

Japanese professor creates baseball-playing robots

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A pitching robot grips a ball made of polystyrene during its pitching demonstration against a batting robot, right, at University of Tokyo in Tokyo, Japan, Friday, July 24, 2009. The both robots have been developed by Information Science Technology Prof. Masatoshi Ishikawa. The pitching robot can throw 40 kph (25mph) strike balls at one-meter (3 feet 3 inches) by 0.8-meter (2 feet 6 inches) strike zone set at 3.5-meter (11 feet 5 inches) away with almost 100 percent accuracy and the batting robot can hit them with more than 90 percent accuracy if they were thrown in to the strike zone. (AP Photo/Itsuo Inouye)

(AP) -- Look out Ichiro Suzuki and Daisuke Matsuzaka. A pair of baseball-playing robots that can pitch and hit with incredible results have been developed in Japan.

The pitching [robot](#), with its three-fingered hand, can throw 90 percent of

its pitches in the strike zone, won't need any relief from the bullpen and never asks for a pay raise.

The batting robot, which has a sensor to determine if pitches are strikes or balls, hits balls in the strike zone almost 100 percent of the time, doesn't swing at pitches outside the strike zone, and is guaranteed to pass all drug tests.

The two robots were created by University of Tokyo professor Masatoshi Ishikawa.

"The demand level of the robotics technology of each robot is very high," Ishikawa said. "What was difficult was to create a mechanism to satisfy such a high level of demand."

The pitching robot throws a plastic foam ball at 25 miles per hour, but Ishikawa is hoping to increase the speed to 93 mph and make it able to throw off-speed pitches like curves and sliders.

Ishikawa is also working on getting the batting robot to be able to hit to all parts of the field.

The robots don't resemble humans but instead the type of robots on a car assembly line.

Japan boasts one of the leading robotics industries in the world, and the government is pushing to develop the industry as a road to growth. Automaker Honda has developed the child-sized Asimo, which can walk and talk.

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