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# AJA

## Generations-old AJA opens 86th season

Games played on Sundays

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Photos by Dennis Fujimoto/The Garden Island

The family of Peter Ishibashi is surrounded by the Kalaheo AJA team, other teams in the Kauai AJA league, Mayor Bernard Carvalho Jr., and Kauai AJA president Tom Shigemoto in releasing white doves to remember the 2015 Kauai AJA Most Valuable Player, Sunday during the opening of the league's 86th season at Vidinha Stadium.



Posted: Monday, December 21, 2015 1:00 am

Dennis Fujimoto - The Garden Island | 7 comments

LIHUE — The Kauai Americans of Japanese Ancestry baseball league has been playing baseball on Kauai for at least 85 years.

The Kauai AJA celebrated the opening of its 86th season Sunday at Vidinha Stadium under the shadow of the recently installed baseball lights.

"Hopefully, we can work it out with the County of Kauai so we might be able to get in some games under the lights," said Tom Shigemoto, the Kauai AJA president. "We have waited for a long time for the lights, and now that we have them, hopefully, we can enjoy them."

The longevity of the baseball league has withstood the test of time and social change. It remains intact, with five teams playing weekly at Vidinha Stadium and later, at Hanapepe Stadium.

"We're still the only father-son duo," said Ichiro Chiba of the Makaweli team. "In all of Hawaii AJA baseball, we're still the only father-and-son pair. I used to catch and my son Mel would pitch."

Sunday, four generations of the Chiba family celebrated the opening of the season.

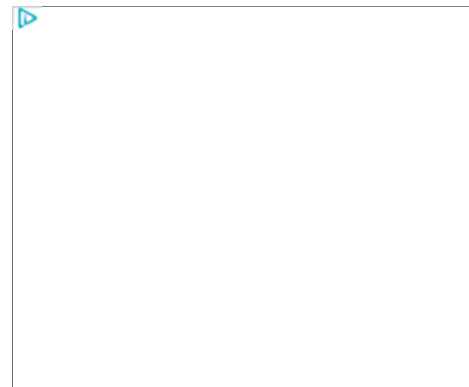
"I have a picture of Bradley when he was Davian's age as a bat boy," said Mel Chiba, Ichiro's son. "Now, Davian is a bat boy for Makaweli."

Bradley Chiba said that makes four generations of the Chiba family who have grown up in AJA baseball.

"And, we're all Ichiro's," he said.

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Gerald Ako, the league secretary, announced Kalaheo, coached by Jason Koga, as the league's 2014-15 league champions, and Peter Ishibashi, former player-coach for Kalaheo, as the league's Most Valuable Player.

Ishibashi, who retired from the county's Department of Parks and Recreation as a Hanapepe Stadium manager, passed away last year. Mayor Bernard Carvalho Jr., all of the teams in the league, and Shigemoto participated in a special release of doves in memory of Ishibashi with Ishibashi's mother Shirley, wife Tiffany, son Brandon, daughter Nikki and grandson Kydon.

"It all started with me," said Gene Otoman, while watching his son and grandson play for Makaweli. "Makaweli started the season with a win over Lihue, and I'm watching my son and my grandson out there. That's three generations — all playing for Makaweli."

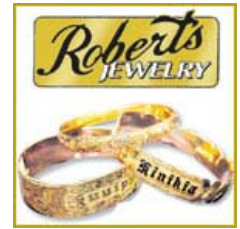
Teams in the Kauai AJA baseball league include Kalaheo, Makaweli, Lihue, Waimea, Hanapepe and Kapaa.

Coaches for the teams include Koga coaching Kalaheo, Mel Nishihara coaching Makaweli, Curtis Matsumura coaching Lihue, Garrett Agena coaching Waimea, and Ikaika Pezario coaching Kapaa.

Joining Shigemoto as president, Brian Yamase is the league's first vice president; Mel Nishihara, a player-coach for Makaweli, is the league's second vice president and league manager; Ako serves as secretary; and Russell Maeda is the league's treasurer.

Games are played on Sundays with the exception of the National Football League's Super Bowl Sunday.

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