

Benny Agbayani: A Red Sox Player Profile

“When you come up, you want to make a pretty good impact. Some days, you’re going to have down days. Some days, you’re going to have up days. But you just want to keep that evenness and just go out there and play, and try to help this ballclub win.” - [Benny Agbayani](#)

Before Shane Victorino, the Red Sox had another Hawaiian-born player by the name of Benny Agbayani. Benny was a pretty good player for the New York Mets before being traded to the Colorado Rockies in a three-team trade in January 2002. Agbayani didn’t perform well for Colorado and was picked off waivers by the Red Sox.

Costing the Red Sox nothing but a few thousand dollars for a waiver claim, Agbayani wasn’t a super exciting, but still useful addition to the 2002 Red Sox. He slugged only .324, but had a .295 batting average and excellent .395 on-base percentage in 43 plate appearances across 13 games. Plus, Total Zone ranked his play in 11 games in left field as 4 runs above average. He also did about average in 2 innings in center and 19 innings in right field. The total package was worth 0.4 WAR, not too shabby for a 30-year old waiver claim.

Of course, that was a far cry from his excellent 2000 season with the Mets, in which he batted .289, got on base 39.1 percent of the time, and slugged a decent .477. All that was good for an on-base-plus-slugging (OPS) of .868. Compared to league average, he was about 22 percent better than average. He was still useful in 2001, but his power disappeared, although his on-base percentage was fine. The biggest problem is suddenly his ability to play the outfield evaporated, costing his team an estimated 12 runs in the field.

Sadly for Agbayani, he was cut by the Red Sox in spring training in 2003. He caught on with the Cincinnati Reds, who sold his contract to the Kansas City Royals. With KC, Agbayani was sent directly to Triple-A. He performed fine there, but a .237 batting average didn’t impress the Royals brass. Fortunately, there was a team interested in his services, the Chiba Lotte Marines of the Nippon Professional Baseball League in Japan. The manager of that team was Agbayani’s former manager with the Mets, Bobby Valentine. (Oh, how Red Sox fans hate that name...)

In 2004, Agbayani enjoyed his best season in professional baseball hitting 35 HR and driving in 100 runs for Bobby Valentine’s 65-65 team. In 2005, however, the Marines would go on a surprise run to sweep the Hanshin Tigers in 4 games for the Japan Series Championship. However, despite falling off as far as HR and RBI, he remained a useful player right up until age 39 in 2009.

It’s unfortunate that the Red Sox let Agbayani go, although it’s hard to see where he would’ve fit on the 2003 Red Sox. Even more unfortunate is that more Major League teams didn’t give him a chance. He was still OK in the outfield, although in Japan he’d be placed at Designated Hitter for many of his games. If the DH had existed in the National League in 2003, it’s likely he would’ve had many more suitors for his solid on-base skills and modest power – both of which played up immensely in Japan. To be fair, it probably worked out better for Benny, where he got far more playing time than MLB teams likely would’ve let him have.

As of 2020, [Agbayani has started a second life working at the luggage ramp for Hawaiian Airlines, coaching his daughter’s softball team in the afternoons](#). It’s likely he lives fairly comfortably, as he made about \$2 million during his short time in the MLB, and probably just has the airline job to stay busy. In January 2024, [Agbayani got a chance to coach the Saint Louis Crusaders baseball team](#), which

is his alumni. It's safe to say he's pretty happy with his life, and in retrospect, the Red Sox were better for having him.

~ Amelia Desertsong