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Why did Takashi Ogino, the former stolen base king of Lotte, choose the Czech Republic as his new home?

Why did Takashi Ogino, the former stolen base king of Lotte, choose the Czech Republic as his new home?

May 06, 2026

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Takashi Ogino (right) joined the Czech extra league "Dráči Brno". On the left is Arnošt Nesnar, who is in charge of team organization = March 9, 2026, Czech Embassy in Shibuya-ku, Tokyo [Jiji News Agency]

16 years of professional baseball Lotte. Outfielder Takashi Ogino (40), who left the team last year with a total of 1143 hits and 260 stolen bases, started the "second chapter" of his baseball life in a new world this spring. The new main battlefield for the veteran, who has won titles such as the stolen base king, is the Czech Republic in Europe. In January of this year, he decided to join the prestigious "Dráči Brno", which boasts a maximum of 26 championships in the Czech Republic's highest extra league. The league match will start on April 10th. Although it is not a crowded schedule like in Japan, in the same month, he was mainly entrusted with the second and first positions as a left fielder, and started well with a batting average of just over 40% in 7 games. The challenge of unbelievable began. (Jiji News Agency Satoru Ishikawa)

Retirement recommendation "I can still move"

At the end of last season, when Lotte's bottom of the Pacific League was almost certain, Ogino was approached by the club, saying, "I will not sign a contract for next season. Although he was late due to a leg problem immediately after the opening, he also participated in the second team match after recovering. He was struggling to become a force for the suffering first team, but he was not called for promotion, and for the first time in his 16th year as a professional, he ended up without playing in the first team. "Looking at the method of appointing players, I thought there would be (a notice of out-of-force)."



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- Is there a coup d'état concern?
- Former rugby legend dies
- Father re-arrested on murder charges

The direction was decided. "I can still move, and I will regret it if it ends here." On October 7 last year, it was announced that he would leave the club, and Ogino began to look for a way to continue his active career. Behind the scenes, he received a voice from other clubs saying that he would also serve as a coach, but "I had no intention of playing for a team other than Lotte (in Japan)." As for the coaching business, he said, "If I wanted to take on a concurrent role, I quit Lotte completely and became a coach," and insisted on only one player. That option ended up in the Czech Republic.



Takashi Ogino of Sekigaku University at bat in the 2007 Japan-US Collegiate Baseball Championship = July 8 of the same year, Durham, North Carolina, USA [Jiji News Agency]

At Sekigaku University, he stole bases in the season 17

Let's trace Ogino's baseball history. Born in Asuka Village, Nara Prefecture, known for the Takamatsuzuka burial mound. He has a father who is an all-rounder and a mother who is a former track and field athlete, and has had an exceptional baseball sense and agility since he was a boy. At the prefectural preparatory school of both civil and military roads, Koriyama High School, he is a regular at shortstop. The fact that he lost to Tenri High School in the final of the Nara tournament in the summer of 3 and was unable to participate in Koshien ignited Ogino's fighting spirit.



Toyota Motor Corporation's Takashi Ogino smiling after finishing the contract with Lotte, which was nominated first in the draft = November 30, 2009, Toyota City, Aichi Prefecture [Jiji News Agency]

He has been active at Sekigaku University since his first year, and in the spring league game of his fourth year, he marked 17 stolen bases in the season, which is still the league record for Kansai student baseball. He led the team with his classmate pitcher Nao Miyanishi (currently Nippon Ham). Joining Toyota Motor Corporation as a member of society baseball will be a major turning point in Ogino's baseball life. "(As a shortstop), I was worried about throwing, and if it's an outfield, I can also use my feet." He later turned to an outfielder who would be highly regarded as a professional.








Australian crafts

A 76-year-old bladesmith is closing his forge, Australia is moved

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Lotte 1st year, right knee injury

After two years at Toyota Motor Corporation, the opportunity to become a professional was ripe. Joined Lotte in 2010 with the first pick in the draft. In the first year, he made his debut in the opening game against Seibu as "No. 2 center fielder". However, he injured his right knee when he tried to steal a base in an exchange game in May, and was diagnosed with a two-month recovery. Until then, his batting average was 30.2 minutes and 6%, and his performance was outstanding, such as already deciding 25 stolen bases, so he left the front line with regret. He underwent knee surgery and finished the season without returning to the first team.

That year, Lotte won the climax series from 3rd place in the regular season and defeated Chunichi in the Japan Series. He became the best in Japan. During rehabilitation, I received a call from my main outfielder, Saburo (current Lotte manager), and said, "If it weren't for your performance in the first half, I wouldn't have been the best in Japan this year." Still, Ogino's heart did not clear. "I couldn't contribute until the end, and the frustration was better."

At the age of 36, he is the oldest stolen base king in history

The injury in the first year was the beginning of the fight against injury. In the second year, infielder Tsuyoshi Nishioka (currently Lotte coach) challenged the vacant shortstop due to the transfer of the US major leagues, but injured his right knee again and underwent surgery twice during the season. After that, not only the knees, but also the thighs, hips, shoulders, etc. were broken. I had a difficult time with leaving and returning, and returning and leaving.



