan's role as a democratic bulwark in East Asia in the early Cold War. As one of the leading forms of U.S.-Japan ties, stretching back all the way to the early years of the Meiji period, baseball constituted a way not only to reconnect Japan to its pre-war past, but also a means to look toward its future.

This paper examines how baseball institutions and exchange with the United States helped forge Japanese identity during the period of U.S. occupation after World War II. To accomplish this task, this paper first discusses how institutions such as amateur and professional leagues developed in Japan through coordination with and influence from American sources. Next, it describes the dissolution of these elements during wartime and how Japanese and Americans worked together to reinstate them in the first years of the occupation. Then, it analyzes how the reintroduction of these institutions and actions by influential Japanese and American figures played a part in enabling a reformation of Japanese identity along two main avenues: reconnection with the past and pivoting towards a post-war future. Baseball, due to its long, shared history between the United States and Japan, became a powerful vehicle for change in the post-war period.

Pre-War U.S.-Japan Baseball Exchange and Institutional Growth

By the outbreak of World War II, Japan had developed its own distinct domestic baseball traditions, and the sport became a prominent feature of life across wide swathes of Japanese society. Starting from the sport's introduction to Japan by Americans in the late-nineteenth

century, baseball exploded in popularity throughout the country. This process first took shape in the context of amateur teams connected with educational institutions. Sport was inextricably linked with education during the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taisho periods (1912-1926), and educators saw great potential in the ideational value of baseball. For example, Fukuzawa Yukichi, a prominent Meiji-era reformer and writer, exhorted schools to incorporate sport into their curriculum, and he favored baseball especially, saying it could provide value by imparting Confucian values to students.¹ In his view, baseball modeled self-sacrifice for the group while also instilling a competitive spirit, key values as Japan emerged onto the world stage during these periods.² Thus, university and high school teams developed before the emergence of professional leagues in Japan, and competitions between school teams became widely popular throughout the country. For example, in 1925, six major universities in the Tokyo area joined to form a baseball conference called the Tokyo Big Six League, and the top talent in this conference often became national celebrities.³ Similarly, *Koshien*, a national high-school baseball tournament that began in 1915, also drew significant coverage from the press and interest from fans. Semi-pro leagues followed, as did a full professional league, the *Nihon Yakyū Renmei* (Japanese Baseball League), which was established in 1936. Baseball even became an aspect of Japan's colonial projects, with the sport spreading to Taiwan and South Korea during the Japanese occupation. However, while these developments indicate the presence of a baseball culture endemic to Japan, each individual aspect was built in the context of interaction with America, the birthplace of the sport.

Though Japan had developed a baseball culture specific to the country, it did not do so in isolation. Instead, communication and exchange with the baseball community in the United

¹ Keaveney 2018, 28.

² Keaveney 2018, 28.

³ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 87.

States informed and shaped the progression of baseball culture in Japan. The rapid growth of collegiate baseball in Japan in part reflected a similar, concurrent movement in the United States. Furthermore, these burgeoning college-level leagues directly interacted, starting with a baseball match between Waseda University and Stanford University in 1905. In that year, the Waseda team embarked on a series of twenty-six games across the U.S. west coast, kicking off what would become a significant source of exchange for athletes and fans in both Japan and the United States. Many Japanese and American universities invested in overseas trips for their players, staging their baseball tours as opportunities for both cultural enrichment and school recruitment.⁴ The U.S.-Japan connection also paid dividends for the pro game in Japan. Teams of all-stars from U.S.-based Major League Baseball regularly conducted barnstorming tours, trips consisting of a series of matches against local opponents, in Japan in the pre-war period. In addition to drawing incredible crowds and wide press coverage, these visiting teams, often composed of top American players such as Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, demonstrated the potential for the growth of a professional league in Japan. In fact, Lefty O'Doul, an American player that both organized and took part in several of these pre-war tours, played a pivotal role in organizing the Tokyo Giants, Japan's first professional baseball club, in 1934.⁵ American businesses also took note of Japan's love of the national pastime. Sporting goods companies like Reach and Spalding & Brothers played a significant role in bankrolling transpacific trips for Major League stars.⁶ Whether at the amateur or professional level, exchange between the United States and Japan helped shape the growth of baseball in both countries. However, Japanese

⁴ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 94.

⁵ Snelling 2017, 189.

⁶ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 114.

expansionism in the Asia-Pacific and war between the two countries would suspend this friendly, interconnected system until the end of World War II.

