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KBO regular season set for another dramatic finish

News



Jamsil Baseball Stadium in southern Seoul stands empty on Sunday, before fully-vaccinated fans were permitted to reenter baseball stadiums. [NEWS1]

The end of the 2021 KBO regular season promises to be as dramatic as any other year, with seven teams still in contention for five playoff spots as of 6 p. m. on Wednesday.

With just over a week left before the regular season ends on Oct. 30, the KT Wiz hold on to an increasingly tenuous lead at the top of the KBO, now just 1.5 games ahead of the second-place Samsung Lions.

The LG Twins round off the top three, only a game behind the Lions and still well within contention of the No. 1 spot.

A likely unassailable gap follows to the Doosan Bears in fourth place, five games behind the Twins. Two games behind the Bears sit the NC Dinos, Kiwoom Heroes and SSG Landers, all tied in fifth place, the KBO's Wildcard spot.

The eighth-place Lotte Giants are three games behind the fifth-place teams, meaning that a catastrophic failure from all three clubs could theoretically throw the Giants back into contention. At the bottom of the table, the Kia Tigers and Hanwha Eagles are way out of the race, a solid 18 and 24 games behind the Wiz.

The number of games left to play is going to be a huge factor going into the final week. The KBO is currently in the middle of a three-week appendix to the regular season as teams make-up games that were canceled during the regular season due to rain, pollution or Covid-19.

The league always tries to skew these make-up fixtures to ensure that the gap between the number of games left to play for each team narrows as it gets closer to the final day, ensuring that all clubs play their final game of the regular season on the same day — in this case Oct. 30.

This isn't always a perfect science — last year the Dinos faced the Tigers in an entirely meaningless game on Day -1 — but if there are no more rain cancellations this year, all 10 teams will end simultaneously.

When taking into account the number of games left, the second-place Lions suddenly appear to be in a much weaker position. While the Wiz have nine games left to play — the average across all 10 teams — the Lions only have six, the lowest of any club. The third-place Twins, on the other hand, have nearly double that, with 11 games left to play.

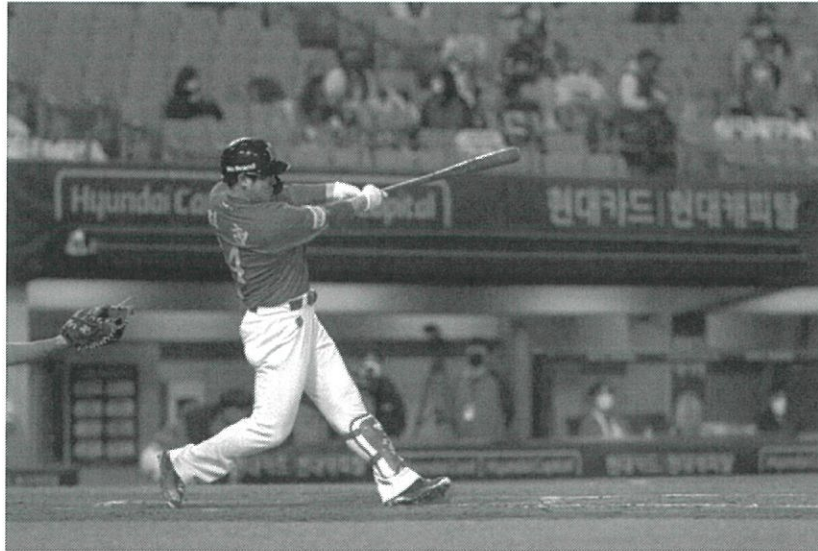
With just one game separating the Twins just one game behind the Lions and 2.5 games behind the Wiz, those extra games could prove to be a huge advantage.

The fourth-place Bears have 10 games left to play, enough to take a huge chunk out of the gap between them and the Lions.

Taking into account the number of games left, the fifth-place face-off should be the Dinos' to win. Like the Twins, the Changwon club and KBO reigning champions have 11 games left to win, well ahead of the eight games that both the Heroes and Landers will play.

The Dinos always have a much easier draw, playing four of their games against the Tigers, while the Heroes only have two games against either of the bottom two teams and the Landers have none.

Adding to the excitement of the final week, fully vaccinated baseball fans in parts of the country under level four were able to return to stadiums from this week.



Choi Jeong of the SSG Landers hits his 400th career home run in a game against the Kia Tigers at Kia Champions Field in Gwangju on Tuesday. [YONHAP]

The KBO also saw a huge milestone passed on Tuesday night, when Choi Jeong of the Landers became only the second player in league history to pass 400 career home runs. Choi, 34, is still on track to surpass the 467 record set by Lee Seung-yuop, the former Lions great.

Just three games are set to be played on Wednesday as of press time: The Heroes will face the Twins, the Dinos will take on the Landers and the Wiz and Tigers will face off in Gwangju.

