

Japan wins Women's World Cup of Baseball

By DEREK VAN DIEST, QMI Agency



Team Japan hoists Akiko Shimura after beating Team USA for the gold medal at the Women's World Cup of Baseball final at Telus Field on Sunday. (Amber Bracken/QMI)

EDMONTON - In women's baseball, Japan is a superpower.

The defending Women's World Cup of Baseball champions defeated the U.S. 3-0 in last night's gold medal final to sew up their third straight title.

"It was a very good game," Japanese manager Hiroshi Shintani said through an interpreter. "I'm very happy with the win. Both teams played very well."

Japan picked up four of its five hits in the third inning, chasing U.S. starter Jennifer Hunter in the process.

The U.S. loaded the bases in the second, but Caitlin Everett then struck out, squandering her team's best opportunity to score.

Japan starter Yukari Isozaki went the distance, giving up seven hits with two walks and four strikeouts.

Isozaki had plenty of help behind her, particularly from third baseman Ayako Rokkuku who had six assists — half of them of the spectacular variety.

“She is a great player,” said Shintani. “She was very impressive and I’m lucky to have her on our team.”

Rokkuku was named the tournament's most outstanding defensive player. Isozaki, who also pitched a complete game in Japan's semifinal win over Australia Saturday, was named the tournament MVP.

Tamara Holmes of the U.S. finished as the tournament's leading hitter, batting .679.

On Sunday, Holmes went one-for-three at the plate.

“We just couldn't put two hits together to score a run,” said U.S. manager Ruben Felix.

“We had a strike three call with the bases loaded. With a girl throwing a lot of strikes, we just have to put the ball in play and see what happens.

“They're the best defensive team here and they showed it tonight, especially the third baseman.

“She kept them in the game and their pitcher shut us out, so we have to take our hats off to them.”

derek.vandiest@sunmedia.ca

Twitter@sunvandiest