World War II: Baseball Militarism Replaces Baseball Exchange

While U.S.-Japan baseball exchange stopped during World War II, Japanese baseball mostly continued but with heavy influence from the wartime government. Rising tensions between the United States and Japan forced Lefty O'Doul to cancel a trip there in 1938, and this end of exchange reflected a sharp change in how baseball fit into Japanese society. Rather than a bridge connecting Japan to other countries, baseball became another avenue for enforcing domestic control. Starting in 1937, every high-school baseball game began with all participants and attendees bowing while facing in the direction of the Imperial palace in Tokyo.⁷ The professional league also contributed to this movement. Up until professional play ceased in 1944, the league donated ten percent of its income each month directly to the military, and it gradually replaced American baseball terminology with Japanese equivalents after war with the United States began.⁸ Pro teams even took on new, highly militaristic names. For example, the Hanshin Tigers of Osaka became the *moko gun*, or fierce tiger troop.⁹ The effects of this shift could also be felt throughout the Japanese Empire. In Taiwan, for instance, the Japanese colonial government embarked on a campaign of *kōminka undō*, a movement to create loyal imperial subjects by de-sinicizing the island's ethnic Chinese population.¹⁰ Japan viewed baseball as a means for achieving this goal by transmitting "Japanese essence and spirit" to non-Japanese

⁷ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 173

⁸ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 178.

⁹ Reaves 2002, 28-79.

¹⁰ Morris 2011, 48.

peoples and further encouraged adoption of the sport in its colonies during wartime.¹¹ Baseball would continue until the final stages of the war, when the increasingly dire situation in Japan would force an end to collegiate, high school, and professional play. However, the end of the war would bring about a rebirth of baseball, and the sport would play a vital role in shaping Japan's post-war trajectory.

A Bridge to the Past: The Return of Baseball to Occupied Japan

In the aftermath of Imperial Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945, baseball reemerged as a prominent part of daily life. In addition, baseball experienced a particularly swift return to the Japanese education system, and both Japanese domestic authorities and the U.S. occupation leadership broadly supported this reinstatement. As early as September, 1945, Japanese Welfare Minister Kenzo Matsumura openly advocated for the return of intercollegiate baseball, especially the Big Six competition.¹² The wartime government had drastically cut sports education in favor of teaching Japanese martial arts and infantry drills to schoolchildren, but in October, 1945 the Education Ministry announced an end to all military training in schools and the return of sports at all levels of education.¹³ U.S. leadership also supported measures to reimplement sports education in Japan with a strong emphasis on baseball. On October 14, 1945, a team of U.S. Army personnel played the first of three games against veteran ballplayers of Meiji University, winners of the last Tokyo university tournament in 1942 before the yearly series stopped for the war, reflecting a desire to reinstate interrupted traditions.¹⁴ The national high school baseball tournament also returned in 1946, and it was accompanied by prominent visits by U.S. military

¹¹ Morris 2011, 50.

¹² "Sports Revival Planned By Welfare Ministry," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), September 26, 1945, 3.

¹³ "Education Ministry Encourages Sports," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), October 2, 1945, 3.

¹⁴ "8th Army-Meiji Ball Game," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), October 7, 1945, 3.

officials. For example, Brigadier General Everett E. Brown opened the 1948 summer tournament with a speech congratulating all participating teams, reflecting the SCAP leadership's interest in promoting baseball.¹⁵ Baseball factored heavily into post-war educational strategies of both Japanese and U.S. officials, but it also returned in a professional context.

Just as Americans took great interest in reviving amateur baseball, so too did they play a pivotal role in reviving post-war professional baseball in Japan. Japanese professional baseball had only started in the 1930s, but the pro league had quickly become a popular attraction, so several measures were taken to bring it back in post-war Japan. At the behest of Douglas MacArthur and Major General William Marquat, one of MacArthur's primary advisors, available funds for sport were overwhelmingly diverted to baseball. This direct support helped the Japanese Baseball League return in 1946, just one year after the end of the war.¹⁶ However, the rebirth of the professional game in Japan also came about by way of an extremely influential domestic baseball lobby. This group included Suzuki Sōtarō and Matsumoto Takizō, key figures in the development of the Japanese Baseball League, and they pressed SCAP to prioritize rebuilding fields and stadiums, increasing Japan's ability to support baseball as a professional enterprise.¹⁷ Another powerful supporter of baseball was Captain Tsuneo "Cappy" Harada, a Nisei American intelligence officer that provided a direct line of contact to Marquat for Japanese baseball supporters. He would also play a vital role in organizing the 1949 tour of Japan by the San Francisco Seals, a minor-league team managed by Lefty O'Doul, which also helped reinvigorate interest in professional baseball. The return of organized baseball, both amateur and

¹⁵ "Congratulates Teams," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), August 20, 1948, 3.

