



The Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

Articles in NEWSLETTER, Vol.27, No.4 (Feb, 2018)

(<http://www.baseball-museum.or.jp/>)

(The English version prepared by Mariko Inagaki)

p.1 2018 Hall of Famers Elected

Shinichi Hirose, President

The Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum announced its Hall of Fame inductees for 2018 at the press conference held at the Baseball Hall of Fame gallery from 2 p.m. on Monday, January 15. The media and pre-registered sustaining members of the museum were exclusively invited to the closed press conference.

The Players Division of the Players Selection Committee elected Hideki Matsui, the slugger of the Heisei era who was known as “Godzilla,” and Tomoaki Kanemoto, who set the world record of 1,492 consecutive games without missing an inning and was nicknamed “Iron Man,” into the Players Division.

The Expert Division elected Tatsunori Hara, who played for the Yomiuri Giants as a cleanup hitter, and later led the Giants to seven league pennants and three Japan Series titles in his 12 years as manager. He achieved a second successive victory at the World Baseball Classic as a manager.

The Special Selection Committee elected the late Masao Taki who managed the baseball clubs of Chukyo Shogyo (current Chukyo University Chukyo Senior High School) and the Chukyo University, and who had made significant contributions to the development of Japanese amateur baseball.

The press conference began with the announcement of the names of the 2018 Hall of Famers by Atsushi Saito, chairman of the museum, followed by the presentation of the induction notification to each of the 2018 inductees. Subsequently, the report of the selection procedures of the Players Selection Committee was delivered by its representative director, Gotaro Nagase, and the acceptance speeches of the inductees in this category followed. After the commemorative photographs, the selection procedures of the Special Selection Committee were reported by its chairman, Tetsuo Ikeda. Afterwards, an acceptance speech was made by the inductee’s family member in this category.

On behalf of Hideki Matsui, who was unable to attend the press conference, his father Masao Matsui read Hideki’s acceptance message: “I am thankful to all of the fans who have supported me through the years”. “Especially I am truly humbled by the support of my respected manager, Shigeo Nagashima. If I did not get opportunity to have a great journey together, in which I received his consistent guidance and sizable support, I would probably not be where I am today”. Kanemoto commented that “I feel a mixture of emotions – I am kind of surprised but also thrilled at this news. Honestly, I am absolutely humbled and overwhelmed to be a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame.”

Hara expressed his appreciation: “I sincerely want to thank you all for all the things that you have done for me. Probably I was not the greatest player but I think my 12 years of devotion to baseball as a manager has been recognized with this award.”

Each of the guest speakers told an interesting episode about his respective inductee. A congratulatory message was delivered on this special occasion from Shigeo Nagashima (1988 HOF, the honorary lifetime manager for the Yomiuri Giants) to Matsui. “One day in the future, I am looking forward to seeing you coaching talented young players yourself, training and supporting them to be cleanup hitters and to lead the future of Japanese baseball.”

Koji Yamamoto (2008 HOF), who was the manager when Kanemoto played for the Hiroshima Carp, recalled that “Kanemoto played for the Carp as a mainstay. All of his success came from his tremendous hard work and dedication.” The Giants legend Masaichi Kaneda (1988 HOF) spoke of Hara in the highest terms: “My heart is too full for words. I am deeply satisfied to see another wonderful person being inducted to the Baseball Hall of Fame. I cannot think of anyone better qualified to be a Hall of Famer than Hara, He is an absolute favorite of mine!”

Katsumi Taki, a son of Masao Taki, spoke of his late father, “He had been completely absorbed in baseball. No hobbies other than that. His induction to the Baseball Hall of Fame is the greatest honour for his entire family, too. I think my father lived a really happy and successful life”; at some points during this speech, his voice choked up. Toshiyuki Ofuji, who was a former manager of the Chukyo University Chukyo Senior High School baseball club, and who played under Taki, extended his gratitude to Taki: “Although he was very strict when he put on his hat as manager, he respected his students as equals when off duty.”

