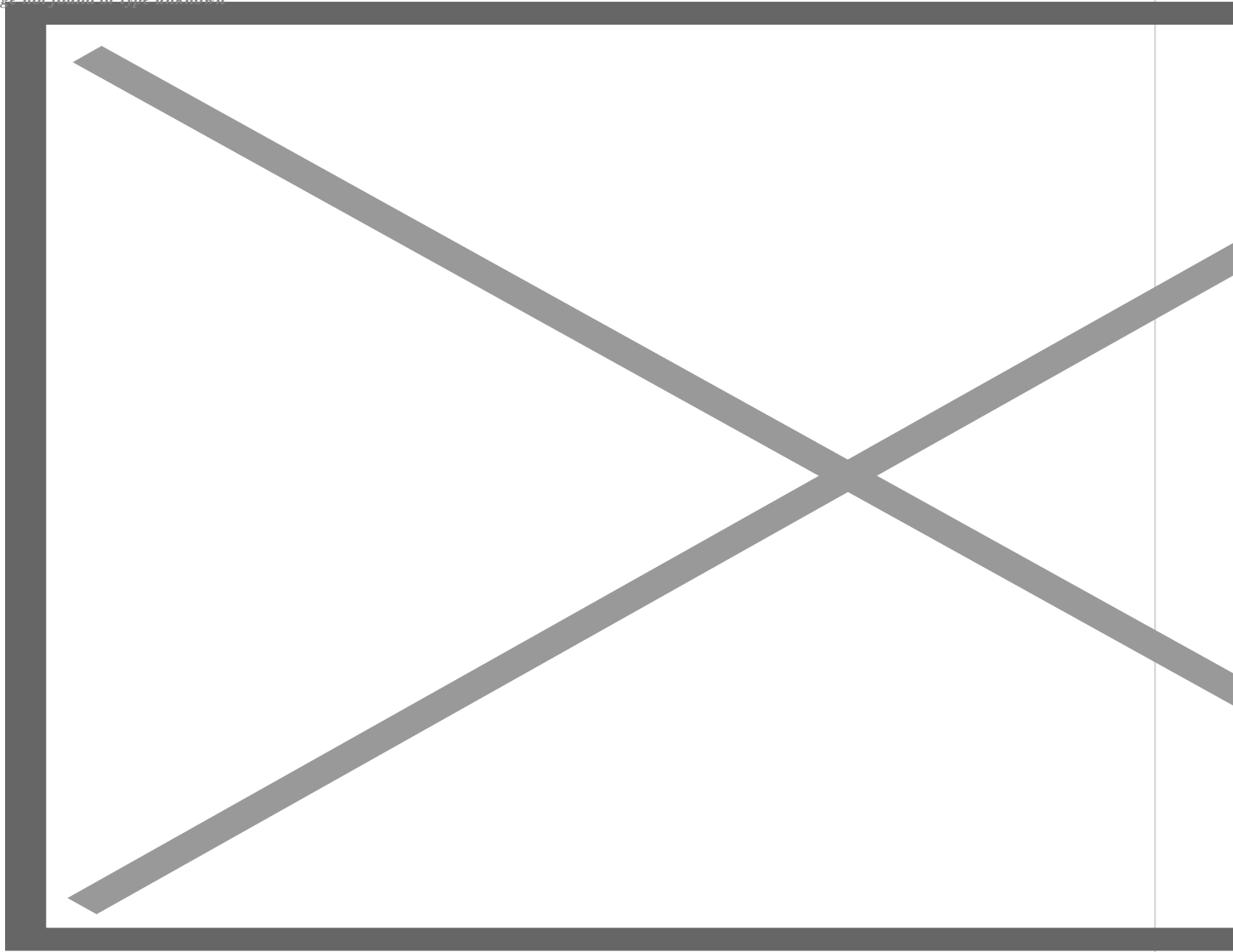


# *Ohtani and Sasaki... the Dream Team of samurai in the Classic*

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**Shohei Ohtani**

Tokyo, March 15 (PL) - Shohei Ohtani, the most spectacular two-way player in the history of baseball, makes an impact today in the World Classic, as the icing on the cake of a Japanese team full of talent in

all its lines.

From the Los Angeles Angelinos, Ohtani received a few hours ago the "Most Valuable" award in Group B of the tournament, after shining on the mound (1-0, 4.0, 0C, 1H, 5K) and wood in hand (12-6, 8CI, 3-2B, 7BB, 1HR), something that should not -at this point- attract attention.

Currently, the Japanese is considered the player with the greatest impact on the planet, and the furor caused by his figure is almost inexplicable, to the point of "overshadowing" other stars of his own national team.

At this point, the figure of Roki Sasaki, who, at just 19 years of age, on May 16, 2021, made his debut in the Japanese Professional Baseball League (NPB), the second most important in the baseball context, comes to the fore.

His quality is such that, a few months later, he starred in a perfect game, the first in almost three decades in the NPB, in which he struck out 19 opponents; something never seen even in the Major Leagues (MLB).

A survivor of the earthquake and tsunami that struck the east coast of Japan on March 11, 2011, Sasaki, only 21 years old, throws 102 mph, and his characteristics are quite similar to Ohtani's own.

Last season, he posted a 2.02 ERA and struck out 173 times in 129 innings, which is why today, "The Monster of Reiwa", as he is called, is being followed by MLB's top franchises.

With the mission of covering Ohtani in the Asian line-up, Munetaka Murakami also radiates light, as he is considered the most powerful hitter in the local circuit at the age of 23.

Although he had a slow start in the WBC 2023, Murakami has the confidence of his fans, as he has just broken the NPB home run record for a player from his country, with a total of 56.

Leading in average (.318) and runs batted in (134), the number of homers surpassed a mark held -since 1964- by Sadaharu Oh (55), a universal baseball legend.

The trident leads what is considered the best Japanese team of all time, as manager Hideki Kuriyama also has at his disposal, among others, the pitchers Yu Darvish, Shosei Togo and Yoshinobu Yamamoto, as well as position players Yuhei Nakamura, Masataka Yoshida, Seiya Suzuki, Lars Nootbaar and Kensuke Kondo.

Japan (4-0), two-time winners of the tournament (2006, 2009), advanced undefeated to the quarterfinal round and will maintain their status as favorites when they face Italy (2-2), second in the B bracket, tomorrow for a berth in Miami, United States.

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