¹⁶ Elias 2010, 172.

¹⁷ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 204.

pro, demonstrated how highly Japanese and American leadership valued the sport. However, baseball also gripped Japan's interest as part of daily life.

After the end of World War II, baseball quickly reclaimed its status as the national pastime in Japan. Even in a country ravaged by war with a populace struggling to live day-to-day, droves of people were willing to spend time and money to watch, follow, and play baseball. In 1946, crowds of 35,000 regularly packed Koraku Stadium to watch the Tokyo Giants, and Suzuki Sōtarō, the vice president of the reemergent Japanese Baseball League, stated that the league was turning a profit for the first time since its inception in the pre-war period.¹⁸ Beyond attendance, an explosion of print media related to baseball captured readers young and old. After World War II, each of Japan's major newspapers introduced sporting magazines that featured a heavy emphasis on baseball, and independent sports-focused journalism, like that of *Nikkan Supōtsu* ("Daily Sports") also emerged.¹⁹ Youth-oriented baseball periodicals, starting with *Yakyū Shōnen* ("Baseball Boys") in 1947, also became popular. Interestingly, magazines for young readers in particular featured many articles on American players, indicating the growing appeal of both international and domestic leagues.²⁰ For baseball fans in occupied Japan, baseball was a global sport and one that they actively participated in.

The "baseball craze" also took the form of recreational, unorganized play throughout the country. Polling demonstrated that baseball was the favorite activity among boys, and demand for proper baseball equipment was incredibly high.²¹ However, even with the production of baseball equipment given priority over other sporting goods, meager amounts of rubber and leather meant that supply could not keep up with the overwhelming demand. Still, baseball

¹⁸ "Pro Baseball Seen Gaining Popularity," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), November 3, 1946, 3.

¹⁹ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 211.

²⁰ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 211.

²¹ "School Survey Bares Vocations of Pupils," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), June 9, 1946, 3.

persisted, even in surprising places. When villagers in the fishing village of Tsugaruishi in northern Iwate Prefecture made a record profit from salmon sales in 1947, they spent 500,000 yen, a sixth of their profits, on baseball gloves for every boy in the village.²² Women also found avenues to participate in the booming sport. For example, a group of Buddhist nuns at Komazawa University in Tokyo formed their own baseball team, an endeavor supported by their Dean of Students, who stated, “There is no reason in heaven or earth why Buddhism and baseball shouldn’t mix.”²³ Enthusiasm for baseball connected Japan from Hokkaidō to Kyūshū, and this passion for the sport, a passion shared with the American occupation force, allowed for baseball to enable powerful change within the country as it repositioned itself after World War II.

The reintroduction of baseball institutions and the widespread enthusiasm for the sport provided a way to connect post-war Japan to its pre-war history. Amateur and professional leagues first emerged before the outbreak of World War II, and their earliest incarnations communicated values viewed as valuable by Japanese and American leaders during the occupation era. While baseball’s status as a combination of “...the modern and the traditional, the Western and the native Japanese,” made it a target of scrutiny for Taishō-era conservative critics, it made baseball the prime choice for incorporating both traditional and Western values into post-war Japanese society.²⁴ Just as Fukuzawa Yukichi argued that baseball could impart Confucian values through a modern means, so too did post-war Japanese figures associate baseball with native Japanese traditions, including personal improvement through ritual practice and prioritizing group successes over one’s own. As prominent baseball writer Tobita Suishū wrote when launching *Baseball Magazine* in 1946, baseball had become the “national religion,” and he

²² “Fishers Don’t Know How to Spend Huge Profits; Buy Baseball Gloves,” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), January 19, 1947, 1.

²³ “Buddhism on the Diamond,” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), September 26, 1948, 3.

²⁴ Keaveney 2018, 27.

criticized wartime leaders for limiting the baseball leagues that were so dear to the country.²⁵

Furthermore, these leagues, especially amateur ones, provided another means of demonstrating perceived traditional values in a contemporary context.