Commemorative photographs of the new inductees and the guest speakers were also taken during the press conference. Later in the evening, an informal party was held at the Tokyo Dome Hotel, consisting of approximately 30 people including new inductees, guest speakers, their families, and others. It provided an opportunity to deepen the engagement among the participants. Some interesting anecdotes about the new inductees were revealed. Attendees also saw a special performance by Masao Matsui, who sang an excellent song for us at the party.



Photo:
(From left in back row)
Yamamoto, Kaneda, Kenji Taki (second son of the late Masao Taki), and Ofuji.

(From left in the front row)
Masao Matsui (father of Hideki Matsui), Kanemoto, Chairman Saito, Hara, Katsumi Taki (first son of Taki).

Gotaro Nagase, Representative Director of the PSC

The 58th Players Selection Committee elected Hideki Matsui and Tomoaki Kanemoto into the Players Division. Matsui played for a total of five clubs in both Japan and the USA including the Yomiuri Giants and the New York Yankees, and amassed 507 career home runs. Kanemoto set the world record of 1,492 consecutive games without missing an inning. The Expert Division elected Tatsunori Hara, who led the Giants to seven league pennants and three Japan Series titles.

The 17 eligible candidates were selected by the screening committee of the Players Selection Committee from professional players who have ceased to be active for at least five years prior to selection and have been retired for fewer than 21 years. In the election in the Players Division, 368 out of 376 voting members with an experience of reporting baseball for 15 years or more selected the names of seven candidates at most on a ballot. With encouragement from the secretary of the committee, the voting participation rate was 97.9%. The total ballot count was 1,871, with no invalid votes. This means that each voting member selected 5.1 candidates on average, exceeding the previous year of 4.5 per voting member.



(Photo: BBM)

Matsui received 336 ballots (91.3% of total valid ballots), and Kanemoto received 278 ballots (75.5%). They were both the fifth to be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in the first year of eligibility after Victor Starffin in 1960, Sadaharu Oh in 1994, Hideo Nomo in 2014, and Kimiyasu Kudo in 2016. It was the first time that two of those who were in the first year of eligibility were inducted at the same time. Matsui is currently 43 years and 7 months of age, and became the youngest inductee, which title had been claimed previously by Hideo Nomo, who was inducted in 2014 when he was 45 years and 4 months. Matsui received the third-highest voting rate for a first-year eligibility player ever, at 91.3%, after Starffin (97.3%) and Oh (93.2%).



(Photo: BBM)

Kanemoto is a current manager of the Hanshin Tiger, becoming the seventh to be inducted as an active manager after Tetsuharu Kawakami (1965 HOF), Kazuto Tsuruoka (1965 HOF), Hiromitsu Ochiai (2011 HOF), Koji Akiyama (2014 HOF), Kimiyasu Kudo (2016 HOF) and Tsutomu Itoh (2017 HOF).

Those who have missed out on induction this year include Kazuyoshi Tatsunami, who was named on 65.8% of the ballots this year, earning 242 ballots, followed by Shingo Takatsu, who earned 45.9% (169 ballots) of the total ballots. Yoshinori Satoh follows with 38.0%, with 140 ballots. It was his final year for eligibility in the Players Division, but he will be eligible for the Expert Division starting next year.

In the Experts Division, 122 of the 127 electors consisted of living Hall of Famers, baseball reporters with 30 years or more of baseball reporting experience, and directors of the Players Selection Committee; they

selected the names of five candidates at most on a ballot out of 14 eligible candidates prepared by the screening committee. Similar to the Players Division, the Expert Division had a high voting participant rate of 96.1%. The voting slip from Senichi Hoshino, who passed away on January 4, 2018, was also received with postmark December 11, 2017.

There was no invalid vote, and the total ballot count was 498, meaning that each voting member selected 4.1 candidates on average (4.2 in 2017). Tatsunori Hara received 96 ballots, 78.7% of the total valid ballots.

p.3 2018 Hall of Famers elected by the Players Selection Committee (Cont'd)



(Photo: Yomiuri Giants)

Hara was named on 243 ballots from the Players Division in 2015. It was his final year on the ballot in the division, and he fell just 6 votes shy of the 249 ballots needed for induction. After being on the ballot in the Expert Division, he finally made it into the Baseball Hall of Fame on his second year. Not only his notable achievement as Giants manager, but also his distinguished contribution to the 2009 World Baseball Classic, where he led Team Japan to its second successive victory, were highly recognized.

