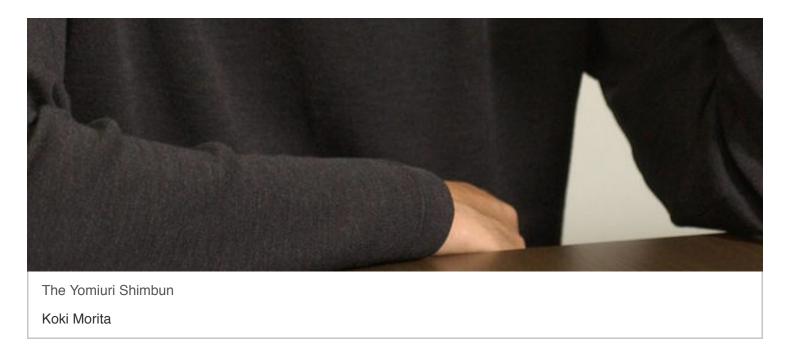
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Obituary / Koki Morita / Ex-Yokohama reliever





9:29 pm, October 20, 2015

The Yomiuri Shimbun

Former star relief pitcher Koki Morita, whose career was interrupted by a brain tumor from which he bravely battled back to pitch for four more seasons, died on Friday. He was 45.

Morita, who played for the Yokohama Taiyo Whales and Kintetsu Buffaloes and was the first Japanese reliever to establish the role of set-up man, retired in 2002 and was said to have spent recent years fighting his illness.

Morita was the No. 1 draft pick in 1988 of the Whales (now the DeNA BayStars). With a sharp screwball, he led the Central League in earned run average in 1992. Pitching before closer Kazuhiro Sasaki, he became the pioneer among set-up men.

In 1998, he was traded to Kintetsu, but was forced to leave the game after being diagnosed with the brain tumor. But through his tireless rehab efforts, he returned in 1999 and was named comeback player of the year in 2001, when he appeared in 34 games.

He compiled a 47-34 record with 29 saves in 345 career games.





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