

Four former baseball players elected to Hall of Fame in Cuba

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Havana, December 27 (RHC)-- Four former baseball players were elected to enter the Hall of Fame of this western city, which since 2017 welcomes outstanding players of this modality.

In this sixth exaltation, the Elector Group chose outfielder Antonio "Haitiano" González as the pre-1961 player, while from the post-1962 stage the selection fell on pitcher Rogelio García and also outfielder Armando Capiró.

The Veterans Committee, for its part, chose Mariano Álvarez, who played in the national series as well as in the strong Pedro Betancourt League with central España.

Francisco Soriano, president of that Committee, recalled the importance that baseball acquired since the mid-19th century in the territories of Havana and Matanzas.

Soriano highlighted the contributions of this sport to the struggle for independence from Spanish colonialism and its role as an exponent of many national characteristics, which is why it was declared Cultural Heritage of the Nation in 2021.

The induction ceremony of these former athletes will take place on February 6 in the aforementioned hall, located in the mythical Palmar de Junco stadium, where on December 27, 1874, the first official baseball game in Cuba took place.

On that Sunday, the teams of Havana and Matanzas played against each other on the field of the Pueblo Nuevo neighborhood, a game that ended 51 "runs" X 9 in favor of the visitors, according to reviews of the time.

It was the first game reported by the press in the 19th century, accompanied by a "box score" or score sheet, it had an umpire and scorer, who enforced the rules of those years and the teams were duly uniformed in front of a good turnout of fans.

Specialists point out that Emilio Sabourín, a patriot of the War of Independence who died while detained in Ceuta, Spain, played for Havana, and Esteban Bellán, the first Latino to play in U.S. major baseball in 1871 with the Troy, New York team.

El Palmar de Junco is currently recognized as the oldest active stadium in the world since, after being the headquarters of the Matanzas teams in national tournaments, the provincial Baseball Academy is located there.

Since 1977, the headquarters of the Matanzas teams, nicknamed "the Crocodiles", currently national runners-up, is the Victoria de Girón facility.

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