

W MAINICHI WEEKLY

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Samurais' Gift From God

Suzuki Ichiro thanked the Almighty after he hit a tie-breaking, two-run single in the 10th inning that lifted Japan to an emotional 5-3 win over South Korea in the World Baseball Classic final in Los Angeles on March 23.

"God descended on me," said delighted Ichiro after the nail-biting showdown at Dodger Stadium.

The winning hit helped Ichiro return to favor after a shaky batting record in the tournament, which had led some media and fans to accuse the veteran of being a liability.

"I kept dragging down the team until the last game," admitted the 35-year-old Seattle Mariners' star.

Japan lost twice to South Korea in earlier rounds. But they beat Cuba to stay alive in the second round and knocked out the United States 9-4 in the semifinals.

Matsuzaka Daisuke won the MVP award for the second straight time after going 3-0, the same record he had in the inaugural Classic.

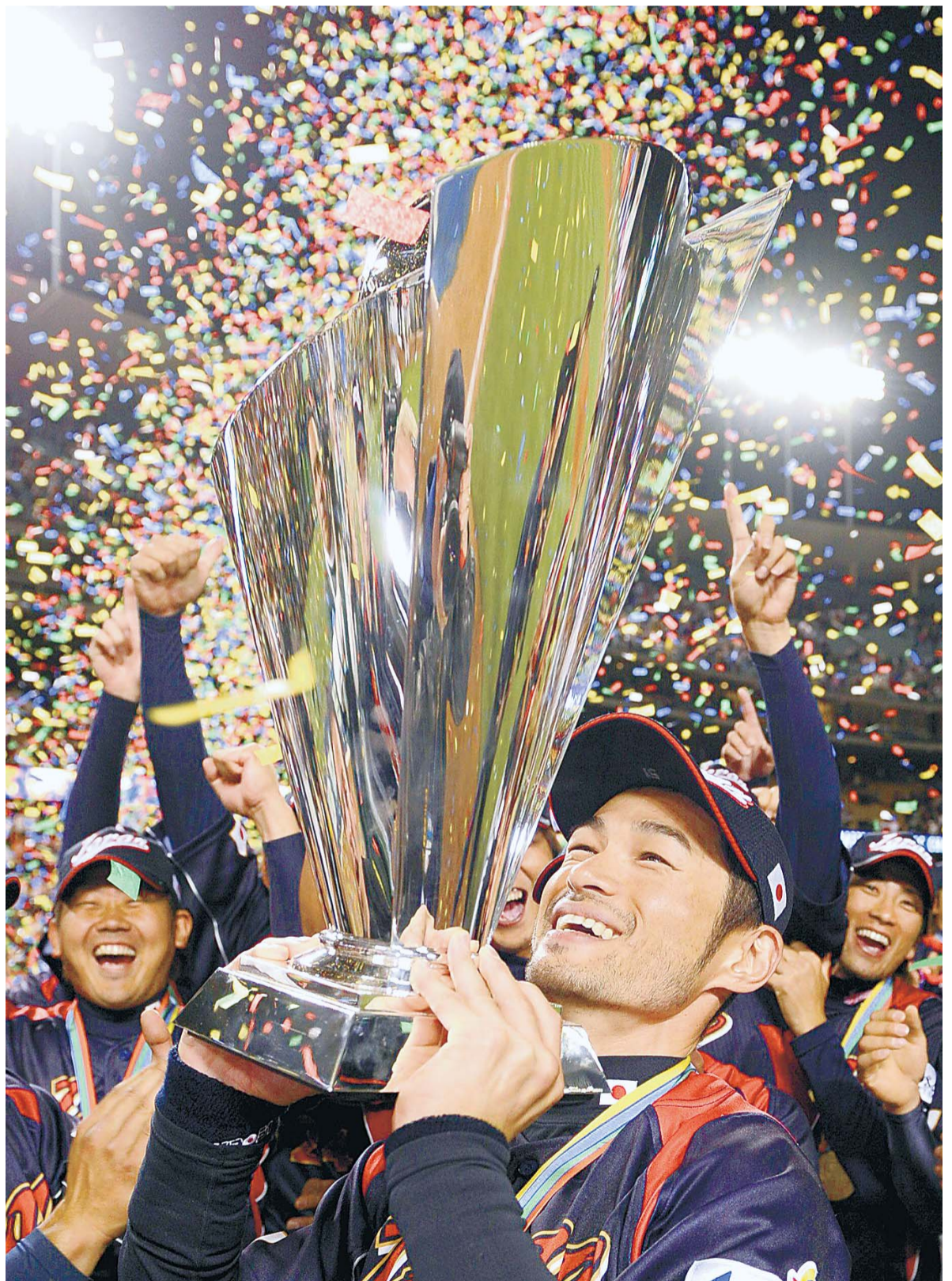
The Samurai won the first WBC tournament three years ago, beating Cuba 10-6 in the final at San Diego.

The back-to-back WBC titles were especially satisfying for the Japanese, given the results of the baseball tournament at the Beijing Olympics where South Korea won the gold medal. Japan finished a disappointing fourth at Beijing, despite sending many top players from the Japanese pro leagues.

The success of the Samurai has energized Japan as the country struggles to overcome the global recession. The winning campaign was estimated by one economist to have generated 50.6 billion yen worth of economic benefits.

Hopefully, the gods will continue to shine on the land of the Samurai.

(Compiled from Mainichi and AP)



Japan's Suzuki Ichiro celebrates with the trophy after beating South Korea, 5-3, in the final of the World Baseball Classic in Los Angeles, March 23. (AP)



KEYWORDS

侍ジャパン、WBCで2連覇

god 神(後出 the Almighty も同意) hit a tie-breaking, two-run single 勝ち越し点となる2点適時打を放つ

lift ~ to a win ~を勝利に導く emotional 感動的な God descended on me 神が降りてきた delighted 喜びに満ちた nail-biting はらはらさせる showdown 対決 winning hit 決勝打 help ~ return to favor ~を再び人気者にする shaky 不安定な accuse ~ of ... ~を...で責める liability (ここでは)お荷物 keep dragging down ~の足を

を引っ張り続ける stay alive 勝ち残る second straight time 2大会連続 go 3-0 3勝0敗を挙げる inaugural 初開催の back-to-back WBC titles WBCの2連覇 given ~ ~を考えると energize 活気付ける (be) estimated 推定される generate 生み出す worth of ~ ~に値する economic benefits 経済効果