

Takushi first draft pick of Golden Kings; Americans selected, too

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Veteran point guard Naoto Takushi was the first choice of the Okinawa Golden Kings in the Japan Basketball League draft.

The Okinawa expansion team chose Takushi in the draft held at Mita NN Hall in Minato Ward, picking one of the league's top players. The 25-year-old Takushi, an Okinawan who played last season with the Aisin Seahorses, is a 182-cm who lead Hosei University during the 2000-03 seasons, finishing as one of Kanto Plains's top collegiate scorers.

Okinawa's general manager, Tatsuro Kimura, predicts Takushi will be the pivotal player on his newly formed squad. He also announced selection of Hernando Plannells Jr., a Californian, as the head coach for the Ryukyu Golden Kings. Plannells is only 30, but has experience both as an American Basketball Association coach with the Hollywood Fame, and as Wyoming Golden Eagles head coach.

Okinawa had first pick in the draft, while fellow expansion team, the Rizing Fukuoka, chose former Takamatsu Five Arrows point guard Kazuyuki Nakagawa. Nakagawa has experience in both the American Basketball Association and the United States Basketball League.

The Ryukyu Golden Kings selected American Ken Tanaka as its second round pick. A former Toyota Motors player in the Japan League, Tanaka is a Californian graduated from Whittier College in 2003 after winning Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference praise.

Also chosen for the expansion Okinawa team was American Bryan Simpson, a Kadena Air Base worker until recently. Simpson, a Georgia native, first came to Okinawa when he was 16, then became a radio operator at Kadena. He won Most Valuable Player honors in the Pacific Wide Kadena Men's Basketball League this year, while playing with the championship Kadena team.