Those who have fallen short of the 75 % needed were Hiroshi Gondo, who received 65.6% of the ballots, followed by Randy Bass, who was named on 46.7%, and Koichi Tabuchi, who was named on 41.0%.

The 58th Players Selection Committee elected three inductees in total: Matsui and Kanemoto into the Players Division, and Hara into the Expert Division. It turned out that the Committee selected three Hall of Famers for 3 years in a row, starting from the 56th Committee, which elected Masaki Saitoh, Kimiyasu Kudo and Kihachi Enomoto, and the 57th Committee, where Tsutomu Itoh, Senichi Hoshino, Masaji Hiramatsu were elected. The number of the Baseball hall of Famers elected from the Players Selection Committee now stands at 95.

2018 Hall of Famers elected by the Special Selection Committee

Tetsuo Ikeda, Chairman of the Special Selection Committee

Last year, the Special Selection Committee elected the late Mirei Suzuki, who was a member of the Tokyo Big6 Baseball Rules Committee and the Official Baseball Rules Committee, and Hiroshi Goshi from Meiji University, who had a long umpiring career for amateur baseball.

The 57th Special Selection Committee was held on January 9 this year. There were eight holdovers from last year, excluding Suzuki and Goshi. Two candidates, i.e., former umpire Hiroya Miyazawa and a manga artist Shinji Mizushima, were newly added to the list.

The Special Selection Committee, which consists of 14 members, voted for a total of 10 eligible candidates, and they elected the late Masao Taki, who received 13 ballots, well over 75% of the total valid ballots.



Taki was born on September 8, 1921 and died on April 2, 2012 at the age of 90. Taki entered the Chukyo Shogyo school (current Chukyo University Senior High School) in 1936. He played for the Chukyo Shogyo baseball club and won the 1937 Summer National High School Baseball Tournament. In the 1938 Spring National Invitational High School Baseball Tournament, he formed a battery with pitcher Jiro Noguchi (who later amassed 237 wins in professional baseball and who was inducted to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1989) and led the team to win the title.

In November 1949, he took up a post as a manager for the Okoshi Kogyo Senior High School baseball club, Bisai City in Aichi prefecture. He spotted talent in Kazuhiro Yamauchi, who later became a cleanup hitter in professional baseball and a Hall of Famer in 2002. Taki suggested that Yamauchi convert from pitcher to batter, and this established a foundation for his solid batting in the future.

In 1953, Taki was appointed a General Manager at the Chukyo Shogyo school baseball club. He led the team to win the 1954 summer and the 1956 spring tournaments, thus accomplishing the remarkable feat of winning both the spring and the summer tournaments both as a player and a general manager. In 1956, he became the manager and general manager for Chukyo University baseball club, winning a total of 28 Aichi University Baseball League championships including 11 consecutive championship titles.

In 1967, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the Aichi University Baseball League, the All Japan University Baseball Championship was held in the Aichi area for the first time. Taki was highly involved in the selection of Aichi to host the championship.

In 1970, he led the team to become the first and only baseball club representing Aichi Prefecture to earn the All Japan University Baseball Championship title. On June 24, Chukyo University defeated Kansai University. Taki was tossed by his students in the Jingu Stadium with the cocktail beam lighting him. In that year, he marked his 15-year anniversary as manager. Later in the autumn, he guided the team to take second place in the inaugural Meiji Jingu Baseball Tournament after losing in the finals against Tokai University.

He demonstrated firm leadership in the field of University baseball in the Tokai area including Aichi prefecture, and built a robust foundation upon which many players from Tokai were launched onto the national level. He was not only taking care of a number of high school baseball players in Aichi, but also contributed to raising the status of the University baseball in the Tokai area, which ultimately a positive impact on boosting the local employment rate for new graduates.

In the summer of 1989, he took the Aichi University Baseball League representatives on a tour of Khabarovsk (former Soviet Union) and played local University teams as a part of the commemorative events for the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Aichi University Baseball League. He also held a baseball clinic during his stay. Thus, he also made contributions to the internationalization of baseball.

