

Hyun-Jin Ryu won the gold-medal game for South Korea at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. He is the first player to be named KBO Rookie of the Year and MVP in the same season. He is the most successful Korean player to make the jump from the KBO to the major leagues. He is the reason the Los Angeles Dodgers became the first team in Major League Baseball to have every game broadcast in Korean.

He is the first Korean-born pitcher to start both an All-Star Game and a World Series Game. At four years and \$80 million, he signed the biggest free-agent deal for a pitcher in Toronto Blue Jays history last winter. In addition -- and he refutes it, but video attests -- he became one of the few KBO pitchers to pimp his bat in an MLB game after hitting his first career home run.

With MLB on hiatus during the coronavirus pandemic, the most accomplished Korean player in major league history and one the most recognized celebrities in his home country, Hyun-Jin Ryu, is now sitting at home watching the KBO.

And according to him? So should you.

"American-style baseball revolves around power, home runs, slugging percentage. Korean baseball is more based on your on-base percentage, closer to traditional baseball," Ryu told ESPN through a translator from his spring training home in Florida. "They play sound fundamentals, are contact-focused. It doesn't matter what part of the lineup you are, if you need to bunt, you bunt. It's more classic baseball versus current MLB baseball, which is power-focused."

And while the KBO remains one of the few professional sports leagues to have returned to action, they had to do so without one of their primary assets -- their fans. Ryu deems KBO fans a vital part of what he referred to as the singular "pageantry" of Korean baseball.