

Ohtani shines with bat and pitching in Japan's first win



Shohei Ohtani

Tokyo, March 9 (MLB) - There were 55,000 spectators at the Tokyo Dome on Thursday, but everyone's attention was focused on one figure: Japan's No. 16 Shohei Ohtani. There was a roar from the crowd when Ohtani's name was announced prior to the Japan-China game in the World Baseball Classic.

The applause even increased when Ohtani stepped onto the mound to pitch and then when he stepped into the batter's box. The rules of the Classic established a rule just for the Japanese star, allowing him to pitch as a designated hitter.

Playing in the Classic for the first time in his career, Ohtani dominated a much weaker China squad. In four innings as a pitcher, he struck out five batters and allowed just one hit. He touched 100 mph with his straight and hit 99 mph on six more occasions in what would ultimately be an 8-1 victory for the Japanese team.

Most of China's national team roster plays in that country's National Baseball League, which has not played its games since the end of the 2019 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been training and playing scrimmages on their own, but it doesn't seem fair that their first assignment in the Classic was against the most outstanding player on the planet.

In batting, Ohtani was... Ohtani. After taking a base on balls on his first visit to the plate, the Angelinos superstar came to the box with the bases loaded in the second inning and Japan up 1-0, but gave up a grounder to end the inning.

Finally, in the bottom of the fourth inning, Ohtani hit a double with runners on first and third, driving in both, to extend Japan's lead to 3-0.

In the end, Ohtani batted 4-2 with the double, two runs batted in, two runs batted in, one run scored and two walks.

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