He had long devoted himself to training coaches and developing their leadership. The late Hiroyoshi Sai, manager for the Okinawa Suisan Senior High School baseball club, was among those who trained under Taki. Taki was an important figure who made significant contributions to the development of Japanese amateur baseball.

He also held prominent positions such as the Professor at Chukyo University (Emeritus Professor from 1992) and Vice President of the Aichi University Baseball League.

p.4 Inductees Remembered (58) A Memory of my grandfather

Ikuo Abe (grandson of Isoo Abe, 1959 HOF)



My grandfather, Isoo Abe, was born in 1865, three years before the Meiji Restoration. He was born as the second son of a clansman of the Kuroda clan of Fukuoka. He moved to Kyoto at the age of 14 to learn English and entered the Doshisha Eigakko (English Academy) He studied under Jo Nijima (known as Joseph Hardy Neesima) before leaving to study in the US for four years at the age of 26. He left Doshisha in 1899 and became a teacher at the Tokyo Senmon Gakko (current Waseda University), Tokyo.

Although Isoo is known as an educator of sober and upright character, having intellectual depth and nobility of mind, a politician, and a devout Christian, he was just a young and lively teacher who loved sports when he came up to Tokyo. According to his students in those days, he was very strict with his pupils during class. He made plans and kept his students focused on their tasks. Nevertheless, he never showed anger nor severely scolded his students.

On the other hand, he would always come to tennis court straight after school hours, play tennis with his students, and then move to the field to practice baseball; it was his daily habit. To my expectation considering his sobriety, he enjoyed offering prizes or presents for his students. He normally offered a meal to those who won the game. But once in the past, during a baseball club camp, he offered students tickets to an official professional sumo tournament if they were victorious over the local baseball team with an excess of more than 10 runs. I can imagine that this added to the fun on the game and that it motivated the students.

When the Tokyo Senmon Gakko became Waseda University in 1902, he was appointed the first general manager for both their baseball club and tennis clubs. Three years later in 1905, when he was 40 years old, he took a step that was unthinkable to many people at the time - he took the baseball team on an inaugural tour to the U.S. for the first time in Japanese baseball history. He conducted a successful tour, wearing many different hats during the tour as general manager, manager, club secretary, and interpreter. The tour was held around the same time as the Battle of Tsushima Strait during the Russo-Japanese War. Shin “Gantetsu” Hashido, who captained the team and who later established Inter-City Baseball tournament and was inducted to the Baseball

Hall of Fame in 1959, effectively portrayed the team in its early days. Although Hashido was already a decent baseball player when he entered the Waseda University from Aoyama Gakuin, he initially wanted to play tennis at the University. Soon after entering the Waseda, Hashido and Abe quickly got along extremely well and played doubles in tennis. They won a silver cup at the tennis tournament commemorating the opening of the court, demonstrating their real strength. In early days, both the baseball club and the tennis club attended to the camp together. Hashido initially joined the tennis club camp, but once his baseball ability caught Abe's eye, he was persuaded to play baseball by Abe. They are both unique in that way their names are found both in the history of baseball and of tennis.

My father, Tamio Abe, who was the first son of Isoo Abe, used to be a member of the Waseda University tennis club. He won the All Japan Tennis Championship and was active on the international stage. I heard that when Hashido and Isoo went to see Tamio's game together abroad, Isoo commented that Tamio was too lacking in physical strength to compete with foreign players.

Isoo was blessed with many descendants: he had two sons, six daughters, and 22 grandchildren. He was 73 years old when I was born as his twelfth grandchild. It was around the end of World War II when I began to understand things. Since our family was caught up in evacuee life, I did not have much chance to see my grandfather. However, when an air-raid on Tokyo began to rage a few months before the end of the War, my grandparents evacuated to the same village in which we were located. Isoo was 80 years old at the time. Although I was a mere child, I was strongly impressed with his polite and strict behavior. Whenever he had a villager visiting him, even for young boys, he behaved calmly, sitting on the floor Japanese style with his back ramrod-straight. I remember that one day he asked me about the local geography. When I answered him by drawing a map, he gave me a pocket money, saying "good job". It was much to my surprise.

