

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Shikoku Island League Plus Director Michitaro Nakamura shakes hands with Hideki Matsui at Consul General's house in New York

Keep Going!

Former New York Yankee, Hideki "Godzilla" Matsui, encourages all-star team from Shikoku Island League Plus; Shikoku Island League Plus tours North America

The all-star team from Shikoku Island League Plus, an independent professional baseball league from the island of Shikoku, Japan, are touring North America for the third time since 2016. Since June, they have played 20 games in New York, New Jersey and Quebec in Canada against six teams in the American independent baseball league.

On June 17, a talk was held featuring Hiroaki Sakaguchi, director of Shikoku Island League Plus, and former New York Yankee, Hideki "Godzilla" Matsui, at the Consulate General of Japan in New York. All-star team members were also in attendance.

Matsui said "There is nothing you can do if you strike out due to a skillful pitcher, however, if you miss a chance to hit the ball, that's your responsibility. You cannot control game delays due to weather conditions, but you can control yourself before you get into the batter's box. You have to try hard to produce good results. I'm expected to make a hit or a home run for my team, so I practice my swings as much as I can to make that happen. We cannot produce good results all the time, but we can try harder each

time." "I don't like the word 'slump'. You just do what you normally do, and do the same thing on the field. If you get distracted by others, you cannot produce good results. If some good baseball players, like O or Ichiro, cannot produce good results, then people will say they're in a slump. But, if it were you, that means you don't have enough skills and are not mentally strong enough. There has to be something more you can do.



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The Heart of Wagashi Wagashi Tsukasa Izumiya owner Junichi Mihori demonstrates Japanese sweets

On the evening of June 10, Asia Society held an event showcasing Japanese sweets. Junichi Mihori, the owner of the confectionery store Wagashi Tsukasa Izumiya, located in Yokosuka, Kanagawa, gave a demonstration on the process of creating Japanese sweets. Mr. Mihori has sought to develop the making of Japanese sweets as a form of art. Motivated to have people recognize the spirit behind Japanese sweets, he has worked overseas in places such as



Sydney, Australia, receiving high praise from many. Mr. Kanji Yamanouchi, Consul General of Japan in New York, gave his congratulations to Mr. Mihori. He stated that Japanese sweets represent "hospitality and a sense of calmness," which he said relates to the meaning behind the name of Japan's new Reiwa era: beautiful harmony.

During the demonstration, the audience's eyes were glued at the sight of Mr. Mihori carefully adding patterns to his sweets, with his handwork projected onto a large screen. After the demonstration, Mr. Mihori held a Q&A session, and was asked why he continues to introduce Japanese sweets to countries outside of Japan. He answered, "Right now, the children of Japan are eating more chocolates, cakes and other western sweets instead of Japanese sweets. By developing the culture of Japanese sweets and having it gain popularity in the west, I intend to, eventually,

I don't do anything special for my body maintenance; I feel ready when I go to the stadium and put my uniform on because I practice for myself when I'm not wearing my uniform."

"I'm originally from Ishikawa prefecture, where professional baseball teams came only once a year, so that

convey the beauty of Japan back to Japanese children."

Currently, Mr. Mihori is using six different social media accounts to convey the beauty of Japanese sweets. Regarding this, he commented "I believe the captions of my posts are more important than my actual creations. My captions are a philosophy that cannot be replicated by technology. One day, 3D printers will be able to replicate anything, and make hundreds of that same thing in a very short amount of time. However, what's important is the 'heart' that goes into my creations. I truly desire to create deliciousness that is unique to me, and cannot be replicated by an AI," he concluded, inciting loud applause from the audience.

After the demonstration, there was a reception held in the main hall, where tea and freshly made mizu yokan were served. Here, the guests were greeted by Kimono House employees, who all wore beautiful kimono and gave out flowers to them.

(Article by Ryoichi Miura / Translated by Yudai Kaneda)

was a big event for kids. Kids pay attention to the players, and remember those special moments forever, so I always think about my fans. I try to be on my best behavior and to not be rude. Now, I want to say to you: Please do not forget what you felt when you started this career. Think by yourself, and take self-motivated actions which will lead you to gain confidence. Do what you can do, and keep going!"

(Article by Ryoichi Miura / Translated by Chikako Iwasaki)

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 - O. Mabson Southard

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