Lotte's Takashi Ogino (right) stealing a base to second base in the 2021 Rakuten game = March 31 of the same year, Chiba ZOZO Marine Stadium [Jiji News Agency]

If you don't get hurt... Everyone involved in the club hoped for that. Perhaps his thoughts came to mind, and he completed the season in 2019 without any major breakdowns. In 125 appearances, he recorded a batting average of 30.1.5%, 10 home runs, and 28 stolen bases, winning the Best Nine and Golden Glove Awards. In 21, he failed to produce results in the open game and started remodeling his batting form just before the opening. This worked. In addition to participating in the All-Star Game, he won the title of most hits (169), and was the oldest in history at the age of 36 to steal bases (24). He also won his second Golden Glove Award.

Influenced by Ayumu Ishikawa from the Netherlands to Europe



Australian crafts

A 76-year-old bladesmith is closing his forge, Australia is moved

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#経済安全保障

Ogino overcame repeated breakdowns and shined in his late 30s. That's why it seems that a strong will to "make another flower bloom" has arisen one after another outside of Lotte, which I am attached to. There was also the influence of former ace pitcher Ayumu Ishikawa (38), who also left the team at the end of last season. He has a track record of Rookie of the Year and the best ERA, and is a right-hander with a total of 79 wins in Lotte. While being approached by the club to become a coach, he wanted to continue his active career. Rick van den Haark, who was a Softbank pitcher from the Netherlands, decided to transfer to the country's league at the end of last year.

As he listened to Ishikawa's story, Ogino himself leaned towards "Europe". "I watched Czech baseball at the World Baseball Classic (WBC) in '23 and became interested in European baseball." On top of that, he consulted with Kenji Takubo, who once played in the Czech Republic and coached the country's national team at the WBC this spring. "That's why I decided to move to the Czech Republic," he says. Arnošt Nesnar, who is in charge of organizing Drazzi, said, "I have heard that Ogino is a Japanese superstar. His arrival will have a great impact not only on the team but also on the Czech baseball world."



Lotte's Takashi Ogino hits a timely double that will become his 1000th hit in the 2022 Softbank match = August 10 of the same year, Chiba, ZOZO Marine Stadium [Jiji News Agency]



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Taiwan Tourism Organization

High baseball enthusiasm and presence in the WBC

Although there is a difference in level compared to North and Central America, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, etc., the baseball fever in the Czech Republic is high. Participated in the WBC from the qualifying round of the 3rd tournament. He made his long-awaited first appearance in the main tournament at the 5th tournament and participated in the main tournament of the 6th tournament this spring. Both fought in the first league at the Tokyo Dome and were in the same group as Japan. The hurdle to break through the first round is still high, but he is steadily impressing that "there is a Czech Republic in the WBC".



Czech national team players gathering on the mound in the WBC 1st League Group C match against Japan = March 10, 2026, Tokyo Dome [Jiji News Agency]

"Yokai Exhibition in Motion" is being held at Tennozu Isle in Tokyo!



(PR) Yokai Exhibition in Motion TOKYO Executive Committee

In the 5th tournament in 23, he defeated China and won his first historic victory. In the match against Japan, Willy Escala received a powerful dead ball of "162 kg" from pitcher Roki Sasaki (Lotte at the time, now the Dodgers) in his left knee and fell to the ground, but he immediately got up and sprinted to first base. There was also a funny episode in which Sasaki later handed Escala sweets made by Lotte as a token of appreciation.

"Play in Europe for as long as you need it"

The Czech national team is mostly a "semi-professional" corps with other main jobs. Therefore, the situation in the domestic league is also different from that of Japanese professional baseball. "I practice 2~3 times a week, and the game is only on weekends. It is not easy to prepare baseball equipment, so I bring two gloves and 10 bats that I used in Japan and get on board. It is about half a year of the season, but his family is also accompanied and backed up. "I want to see what kind of world baseball is like in Europe, and I'm looking forward to gaining life experience by trying a different environment, different culture, and a different diet (from Japan). I think that experience is something you can't get when you're in Japan."



Ambassador to Japan Martin Kurčar (right) smiles, at a social gathering with the WBC Czech National Team hosted by the Czech Embassy. On the left is national team coach Pavel Hazim = March 9, 2026, Czech Embassy in Shibuya-ku, Tokyo [Jiji News Agency]

On March 9 this year, a social gathering was held at the Czech Embassy in Tokyo to invite the Czech national team and officials participating in the first WBC league. Ambassador to Japan Martin Kurčar said, "I would like to thank this team for representing the Czech Republic, including its humanity, and I would like to express my gratitude to the Japanese people who support the Czech Republic, which has led to the popularity of baseball in my home country." Ogino says. "I want to play in Europe as long as they need me, and when I return to Japan a few years later, I want to make use of that experience." He took the next step to become a bridge between Japan and the Czech Republic.

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- B. Threats
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