On Thursday, the Heroes will continue their run against the Twins, the Bears will visit the Landers in Incheon for back-to-back games and the Eagles will take on the Tigers.

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tenuous, theoretically, huge, milestone, take on

Do you have a favorite baseball team?

Who do you think will win the Korean Series?

Before the pandemic, did you enjoy going to see sporting events?

Do you find it worrisome that games are now cancelled due to pollution?

Why are some people such huge sports fans?

Who is your favorite athlete?

What is your favorite sport?

What has been a milestone in your life?

Millennials redefine what a successful job should be

양면 News

2021-10-22 : 08:55



Graphic by Cho Sang-won

Younger Koreans break job stereotypes, value manual work

By Park Han-sol

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning at 5 a.m., Kim Ye-ji, 32, starts her day as a janitor. After waking up, she rushes to an office building and arms herself with a broom and a mop. Her day working at multiplex housing complexes, hospitals and other facilities comes to an end in the early afternoon when most people are thinking about what to eat for lunch.

Bae Yoon-seul, 28, is another millennial who starts her day early in the morning. Waking up — also at 5 a.m. — to the sound of her alarm, she spends more than an hour travelling to a construction site where she joins a crew of workers putting up wallpaper in newly built apartments.

In the past, it was considered “improper” for university graduates to even consider taking on blue-collar jobs such as cleaning and hanging wallpaper.

“At work, several people used to come up to me and ask, ‘Young people do this stuff?’ or ‘Is this your part-time job?’ Sometimes, they would think I’m a young mother in need of money. I’m just

doing my job, but they would come up with all these stories as to the reasons for my choice of occupation,” Kim told *The Korea Times*.

“But I've been a cleaner for over seven years now. I've achieved and gained a lot through this profession — more than in terms of finance — so I've learned not to give them much thought.”

Bae overcame the initial physical and psychological hurdles that come from working at construction sites by telling herself, “Let's just get through this week, then this month, then until the next payday.” It's already been two years since she began her “profession” and Bae is starting yet another day, hoping to be recognized as a veteran wallpaper hanger one day.

The career decisions of these two people, however, actually aren't unheard of among the country's Millennials.

In 2020, Jinju and Changwon cities in South Gyeongsang Province announced job openings for the city's street cleaners. Nearly half of the applicants were in their 20s and 30s — 64 out of 111 candidates in Jinju and 341 out of 727 candidates in Changwon.



Writer and illustrator Kim Ye-ji, left, and her essay collection, “Yes, I Am a Cleaner” (2019) / Courtesy of the author and Book21 Publishing Group, respectively

And there also is a growing interest in hearing the tales behind the younger generation's choices of unique occupations.

In fact, Kim and Bae's heartfelt, autobiographical essay collections about their jobs — “Yes, I Am a Cleaner” (2019) and “The Story of a Young Wall-paperer” (2021), respectively — have been included in the bestseller list in the essay category of YES24, a leading online bookstore.

To this day, the two authors continue to be invited to book talks or lectures to present their stories to others, especially to middle and high school students who are standing at a crossroads in their lives.

This trend of Millennials choosing a wider array of jobs that diverge from ones typically considered by the older generation as more "prestigious and profitable" has become more prominent in recent years.

Some experts say that the volatile labor market plays a partial role in their job selection. Although Korea has a high proportion of 25- to 34-year-olds with college degrees — 69.8 percent in 2020, much higher than the OECD average of 45.5 percent, according to the Ministry of Education — they still have a tough time finding work due to the high youth unemployment rate.