Isoo Abe was born in the turbulent age during the last days of the Tokugawa regime and spent his last years during the country's hardest time immediately following the war. However, he had confidence in his belief, always gave of himself for others and for society, and retained great passion for baseball for 84 years of his life. It looks to me that his way of life was definitely ahead of his time.

p.5 The Winner of the Second Independent Study Awards Unveiled

The Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum hosted the second Independent Study Awards during the 2017 summer school holidays. We received a total of 95 works during the application period that started from June 30 and closed on September 30.

A sixth-grade student, Takumi Kondo, from Gifu prefecture was selected for the first prize through a careful and thorough examination by three judges, Masatake Yamanaka (2016 HOF), Dr. Joyce Sachiko Tsunoda (daughter of Yukio Nishimura, 1977 HOF), and President Hirose. This examination was held on October 5 and 6 in the museum's reception room.



Kondo's research, which is entitled "I Want to Hit a Home Run", consists of 91 pages filed in two files. Using a unique homemade experimental device, he conducted a test to study how hits can be produced. Subsequently, he tried hitting in practice and created a log for analysis. He was highly evaluated for his scientific and academic approach.



The winners of the second prize were, Yoshihiro Ito (second-grade, Tokyo), Tatsuya Kawano (second-grade, Oita), Yuto Imamura (fourth-grade, Chiba), Junpei Kato (fifth-grade, Gifu), Issa Okamoto (sixth-grade, Yamaguchi), and Tomose Suzuki (sixth-grade, Chiba). A total of seven award-winning works and other worthy submissions were displayed in the "Winner of the Second Independent Study Awards" exhibition at the Baseball Museum between November 25 and December 10.

The award ceremony was held on Sunday, November 26 at the Temporary Exhibition Gallery. Following the comments and feedback from three judges, certificates and special gifts were presented to each recipient (i.e., Samurai Japan manager Atsunori Inaba's autographed baseball for first prize and Inaba's autographed card for second prizes).



After the award ceremony, the museum held a gathering for award winners, their families and the judges.

Yamanaka made a toast, and all enjoyed meeting in a friendly atmosphere. During the celebration, Yamanaka spontaneously hosted a small "baseball academy" that turned out to be a wonderful prize, especially for those award winners who actually play baseball.

The Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum will continue efforts aimed at, and make this contest central to, achieving its mission of "engaging in activities to promote fun and interest in baseball, especially to our future generations."

The award-winning works are available on the museum webpage (Japanese):
<http://www.baseball-museum.or.jp/jiyu-kenkyu/contest/award.html>

p.6 Topics from the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum - Nov 2017 - Jan 2018:

Talks:

Nov. 16: Talk by Isao Harimoto

In conjunction with the temporary exhibition ‘Lost Ballparks in Tokyo’(ended Nov.19), the museum hosted a talk by Isao Harimoto (1990 HOF), who played for the Toei Flyers and the Yomiuri Giants. He talked about some of his memories and experience with the ballparks that no longer exist, and that once were home to his teams i.e., Komazawa Baseball Park, the Korakuen Stadium and the Tokyo Stadium. He also shared some stories related to the professional baseball games played in those stadiums.



Nov. 18: Talk by Seiji Yamakawa

The ‘Lost Ballparks in Tokyo’ exhibition displayed the scores from some of the most memorable games in Japanese professional baseball history. In conjunction with the exhibition, the museum hosted a talk by Seiji Yamakawa, official scorer at the Nippon Professional Baseball Organization. He talked about each stadium and the work of scorers, recounting many real stories from behind the scenes.



Jan. 21: Talk by Toshiaki Sekiguchi and Masakazu Ikeda

In conjunction with the temporary exhibition “News Photographs of Baseball 2017”, the museum hosted a talk by Toshiaki Sekiguchi, a baseball photographer who works for the Sports Hochi (sports newspaper), facilitated by Masakazu Ikeda, secretary at the Tokyo Press Photographers Association. By introducing some of the iconic photos taken by Sekiguchi, he talked about the work of baseball photographers, and shared hard-luck stories and other untold stories associated with his work.