The reintroduction of amateur baseball institutions to post-war Japan helped facilitate continuity to pre-war society by refracting traditional values and ideals through sport. Importantly, the earliest amateur baseball tournaments and leagues during the occupation period were framed as direct continuations of their analogues established in the Meiji and Taisho periods. Rather than establishing new forms of competition at the high-school or collegiate level, organizers used the same nomenclature from the pre-war period to link amateur baseball with tradition. The Big Six league returned as the Big Six, and Koshien returned as Koshien. Furthermore, this continuity enabled values transmission through sport. The amateur nature of these leagues in particular represented an ideal. Rather than competing for money, high-school and amateur players were lauded for striving not only for the perfection of one's skills but for the success of the team as a whole. Working through strenuous training sessions and working within the context of a team's hierarchy reflected the Confucian processes of building personal virtue through practicing rituals and right relationships. Similarly, the direct connection between amateur baseball and academic institutions promoted a link between baseball and the importance of education in post-war Japan. Pre-war figures like Yukichi had previously identified this connection between sport and learning, but this link took on a new significance in post-war Japan. Rebuilding the country constituted not only repairing buildings and infrastructure, it also required accumulating new human capital, and amateur baseball, through its connection to education, helped reinforce the importance of cultivating Japan's young people. For a Japanese

²⁵ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 211.

society facing significant shifts in daily life caused by the end of World War II and occupation by a foreign power, amateur baseball provided one way to anchor the country to the past and its ideals.

In addition to the innate connection between baseball and traditional values, the Japanese Imperial Family helped further connect the sport to Japanese tradition. After the war, Emperor Hirohito and Empress Kojun stood as the most significant symbols of Japan's old, pre-war society and traditions. Once distant and invisible for the average Japanese citizen, the Imperial Family took on a new role in the post-war period, acting more as public figures advocating for peace and national development throughout the country. Furthermore, they began to be associated with baseball. This relationship developed through several means. First, the Imperial Family attended many baseball games, with the Emperor and Empress first attending a game together in August, 1947 at Korakuen Stadium in Tokyo.²⁶ Furthermore, their son Crown Prince Akihito, the future emperor, also became publicly associated with baseball, with newspapers publishing numerous stories of him pursuing baseball as a hobby in between studies.²⁷ In addition, the Emperor made very explicit praise of baseball and its importance to Japan's future. Upon meeting Lefty O'Doul during a visit by his team, the San Francisco Seals, in 1949, Emperor Hirohito told him, "I am heartily pleased that you are trying to promote goodwill and friendship between the United States and Japan through baseball games....It is by means of sports that our countries can be brought closer together."²⁸ Though the Emperor and Empress were hardly fans of the sport, their outward endorsement of the sport reaffirmed its connection with tradition and Japan's pre-war history. Just as the Emperor pivoted away from being a

²⁶ "Emperor and Empress Witness First Baseball Game at Korakuen," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), August 5, 1947, 3.

²⁷ "First Year With Imperial Family Is Described by American Teacher," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), September 13, 1947, 1-2.

²⁸ Quoted in Snelling 2017, 243

symbol of imperial conquest, as the 1947 Japanese Constitution stripped him of executive authority, so too did baseball achieve a greater connection to Japanese tradition, and the Emperor played an instrumental role in this process. However, baseball still maintained a connection to martial practices.

In addition to Confucian values and education, amateur baseball long had a connection to militarism that only became more amplified and explicitly nationalistic during World War II. Early dominant baseball teams in Japan at the amateur level were infamous for their strict regimens of training and the aggressive attitude of coaches towards players. For example, Waseda University coach Tobita Suishu directly compared baseball to war and promoted physical suffering in practice as the path to better performance.²⁹ Similarly, a fight-song from Ichiko High School entitled *Yakyubuka*, translated as “baseball club rouser,” employed military metaphors to describe the experience of playing against a team of Americans in Yokohama.³⁰ During the occupation, the martial aspect of baseball became more subtle, but it still remained. SCAP guidelines prohibited teaching traditional martial arts such as *kendo* and *kyudo* in schools for physical education, and baseball took the place of these sports in terms of school-time allotments.³¹ Despite General MacArthur’s view that baseball was a particularly pacifistic sport, baseball teams provided a means to experience a military-esque environment, connecting a defeated, demilitarized Japan to its past in a manner more appropriate for its post-war trajectory.³²

²⁹ Reaves 2002, 52.

³⁰ Reaves 2002, 50-51.

³¹ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 202.

³² Elias 2010, 172.

A Bridge to the Future: Baseball’s Impact on U.S.-Japan Alignment

The return of major baseball institutions to Japan during the occupation not only helped Japan connect to its pre-war past and provide continuity, but it also helped build a bridge forward to a new identity and role for Japan in post-war Asia, one based on U.S.-promoted values such as democracy. Americans believed in an inherent connection between the sport of baseball and democratic values. Before World War II, baseball was often praised as a “peacemaker” by American journalists and major baseball figures. In 1949, Albert Benjamin “Happy” Chandler, then Commissioner of Major League Baseball, declared baseball to be the “greatest and surest” way to spread democracy, even adding that baseball-loving peoples do not start war.³³ Although Chandler was factually wrong— Japan and the United States had been engaged in war only four years before this statement— his incredibly optimistic comments point to the second major way that baseball helped Japan build a new identity after the end of World War II. Both the U.S. and Japanese leadership envisioned baseball as a vehicle for reshaping the country along democratic lines, and in doing so promoted a new vision of post-war Japan.

