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## Scandal

Ippei Mizuhara was implicated in a scandal involving illegal sports gambling and significant financial theft from the Dodgers superstar.

**Jason Bramwell** • Mar. 26, 2024



Los Angeles Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani (right) and his interpreter Ippei Mizuhara (left) attend a press conference at Gocheok Sky Dome in Seoul ahead of the 2024 MLB Seoul Series baseball game between Los Angeles Dodgers and San Diego Padres on March 16, 2024. The Los Angeles Dodgers said on March 21 they had fired Shohei Ohtani's interpreter after the Japanese baseball star's representatives claimed he had been the victim of "a massive theft" reported to involve millions of dollars. (Jung Yeon-je/AFP via Getty Images/TNS)

The IRS is investigating the recently fired interpreter for Los Angeles Dodgers star Shohei Ohtani after he was implicated in a scandal involving illegal sports gambling

and significant financial theft from his longtime friend.

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According to ESPN, the firing was triggered amid questions surrounding at least \$4.5 million in wire transfers sent from Ohtani's bank account to a bookmaking operation to cover Mizuhara's gambling debts.

Earlier this week, both Mizuhara and a spokesperson for Ohtani told ESPN that Ohtani had wired the money to Bowyer on Mizuhara's behalf. However, the spokesperson later "disavowed" Mizuhara's account, and Mizuhara told the outlet Ohtani had been unaware of the funds being transferred.

"In the course of responding to recent media inquiries, we discovered that Shohei has been the victim of a massive theft and we are turning the matter over to the authorities," Ohtani's law firm, Berk Brettler LLP, said in a statement on Wednesday.

Bowyer's attorney Diane Bass told AP that Mizuhara was placing bets with Bowyer on international soccer, but not baseball, adding, "Mr. Bowyer never had any contact with Shohei Ohtani, in-person, on the phone, in any way."

According to the ESPN report, Ohtani became aware of the alleged theft during a team meeting in Seoul, South Korea, where the Dodgers opened the season this week with a two-game series against the San Diego Padres. That's when Mizuhara admitted he had a gambling addiction.

All sides claim Ohtani had no involvement in any gambling.

Sports gambling is legal in some form in nearly 40 of the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, but it's still illegal in California.

Mizuhara has been Ohtani's constant companion, interpreting for him with the media and at other appearances since 2017 when the Japanese superstar came to the United States.

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