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 in 1985.

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.

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."

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.

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1980s BASEBALL STAR BRIDGES JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

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