Among SCAP’s leaders, both General Macarthur and Major General Marquat firmly believed in baseball’s potential as a democratizer, and Captain Harada connected them with Japanese leaders that shared this sentiment.³⁴ This group included Suzuki Ryuji, future president of the Japan Central League, who believed that the sport would “build a bridge” between the two countries.³⁵ Some even pointed to baseball’s growth in the country as proof that democracy could similarly take root and prosper. For example, in a letter to the editor of the *Nippon Times* in 1947, a Japanese author argued that “drilling” in the art of democracy would cement

³³ Snelling 2017, 71.

³⁴ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 199.

³⁵ Elias 2010, 172.

democracy as a norm in Japanese society just as practice of baseball made Keio-Waseda baseball games such an important part of Tokyo society.³⁶ For Macarthur and the rest of the SCAP, who were deeply concerned about Japan falling to Communism, baseball became a way to practice containment on the level of lifestyle.³⁷ The belief that baseball could democratize Japan was widespread, and this trust in the sport helped guide how the sport developed in post-war Japan.

The trust of both Japanese and American leaders in baseball's potential as a democratizer made the sport a top priority for SCAP, and the effort put into reviving and spreading baseball helped facilitate closer relations between the two countries. SCAP poured money into rebuilding fields, providing equipment, organizing games, and other baseball-related efforts. Furthermore, it worked to revive both amateur and professional leagues, believing that each would have a special role in the democratization process. In regards to the pro league, SCAP helped get the league back on its feet as a modern league in the image of America's Major League Baseball. This sometimes took the form of constructing cutting-edge facilities, such as when SCAP allocated funds to help build a new concrete-and-steel stadium for Osaka's Nankai Hawks.³⁸ In other cases, occupation authorities used their influence to change the very structure of the league. For example, Macarthur pushed Japanese Professional Baseball to adopt a two-league structure like the one in the United States on the grounds that it would be more democratic.³⁹ The leagues also developed institutions central to the U.S. league such as a player's association and the Commissioner's Office.⁴⁰ In general, Japanese and American authorities made efforts to Americanize professional baseball in Japan in order to better facilitate the transmission of

³⁶ "Classes in Technique of Democracy," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), December 17, 1947, 4.

³⁷ Nadel 2014, 147.

³⁸ Reaves 2002, 82.

³⁹ Kelly 2006, 23.

⁴⁰ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 198.

democratic values through the sport. Furthermore, they had similar intentions for the amateur game.

SCAP's leader also saw amateur baseball as central to their democratization mission, and they took several measures to strengthen the sport nationwide. One major effort was providing and distributing baseball equipment, which became incredibly difficult to obtain in Japan near the end of World War II. Baseballs were dubbed "emergency priority items" and significant amounts of already scarce sources of leather and rubber were reserved for baseball production.⁴¹ Furthermore, SCAP participated in equitably distributing what few sporting supplies there were to school districts.⁴² Military police of SCAP were even known to overlook the black-market trade of baseball equipment, hoping that such sales could further spread the sport.⁴³ The reasoning behind these decisions was tied to the belief that baseball could embed democracy in Japan. The more people that played and experienced the game, the more they would be exposed to the sport's purported positive effects. However, baseball democracy was only one facet of baseball's role in reshaping Japanese post-war identity.

Baseball, and sport in general, also acted as an incentive for Japan's return to the international community as a responsible, system-reinforcing member. Japan's militarism and wartime aggressiveness in the 1920s and 1930s isolated the country from much of the world, and this isolation was especially felt in terms of sport. For example, though the International Olympic Committee (IOC) initially awarded the 1940 Summer Olympics to Tokyo, the Japanese invasion of China caused the event to first shift to Helsinki, Finland before the event's ultimate cancellation. Furthermore, the IOC barred Japan along with Germany from participating in the

⁴¹ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 202.

⁴² "Distribute Athletic Goods." *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), February 20, 1947, 3.

⁴³ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 203.

