

MLB's Effort In China a Solid Move

Written by Maury Brown

Tuesday, 30 January 2007 07:06



In the 1960s, Chairman Mao Zedong banned baseball in China. As the leader of the communist country, the sport was viewed by him as *bourgeois* and out of step with the country's doctrine: a collective ownership of property and organization of labor for the common advantage of all members. Baseball was viewed as a sport for the wealthy.

So, for more than 40 years, baseball has been in the shadows in the world's most populous country.

As China has expanded into a global player—both in terms of domestic trade, and in space and technology—some of the restrictions seen during Mao's reign are loosening. In 2003, a former U.S. basketball promoter and Boston Red Sox fan, Tom McCarthy, launched the [Chinese Baseball League \(CBL\)](#), the country's first professional baseball league, with four teams. It has since grown to six teams that play approximately a 30-game season from April through July. To place salaries in perspective, the average player can receive a salary of about \$500 to \$1,000 a month (U.S.).

While the NBA has made substantial in-roads into China with the addition of Yao Ming to the Houston Rockets, and the NFL brokering broadcasting deals (CCTV, China's national television network, simulcast NBC's Sunday night games, as well as the 2006 season opener from Pittsburgh, using its own announcers. Sunday night games are aired on Monday mornings in China), MLB is just now making in-roads into the country.

Yesterday, the New York Yankees started the process at the club level and have reached an agreement with the CBL to allow the Chinese league to send staff to the Yankees' facilities in New York and Tampa, Fla., while Yankees personnel will assist the Chinese national team and others. At the news conference announcing the agreement Yankees GM Brian Cashman said, "You can call this the great push for our industry in China." Executives with MLB concurred. China "is a country that is clearly important to us as we look to develop around the world," said Jim Small, MLB's general manager for Asia.

MLB's Effort In China a Solid Move

Written by Maury Brown

Tuesday, 30 January 2007 07:06

As MLB continues its global push, look for efforts to play games in China around the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. While MLB is late in arriving to China, the words, "Better late than never" come to mind. With the popularity of Nomo, Ichiro, Matsui, and now Matsuzaka, it seems only a matter of time before we see Chinese names on MLB rosters in the future.

(**sources** – AP: [Yankees reach agreement to assist Chinese baseball](#) , ESPN World Baseball Classic coverage: [Welcome to China](#))

[ome to China](#)

, The

Boston

Globe:

[Next on NFL's plate: China](#)

)

Maury Brown is the founder of *The Biz of Baseball* and an author for [Baseball Prospectus](#) . He can be contacted

[here](#)

.