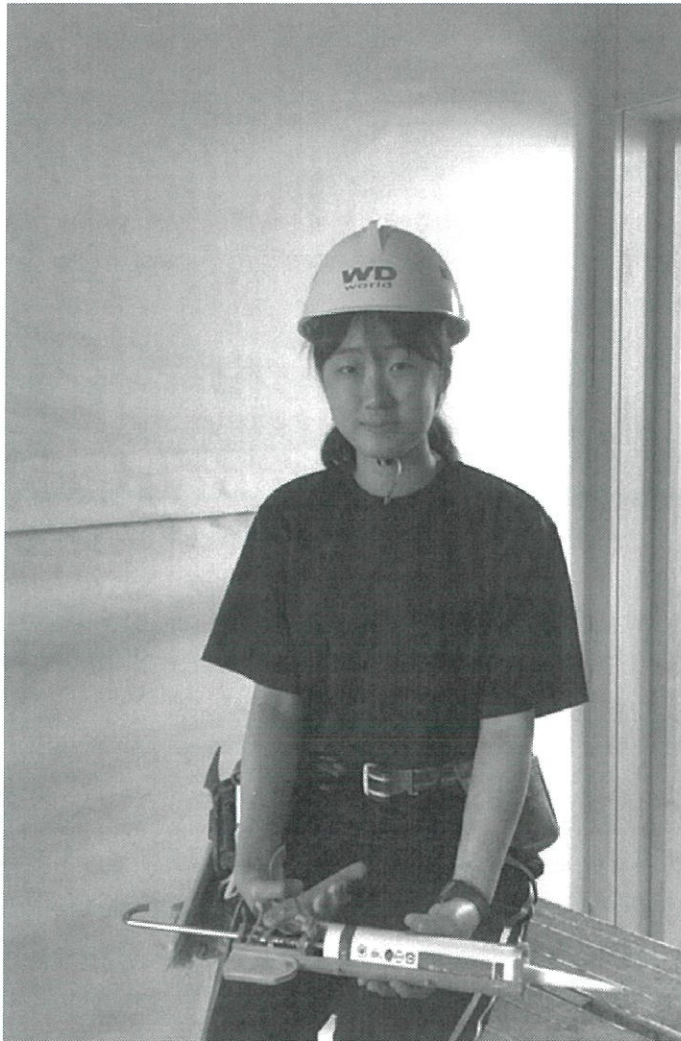
"What added fuel to the fire were the decisions of multiple conglomerates to suspend their regular, massive recruitment of young jobseekers fresh out of college," Suh Yong-gu, a professor of business management at Sookmyung Women's University, said. "With the doors to traditionally well-paying jobs seemingly closed, some started seeking for other sources of income that are more stable and are becoming more promising."

Jobs involving swift mobility and non-routine, physical labor — like cleaners and wall-paperers — have been reevaluated in recent years as a valid alternative, he said, especially in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) that poses a threat to many existing professions.

But the professor added that young people's choice of "unconventional" jobs is not the sole result of their economic frustration. Instead, it reflects their changing attitudes toward careers, not as an end in itself, but as a means to explore their other life goals and passions.

Such is the case for Kim. After majoring in Western painting in college, her passion lies in illustrations. But her unsuccessful attempt to promote her work through blogs, social media and fairs left her discouraged for years.

For her, a cleaning job has not only become a stable source of income, but also a topic of her successful book, "Yes, I Am a Cleaner" — written in a graphic novel format — that eventually created a sizable demand for her illustrations.



Writer Bae Yoon-seul, left, and her essay collection, “The Story of a Young Wall-paperer” (2021) / Courtesy of the author and Kungree Press, respectively

Bae also notes that it wasn't the issue of money and unemployment that made her take on the profession of a hanging wallpaper. Her previous job as a social worker, where her efforts to try out new things were not appreciated, made her realize that she was just another replaceable cog in an inflexible organization.

“After research, I came to the decision that possessing skills as a technician is my way of becoming an important and valuable member in a team environment. I chose my job from my own standards on what would make me most satisfied.”

After weighing the pros and cons of a wide variety of technical professions, she found the job of a hanging wallpaper to be the perfect fit — as she could meet the physical needs demanded by the occupation, while she witnessed relatively more women working in that field.

As to why there are more members of the younger generation who are willing to talk publicly about their jobs, Kim believes that there is much more media that allow them to freely express their opinions.

“Nowadays, you can make your own content to tell your stories — social media, self-publishing, among others,” she said.

Kim, in fact, first released her book herself in 2017. After it started gaining a noticeable amount of attention, publisher Book21 picked it up and turned it into the bestseller we see today.

Bae started recounting her thoughts about the job on her Instagram account after witnessing firsthand the rarely-seen aspects of the construction industry and different portraits of each worker. They eventually caught the eyes of the publisher, Kungree Press, and were subsequently compiled and elaborated into an essay collection.

Koo Jeong-woo, a professor of sociology at Sungkyunkwan University, said such storytelling reflects the "unique cultural confidence of those in their 20s and 30s."

"Members of the older generation may wonder whether these jobs are worth writing about in a book and sharing with others. But for Millennials, who are freer from others' prejudice or opinions, it doesn't have to be a source of embarrassment. On the contrary, these experiences can bring them even bigger, better forms of success."

stereotype, hurdle, unique, stand at the crossroads, diverge, prestigious, volatile, have a tough time, add fuel to the fire, means and ends, frustration, cog, weigh the pros and cons, prejudice

What job do you think you will get after you graduate?

What is your dream job?

What job would you refuse to do?

How do you define success?

Do you think Kim Ye-ji has wasted her university education?

What is one question you would like to ask Miss Kim?

Are you interested in reading Miss Kim's book?

In your opinion, what is the stereotype of city street cleaners?

Do you think Korea has too many people with college degrees?

What hurdles have you had to overcome so far?

What hurdles do you expect to face in the future?

Do you think there is prejudice by employers against people who graduated from a regional university?

What frustrates you as a member of Generation Z?