1948 Summer and Winter Olympics in London, England and St. Moritz, Switzerland, respectively, due to their actions in World War II. Japan desperately wanted to rejoin the international sporting world, and Macarthur understood the leverage this desire gave the United States. While U.S. officials did not have control over decisions by the IOC, they were the gatekeepers to international baseball competitions. In 1947, the National Baseball Congress (NBC), an American organization of semi-pro and amateur baseball teams, proposed a global baseball tournament involving “all nations where baseball is popular,” but Macarthur balked at the inclusion of Japan, stating that the country would need to sign a peace treaty with the United States before participating.⁴⁴ The tournament was further delayed in 1948 when Major General Marquat, also the NBC commissioner for Japan, reiterated the need for a peace treaty from Japan in order for the country to join the tournament.⁴⁵ While an exhibition series between a Japanese all-star team and the Fort Wayne Capeharts, an NBC-member team, took place in 1950, the proposed tournament did not actually occur for the first time until 1955, several years after the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco in 1952. While participation in global competitions was not the primary factor for this treaty, U.S. occupation officials recognized that international baseball was a strong incentive, and they used it help promote alignment with the United States. In addition, global tournaments like the one proposed by NBC represented only one way for international baseball exchange to link together the United States and Japan in the post-war period.

The return of U.S.-Japan baseball exchange played a major role in rehabilitating the relationship between the two countries after World War II. Baseball led to tremendous amounts

⁴⁴ “Global Baseball Series Will Include Japan, But Only After Peace Treaty.” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), December 24, 1947, 2.

⁴⁵ “Amateur World Series in Tokyo Postponed Until 1950.” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), December 20, 1948, 2.

of travel across the Pacific as teams from Japan and the United States sought to compete against each other. This process of exchange helped build the Japanese baseball institutions that became so important to revive during the occupation, and with their return also came the return of baseball-centered exchange. Perhaps the most significant example is the visit by Lefty O'Doul and his San Francisco Seals in 1949. SCAP leadership had been concerned about what they viewed as little improvement in Japanese morale and attitudes to the United States, and they charged O'Doul, still a fan-favorite figure in Japan, with solving the problem by touring the country with the team he managed in the Pacific Coast League.⁴⁶ O'Doul understood his mission quite well. He himself strongly believed in baseball's potential to cause reconciliation, and he had tried to bring the Seals on a separate trip several times before the 1949 trip.⁴⁷ The tour, which consisted of ten games in several major cities, constituted a major success in bringing the two nations closer together.

The visit by Lefty O'Doul and the San Francisco Seals to Japan in 1949 helped repair U.S.-Japan relations in several ways. First, the trip reached a wide swathe of Japanese society. In addition to the five hundred thousand spectators at the ten games, MacArthur claimed that eighty million Japanese citizens heard about the trip and five million saw the American players and coaches in person.⁴⁸ The trip itself consisted of much more than games. O'Doul and his players also made great efforts to interact with and support the people of Japan through visiting different sites and hosting baseball clinics during their travels. In particular, O'Doul focused on appealing to the youth of Japan on the grounds that they represented the future of the country and its relationship with the United States.⁴⁹ This plan reached its apex with "Lefty O'Doul Day," an

⁴⁶ Snelling 2017, 39-40.

⁴⁷ Snelling 2017, 201.

⁴⁸ Snelling 2017, 243.

⁴⁹ Snelling 2017, 203.

annual tradition in San Francisco that the Seals brought to Tokyo. Spectators under the age of fifteen received free admission, and “Uncle O’Doul,” as several newspapers had named him, even participated in the game by pitching for three innings, an impressive feat for a fifty-two year old manager.⁵⁰ Second, organizers of the trip deployed positive imagery of the U.S.-Japan relationship whenever possible. For example, the opening game of the trip, held at Tokyo’s Korakuen Stadium against the Yomiuri Giants, featured several groundbreaking moments for post-war U.S.-Japan relations. For the first time since the Japanese surrender, the American and Japanese flags were flown together and both national anthems were played.⁵¹ O’Doul’s greeting to the crowd of “*tadaima*,” meaning “I’m home,” was met with fervent cheering throughout the crowd.⁵² Sport can act as an important conduit for constructing national identity precisely because of the emotion inherent to it, and these moments capture this transformative interplay between sport and emotion.⁵³ Both Macarthur and Emperor Hirohito judged the visit by the Seals as a tremendous success, with Macarthur going a touch overboard by anointing it the best example of diplomacy in the history of the world.⁵⁴ O’Doul returned in 1951 with American baseball star Joe DiMaggio in tow, but this first visit best demonstrates why both SCAP and Japanese authorities viewed baseball as a tool of reconciliation.

Baseball exchange to Japan did not only consist of professional players touring the country. U.S. military personnel also played an important role in this phenomenon, and their participation in baseball helped ease Japanese hostility towards occupation forces and the United States as a whole. Teams of U.S. soldiers often played local Japanese college and semi-pro

⁵⁰ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 221.

⁵¹ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 220.

⁵² Snelling 2017, 108.

⁵³ Cha 2009, 33.