Ceremonies:

Nov. 21: “Lawson Ticket Speed Up Award” Award Ceremony

The award ceremony for the “Lawson Ticket Speed Up Award” (NPB Commissioner Awards) was held at the Baseball Hall of Fame Gallery, attended by two award-winning pitchers, Kazuhisa Makita of the Seibu Lions and Yota Kyoda of the Chuichi Dragons (Absentees: Raul Valdes of Dragons and Sosuke Genda of the Lions). The Giants and the Lions received the “Team Awards.”



Nov. 22:

Old-Timers' Game Press Conference

The press conference for the “Giants vs. Hawks Old-Timers Game” was held at the Baseball Hall of Fame gallery. The game is held to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Giants’ Miyazaki Camp and will take place on February 10. Isao Shibata, head of the Giants Old Boys (OB) Association, and Katsuya Nomura (1989 HOF), who acts as manager of the Hawks Old-Timers, attended the conference, and both showed their enthusiasm for the game.



Nov. 25:

Fans Meeting by Japan Baseball Promotion OB Club



The museum hosted a Fans Meeting organized by the Japan Baseball Promotion OB Club. The Fans Meeting was offered exclusively to their supporting members. Koichi Tabuchi, Hiromichi Ishige, Yoshihiko Takahashi and Masaru Uno were invited as special guests. The group toured through the museum with the guidance of museum staff.

p.7 Topics from the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum - Nov 2017 - Jan 2018: (Cont'd)

Visitors:

Dec. 16:

Kohei Miyadai visited the museum

Kohei Miyadai the Tokyo University baseball club, who will soon join the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters, visited the museum to view the exhibition “News Photographs of Baseball 2017” in which his photo is also displayed.



Dec. 24:

Tsutomu Ito visited the museum

Tsutomu Ito (2017 HOF) also visited the museum. He particularly enjoyed seeing some artefacts related to Tetsuharu Kawakami (1965 HOF) and Masaki Yoshihara (1978 HOF), who were also alumni of the Kumamoto Kogyo Senior High School.



Jan. 11:

NPB rookies for 2018 visited the museum.

A total of 104 NPB rookies including one umpire visited the museum as part of their in-service training session.



Upcoming exhibition:



Temporary exhibition ‘Showa, Heisei and Shigeo Nagashima’

Saturday March 3 through Sunday May 20, 2018

At the Temporary Exhibition Gallery

In corporation with the Yomiuri Giants and the Yomiuri Newspaper

This year marks the 60-years anniversary since Shigeo Nagashima, ‘Mr. Professional Baseball’, joined the world of Japanese professional baseball. Nagashima not only had a full skillset with all five tools, but also was a performer who embodied all the attractions that baseball can offer. Many baseball fans still love and adore the legend who played through the years of the Showa and Heisei eras. Featuring a choice selection of photographs, videos, golden sayings/witty remarks, stories and related objects, this exhibition will highlight the everlasting legacy and impression that Nagashima has imparted in the history of Japanese baseball.

p.7 News from the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

Change in Chairman:

On Dec 27, 2017, Atsushi Saito was appointed Chairman at the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, succeeding the former Chairman, Katsuhiko Kumasaki.



Vale Senichi Hoshino:

Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum send our deepest condolences on the passing of Senichi Hoshino, who was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2017, and passed away on Jan 4, 2018 at the age of 70.

p.8 Essays (69) A Memorable Day

Yusuke Ohashi, Kansai Television, Director of the Players Selection Committee

One baseball game still stands out most sharply in my mind. It was not only because of my first live broadcast experience for the pennant-deciding game, but it was a game for which I found myself in an unusual situation.

The game finished past 11:00 pm, and the event ended around 11:30 pm. This would never happen in the present, though, especially considering the fact that the final episode of a popular TV serial drama was scheduled after the game that night. The game stretched into extra innings, and it closeted me in a broadcasting booth for six hours.

On September 24, 2002, the Giants arrived at Koshien Stadium with their magic number at 1. If the Giants won, they have clinched the Central League pennant. Even if they had lost, their pennant was guaranteed with a loss by the second-place team, the Yakult Swallows, whose game was scheduled on the same day.

