



Randy Bass reunites with former teammates at an event commemorating the Tigers' feats in the 1985 season.

**RANDY BASS**

Born in Oklahoma in 1954, Bass has been a sports enthusiast since beginning to play baseball at a young age. First drafted by the Minnesota Twins in 1972, he later played for other MLB clubs, including the Kansas City Royals and the Texas Rangers, before coming to Japan in 1983, where he joined the Hanshin Tigers. With a powerful swing and excellent bat control, his success at the plate helped lead the Tigers to their first Japan Series championship in 1985. After leaving the Tigers and returning to the United States in 1988, Bass ran a farm in Oklahoma. In 2004, he began a 15-year stint as a Democratic state senator.

Professional baseball enjoys immense popularity in Japan, and the American Randy Bass may be the most famous foreign-born player in the history of the sport here. After playing for several major-league teams in the United States for 11 years, he signed with the Hanshin Tigers, by far one of the most beloved teams in Japan. In 1985, his third year in Japan, Randy Bass belted 54 home runs, helping to catapult his team to its first league championship in 21 years. He blasted home runs in three straight games during the Japan Series, as the Tigers went on to claim their first championship



Top: Even though he has retired, Japanese baseball fans have never forgotten what Randy Bass accomplished. Right: After retiring, Bass kept himself busy as a member of the Oklahoma Senate.



in franchise history. Today, whenever a new foreign-born player joins the team, fans wonder whether he will be “the next Bass.” He says, “It’s just a humbling experience to be able to know they put everything on me.”

This slugger beloved by Tigers fans, now 66, is still so enamored with Japan that he “could go and live there right now.” Bass was amazed by the Shinkansen, which the team rode to away games. Praising the high-speed rail network that connects far-flung cities in a matter of hours while maintaining astounding punctuality, Bass said, “It’s just so efficient, and it’s a wonderful way to travel.” The place he loved the most on the road was Tokyo, where he would often get

together downtown with foreign-born players from other ball clubs. While Tokyo is renowned as a city with a bustling nightlife, it is also surrounded by abundant nature. Bass recalled, “It was beautiful up in the mountainous parts of Tokyo. You just never forget that. So peaceful and so quiet.” He said that on one day off, he went to catch fish in a river in the mountains, pitched a tent with friends, and enjoyed an unforgettable day of rest.

After retiring from baseball in 1988, Bass returned to his home state of Oklahoma, where he ran a farm and, beginning in 2004, he served as a member of the Oklahoma Senate for 15 years.

Despite his busy schedule, he has found time to visit Japan several times a year for events such as an all-star game for retired ballplayers from Japan’s professional league. Wanting to give something back to all the people who helped him during his time in Japan, Bass has been actively engaged in exchanges with the country, participating in events such as those organized by the America-Japan Society. He says that Japanese children—not even born when he was playing baseball in the country—still come to visit him in Oklahoma, asking him for a handshake or autograph because of what they have heard from their parents. “It is really a cool thing that Japanese people come over and interact with people in Oklahoma.” Bass believes that “baseball has the power to unite people.”

He may have hung up his spikes after making the dreams of Japanese baseball fans come true, but Randy Bass is still building bridges between Japan and Oklahoma.

# 1980s BASEBALL STAR

BRIDGES JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

*In the 1980s, American professional baseball player Randy Bass became a legend of the sport in Japan. Even today, long after retirement, he retains a close connection to the country.*



There are still plenty of natural surroundings outside of Tokyo, Bass's favorite place to play on the road.



More than 130,000 Shinkansen trains travel between Tokyo and Osaka annually, running with an average delay of under 20 seconds.