⁵⁴ Snelling 2017, 243.

teams, starting as early as October, 1945, just two months after the Japanese surrender.⁵⁵ These matches were wildly popular with American and Japanese fans alike, so they tended to draw large crowds. In many cases, the ticket sales from games with military teams would be donated to charitable causes and rebuilding efforts.⁵⁶ Beyond ceremonial appearances by figures such as MacArthur and Marquat at games, certain soldiers participated in Japan's reborn professional league. One such figure was U.S. Army Sergeant Dick Harn, a former Minor League pitcher in the United States, who worked as a coach for the Yomiuri Giants, drilling them in hitting and fielding technique.⁵⁷ Phil Paine, a pitcher for the Boston Braves who was drafted into the U.S. Army during the Korean War, went a step further. During his time stationed at Camp Drake in Fukuoka, Japan, Paine became the first American to play for a Japanese professional team, making nine appearances for the Nishitetsu Lions.⁵⁸ This strong and varied involvement of occupation forces in baseball exchange helped mend attitudes towards the United States and its military, laying the groundwork for rehabilitation and long-term alignment.

Baseball exchange also entailed Japanese players visiting the United States, and this process further contributed to the easing of tensions between the countries. O'Doul continued to play a large part in this process, whether directly or indirectly. For example, four members of the Yomiuri Giants visited the spring training site of the San Francisco Seals to practice with them.⁵⁹ Invited by O'Doul, the success of this small visit prompted the entire Giants squad to travel to the United States in 1953.⁶⁰ Though they lost most of their exhibition games, the trip attracted

⁵⁵ "8th Army-Meiji Ballgame," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), October 7, 1945, 3.

⁵⁶ "GI's To Play Baseball," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), September 26, 1945, 1.

⁵⁷ "U.S. Army Sergeant Coaching Japanese Pro Baseball Team," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), June 25, 1948, 3.

⁵⁸ Nelson Greene, "Phil Paine," *Society For American Baseball Research Biography Project*, accessed April 23, 2019, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/48729b39>.

⁵⁹ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 228.

⁶⁰ Snelling 2017, 236

nationwide interest through newspaper reporting. As for indirect impacts, the proceeds of the Seals' 1949 trip, known as the "O'Doul Fund," financed trips to the United States for Japanese teams and players.⁶¹ While the flow of players from Japan to the United States did not reach the heights of the pre-war period's flood of touring college teams, it still marked a major step in Japan's reconciliation with the United States. In comparison, a similar trip to Australia by the Yomiuri Giants in 1954 demonstrated the relative effectiveness of exchange with the United States. Though the mission carried the usual official messaging of reaching better a understanding between two nations, the results were drastically different. Australia, a country without major baseball traditions and almost no history of baseball exchange with Japan, did not respond well to the goodwill trip. Low attendance and protests by Australian war veterans plagued the trip, and the tour was cut short.⁶² Post-war baseball exchange produced positive results in regards to U.S.-Japan relations not just because the two countries shared a love for the sport. The long tradition of cooperation and exchange through the sport forged in the pre-war era enabled this process. It was not a strategy that could be replicated with other countries to boost Japan's reputation. However, in the case of America, baseball exchange worked.

This renewed baseball exchange played a vital role in refurbishing the image of Japan and the Japanese people in the eyes of Americans. Rehabilitation, of course, did not just consist of Japanese citizens developing more positive views of Americans. Long-term alignment necessitated each side to move past the hatred of wartime, and baseball helped in each case. Beyond baseball, the occupation itself gave hundreds of thousands of U.S. personnel their first real, in-person exposure to Japan. Given the involvement of so many Americans, the occupation drove interest in Japan back on the homefront, making it the subject of journalism and media

⁶¹ Guthrie-Shimizu 2012, 235.

⁶² Snelling 2017, 269.

attention. Baseball helped further drive this fascination with Japan. For some, Japan's shared interest for baseball was all they knew besides wartime propaganda, so the return of baseball exchange helped further fuel interest. American sportswriter Fred Lieb wrote that though memories of Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor or Bataan would be hard to forget, baseball could act as mediator.⁶³ Certainly, baseball was not the primary cause of the American public's decreased animosity towards Japan. Nor did all Americans change their view of Japan, just as many Japanese people continued to resent the U.S. military presence on their home soil. However, as with many other aspects of Japan's post-war identity, baseball helped bring the two countries together.

