Most people understand that healthy immigration policies can strengthen a nation’s workforce. Did you know this is also the case on the ballfield?

Last week, we predicted the National League would be the victors of the Major League Baseball (MLB) All-Star Game. This somewhat cut against the conventional wisdom, since the American League had won fifteen of the last nineteen All-Star Games since 2000.

As the baseball great Yogi Berra once opined, “It’s tough to make predictions, especially about the future.” This is too true, so we made sure to arm ourselves with the best data. The American League’s decade-long sweep occurred when they played more immigrant ballplayers. This year, the National League boasted the most foreign teammates, so we expected them to win.

Lo and behold, both streaks continued. With its 4-3 victory, the American League maintained its recent dominance in the series. But despite the greater number of foreign-born players on the National League roster, it was actually the American League team that played the greatest number of immigrant All-Stars: nine to the National League’s eight.

We focus on the relationship between the number of foreign-born ballplayers and the outcome of baseball’s Midsummer Classic not to pit immigrant ballplayers against those from the United States and Puerto Rico. Rather, we call attention to the fact that Major League Baseball—even more so than the United States as a whole—has welcomed foreign-born players to its ranks.

Today, the percentage of foreign-born MLB players is double the proportion of immigrants found in the population at large. This percentage is even higher among MLB All-Stars.

On the winning American League team, 31 percent of the active players came from foreign countries like the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Aruba, Japan, and Australia. The National League’s field comprised 27.6 percent of foreign-born players, hailing from the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Venezuela, South Korea, and Canada.

The 2019 MLB All-Star Game was great entertainment in its own right. On that warm summer night, the game featured a tight finish, brilliant pitching, and many memorable moments. Plus, it moved along at a nice pace—finishing in just under three hours.

Bob Nightengale, writing in USA Today, opined: “Finally, an MLB All-Star Game that reminds us of what baseball once looked like.” We would add: finally, a game that reminds us of what America once looked liked. Players from the United States were joined by immigrant ball players from eight other countries to play—and excel at—America’s pastime.

With games like these, baseball can teach us an important lesson: the team with the greatest number of foreign-born players has historically tended to be the strongest team. In much the same way, immigration also makes us stronger as a nation.

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