The Giants were ahead by two runs in the early innings with a homerun by Shinnosuke Abe. However, despite the effort of Makoto Imaoka of the Tigers of managing to earn some runs back with a homerun, the Giants' pennant was confirmed due to the loss of the Swallows. However, as the saying goes, "it's not over until it's over". My first pennant-winning game broadcast turned out to be an interesting one. The Tigers' long-time rival, the Giants, were winning at Koshien stadium, which is the home of the Tigers. The closer, Junichi Kawahara, took the mound for the Giants at the top of the ninth inning. I once visualized an end result where Kawahara shut out the inning and the manager Tatsunori Hara is tossed into the air. In that moment, a clean-up hitter, Osamu Hamanaka of the Tigers, hit a game-tying home run off the center field batter's eye. The Tigers' determination not to let the Giants celebrate their pennant with a win put the Tigers back in the game, with a score of 2-2. The Giants did not make use of a go-ahead run in the top of the 11th inning, and the game headed to the final inning. I did not have time to think about anything except making it through the final 12th inning. Who cares about the information sheet at hand? With one out in the bottom of the 12th in a 2-2 tie, Imaoka got on base followed by Norihiro Akahoshi, who also got on base. This was followed by a walk of Shuta Tanaka, leaving the bases loaded with still one out. With one ball and one strike, the next batter Hamanaka, who hit the game-tying homer in the 9th inning, had a clutch hit to drive in a run against Yukinaga Maeda. Watching Imaoka crossing the plate with both hands thrusting skyward, I concluded the 5 hours 1 minute long game with "All of a sudden, the game is over, what an end."

The unscripted drama had not finished yet. The Tigers fans were all so excited with this walk-off, and the entire stadium was buzzing with the choruses of "Rokko Oroshi", the Tigers' team song. It appeared as if it was the Tigers who won the pennant. I watched the Giants' manager Tatsunori Hara coming out from the dugout for victorious tosses by players, while keeping my fingers crossed that the Tigers fans would refrain from boos, at least during Hara's toss. However, my concerns turned out to be unfounded. The Giants drew a storm of applause from the entire crowd in the stadium, including those in the right-field stands. The spectators showed deep gratitude to both teams for their skilful performance and congratulated the Giants' victory. The scene was beyond description. When Hara's victorious toss started, the stadium was filled with a rewarding atmosphere for everything Hara has been through. Although it is quite common for a broadcaster in this situation to count the number of tosses as the manager is being lifted in the air, I decided not to count them and described the scene only with the moving image and sound of the stadium, and I excluded any commentary. This is because there was a great shout of joy that arose in the Koshien, with a distinctive aura surrounding the event that only people in the stadium would experience, and there was the manager being thrown into air in the cocktail beam lights. It could not have been better. Nothing more was needed.

Of course, I was scolded my manager afterward for not having counted the tosses. However, I have never regretted having stood firm in my belief of adhering to what I felt at the site. It was a day on which I realized a new appreciation for baseball, for its profundity in which one can learn so many different aspects in just a day. It reaffirmed my determination that we should work hard to disseminate this appealing sport in the future, especially in this era when the live broadcasting of baseball on television has much decreased. By the way, 2002 was the late Senichi Hoshino's first year as the Hanshin Tigers' manager. I was shocked into silence when I received the news of his death. To close, please allow me to extend my deepest condolences to his family.

Guide to the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

The entrance is located to the right of Gate 21 of the Tokyo Dome.

Hours: 10:00 - 18:00 (March through September), 10:00 - 17:00 (October through February)
(Visitors are requested to enter at least 30 minutes prior to the closing time.)

Admission: ¥600 (*¥500) Adults
¥400 High school and University students
¥200 (*¥150) Elementary & Junior high school students
(* Per person in groups of 20 or more)
¥400 Senior citizens aged 65 or more

Closed: Mondays except;

- 1) during the spring and summer school holidays,
- 2) on National Holidays,
- 3) when a professional baseball game is held at the Tokyo Dome.