Conclusion

Baseball occupied and continues to occupy a special position in the U.S.-Japan bilateral relationship, and the long history of baseball exchange between the two countries presented a unique opportunity for identity shaping and rapprochement after World War II. The development of Japanese professional and amateur baseball in the pre-war period was directly influenced by American baseball figures, and, despite restrictions placed on the sport during wartime, baseball retained an inherent connection with Japanese traditional values such as Confucianism. Furthermore, this connection to distinct Japanese values, combined with baseball's booming post-war popularity, enabled baseball to function as a bridge to Japan's pre-war past. Baseball's connections with the education system, the Imperial Family, and martial practices further established this continuity. However, baseball also filled a parallel role for shaping Japan's role for the post-war period. SCAP and Japanese leaders both saw the sport as a potential

⁶³ Elias 2002, 172.

democratizer, so they made great efforts to spread the sport nationwide. Baseball also provided a means to ease Japan back into the international community through exchange with the U.S. and global competitions. In addition, this revived U.S.-Japan baseball exchange also facilitated an improvement in American views of Japan. In sum, these qualities helped baseball contribute to the long-term alignment between Japan and the United States.

Of course, baseball constituted only one of many ways in which the United States and Japan sought engagement after World War II, and the occupation cannot be wholly summed up with a description of its policies on sport. The occupation was an experience that affected the entire population of Japan, and, though the U.S.-Japan alliance emerged from it, it was deeply traumatic for many Japanese people. However, the role of baseball in this instance provides an important example of how people-to-people exchange can create opportunities for later dialogue and cooperation. U.S.-Japan baseball exchange, though often financed by fortune-seeking investors, was driven by a shared passion for a sport. Two communities separated by six thousand miles chose to engage with each other because of baseball. This common interest built trans-Pacific relationships that otherwise would not have existed, and these relationships came back into the spotlight after war had separated the two countries for four years. Though forged on the baseball diamond, these connections formed a bond that helped tie these two nations together.

Bibliography

- “Amateur World Series in Tokyo Postponed Until 1950.” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), December 20, 1948, 2.
- “Buddhism on the Diamond,” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), September 26, 1948, 3.
- Cha, Victor. *Beyond the Final Score*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- “Classes in Technique of Democracy,” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), December 17, 1947, 4.
- “Congratulates Teams,” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), August 20, 1948, 3.
- “Distribute Athletic Goods.” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), February 20, 1947, 3.
- “Education Ministry Encourages Sports,” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), October 2, 1945, 3.
- Elias, Robert. *The Empire Strikes Out: How Baseball Sold U.S. Foreign Policy and Promoted the American Way Abroad*. New York: The New Press, 2010.
- “Emperor and Empress Witness First Baseball Game at Korakuen,” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), August 5, 1947, 3.
- “First Year With Imperial Family Is Described by American Teacher,” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), September 13, 1947, 1-2.
- “Fishers Don’t Know How to Spend Huge Profits; Buy Baseball Gloves,” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), January 19, 1947, 1.
- “GI’s To Play Baseball,” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), September 26, 1945, 1.
- “Global Baseball Series Will Include Japan, But Only After Peace Treaty.” *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), December 24, 1947, 2.
- Greene, Nelson. “Phil Paine.” *Society For American Baseball Research Biography Project*. Accessed April 23, 2019. <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/48729b39>.
- Guthrie-Shimizu, Sayuri. *Transpacific Field of Dreams: How Baseball Linked the United States*

- and Japan in Peace and War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- Keaveney, Christopher. *Contesting the Myths of Samurai Baseball: Cultural Representations of Japan's National Pastime*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018.
- Kelly, William W. "Japan: The Hanshin Tigers & Japanese Professional Baseball." In *Baseball Without Borders: The International Pastime*, Edited by George Gmelch, 22-42. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.
- Morris, Andrew. *Colonial Project, National Game: A History of Baseball in Taiwan*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011.
- Nadel, Alan. "Sayonara, Teahouse of the August Moon, and the Cold War Re-"Opening" of Japan." In *Legacies of the U.S. Occupation of Japan: Appraisals After Sixty Years*, Edited by Duccio Basosi and Rosa Caroli, 141-154. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.
- "Pro Baseball Seen Gaining Popularity," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), November 3, 1946, 3.
- Reaves, Joseph A. *Taking In A Game*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2002.
- "School Survey Bares Vocations of Pupils," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), June 9, 1946, 3.
- Snelling, Dennis. *Lefty O'Doul: Baseball's Forgotten Ambassador*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2017.
- "Sports Revival Planned By Welfare Ministry." *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), September 26, 1945, 3.
- "U.S. Army Sergeant Coaching Japanese Pro Baseball Team," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), June 25, 1948, 3.
- "8th Army-Meiji Ball Game," *Nippon Times* (Tokyo), October 7, 1945, 3.