

Let the Kobayashi Era begin in CTown. In addition to adding a serious punch to the Cleveland Indian bullpen, the signing has had turned the competitive eating community upside down with the shocking news of one of their all-time legends switching professions. He can eat 63 hot dogs in 12 minutes, this we know. But can he strike out Big Papi in the seventh inning of a one run game? In this satire piece, Erik Cassano has some fun with the Indians most recent signing.



CLEVELAND -- In one of the more bizarre career twists in sports history, it has been reported that competitive eating superstar Takeru Kobayashi has decided to give up a life of fame and fortune downing water-soaked hot dogs to take up baseball.

The man with the iron stomach and surprisingly well-developed abdominal muscles has reportedly agreed to a two-year deal with the Cleveland Indians, where he is expected to be employed as a relief pitcher.

Kobayashi was not immediately available for comment, adding fuel to the firestorm of speculation as to what, exactly, possessed him to switch vocations so suddenly and drastically. The speed of Kobayashi's fastball has never been documented, and it's highly doubtful that he possesses adequate command of a curveball or another off-speed pitch, considered essential for success as a professional pitcher.

However, Indians GM Mark Shapiro apparently sees something in the former Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest champ that others in baseball haven't seen.

“The signing of Kobayashi marks the first contract ever signed by a Japanese professional baseball player into the Cleveland Indians franchise and, more importantly, accomplishes one of our primary off-season goals of adding depth to the back-end of our bullpen,” Shapiro said in a statement Tuesday.

Reaction was swift and varied around the world of competitive eating on Tuesday.

Reigning Nathan's contest champ Joey Chestnut lamented the loss of his rival to baseball.

"Bird and Magic. Connors and McEnroe. Ali and Frazier. Domino's and Pizza Hut. That could have been us. We would have ruled competitive eating for the next 15 years. It's sad to see him go."

"We're all mystified," said Tim Janus, known professionally as "Eater X." "When I heard he was leaving for baseball, my first thought was 'stomach ulcer.' It happens to the best of them. But then, I thought, man, he's like Tiger Woods. If Woods walked away from golf to, I don't know, open a hair salon or something, who could talk? What would he have left to prove? He could give the entire golf establishment the finger and just walk away tomorrow if he wanted. Maybe that's what just happened. Kobayashi gave us all the finger and just walked away."

"He's a legend, man," said Eric "Badlands" Booker, a hip-hop artist and competitive eater. "Legends do what legends want to do."

Baseball executives also chimed in on the move by the Indians, who were looking for bullpen help after failing to hold a 3-1 series lead against the Red Sox in last month's American League Championship Series.

"The Indians actually back-doored us," said Yankees owner George Steinbrenner

. "We were set to offer

Kobayashi

at least \$50 million, but apparently, my GM was too busy mashing

Dunkin

Donuts into his pie hole in the break room to be bothered with making a simple phone call. Like hammering out a new contract with A-Rod is so damn time-consuming. What am I paying him for again? Oh well, we all know a trained chimp could get this team to the playoffs with a \$225 million payroll.

Kobayashi

will turn 30 in March, so he would have been a perfect fit for our aging, decrepit pitching staff. It's a shame, really. I need to go fire someone. Maybe I'll start small, like an intern."

"Kobayashi's cool. Check it out, I learned a new guitar riff!" said Red Sox GM Theo Epstein.

It is unknown if Kobayashi will attempt to apply some of his much-celebrated eating techniques to his new career, including the famous "Shake," in which he uses his esophagus muscles to force food into his stomach at a faster rate than normal.

It is believed he might be able to use such a motion to generate more power in his pitching delivery, which will be extremely important, given that Kobayashi stands a mere 5'-8" and is barely 110 pounds, hardly an ideal size for a major-league right-handed pitcher.

Kobayashi has about three months to get into baseball shape. Pitchers and catchers report for spring training in mid-February.

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**Correction:** Sources have informed us that the person signed by the Cleveland Indians on Tuesday is not, in fact, competitive eating champion Taker Kobayashi

u  
ayashi  
, but veteran Japanese relief pitcher

**Masahide Kobayashi**

. We apologize for any inconvenience this might have caused, and hope you will not take the failure to verify this one, small fact as an overall reflection on the journalistic integrity/competence of this news gathering organization. But still, having a relief pitcher who could eat 63 hot dogs in 12 minutes would have been pretty cool.