

Sports News Roundup July 24



Baseball

A total of 6 losses in a row in games against the U.S. university selection came to an end on Wednesday night in Matanzas before 10,500 spectators, as the young Cuban baseball team took the opener of a 5-game series by a score of 4-3, said www.basebaldecuba.com specialized website.

Twenty-year-old Camagüey pitcher Norge Luis Ruiz played a key role in ending the negative streak and took revenge for his loss last year in the US to a similar team.

This time, Ruiz worked 6 innings allowing only 2 hits, 1 an RBI double in the 4th inning by shortstop Alex Bregman, the top player on the USA roster. Ruiz struck out 6 and walked 3, leaving the mound after the 6th episode with Cuba on top 4-1.

The win allowed the Cubans to break a streak of 6 consecutive losses in these bilateral series, dating back to July 8th, 2012, when right-hander Freddy Asiel Alvarez won 5-2 at the Havana's *Latinoamericano Stadium* in the 4th game of that year's series.

The Cubans were helped by a shaky start from the highly regarded US pitcher Justin Garza who appeared nervous and wild, giving up 4 walks in the 3rd inning, which combined with a wild pitch and a single by Ramón Lunar provided the first 2 of Cuba's runs.

Thomas Eshelman came on in relief of Garza with 2 out in the 3rd and kept the score close until the 6th inning when RBI singles from Roel Santos and O. Yander gave Cuba a 4-1 lead.

The US team edged closer in the 7th as pinch-hitter Chris Okey dispatched a homer off left-handed reliever Pedro Durán, making the score 4-2. The 8th would bring the USA even closer when Bregman drove in run 3, with his 2nd single of the game, this one off reliever Yaisel Sierra.

Then Juan Carlos Viera of Las Tunas finished off the job recording a save despite allowing 2 hits in the top of the 9th.

Team USA and Cuba will meet again on Thursday at the same venue of the *Victoria de Giron Stadium* in Matanzas at 7:15 pm. Righty James Kaprielian is listed as the starting pitcher for the USA and southpaw Julio A. Martinez of Pinar del Rio for Cuba.

And also on baseball, we learn that Yunieski Gourriel, brother of famed Yulieski Gourriel, is in Canada and was hired by the team *Les Capitals* of Quebec without the media hype that received the insertion of Frederich Cepeda, Yulieski Gourriel and Alfredo Despaigne on Asian teams.

The eldest of the 3 Gourriel brothers, 32 years old, the former outfielder of *Sancti Spiritus* team and now a full member of the Havana's *Industriales*, can be seen training, wearing the uniform of the new team and even flying on a chopper if you go to his *Facebook* website.

Les Capitals of Quebec belongs to the *Professional League of Canada*, but is not affiliated with *MLB*, so hiring Yunieski had no objection.

The agreement signing Yunieski was signed in late June between the President of the *Capitals*, Michel Laplante, the Cuban Baseball Federation and INDER.

Heptathlon

The heptathlon runner yorgelis Rodriguez managed the 1st medal for Cuba at the *World Youth Athletics*, based in Eugene, United States.

Yorgelis, champion in *Barcelona 2012*, reached the silver medal this time with 6006 points, only surpassed by the British Morgan Lake (6148), who achieved the best cumulative lifetime ever while the bronze went to the Dutch Nadine Visser (5948).

At 800 m, the leader of the junior world ranking and 2nd among older, Cuban Sahily Diago, goes as favorite today as she has the fastest time among the 16 semifinalists (2:03.60). Other option for medals is long jumper José Luis Despaigne, 3rd in qualifying with 7.61 meters.

To women semi-finals in the 400 and 400 with hurdles for men will go Gilda Casanova, José Luis Gaspar and Leandro Zamora, in that order. Gilda stopped the clocks in 53.43 sec., only surpassed by the host, Kendall Baisden (53.28).

Chess

Cuban GM Isam Ortiz agreed tables with local GM Angel Esponiza at the 2nd date and fell to 16th spot at the *V Iberoamerican Chess Championship* based in Linares, Spain.

Ortiz, Elo 2592, led white pieces against an opponent of lesser level (2388) and tied in 40 moves of a Sicilian defense.

Now the Cuban monarch shows 1.5 units, because he won his opening game, while Paraguayan GM Axel Bachman (2652) started at the top for better playoff among 14 participants with a couple of wins.

The fair brings together 82 players from 22 regional countries and will be defined in 9 rounds convened until July 30th by the Swiss system of *All Against All*.

Basketball

Cuba took the lead in *Group B* with 2 wins without a defeat by winning 60-50 to US Virgin Islands in the most hard-fought game of the *Women Centrobasket Championship* currently underway in the Mexican city of Monterrey.

The Cuban team held the advantage from the 1st quarter, winning 12-10, and was led by its captain Marlén Cepeda, who marked 17 points and 10 rebounds, and was escorted by her compatriot, Yamara Bitter, who contributed with 14 points.

With this victory, the Cubans, per-competition favorite, add 2 wins and no losses and faces today Thursday at the close of the preliminary stage, the Champion of the Caribbean, Jamaica, who disposed of El Salvador by 58-36.

Meanwhile, Puerto Rico virtually secured its qualification to the semifinals by crushing 92-27 to Costa Rica, which was deleted, to lead *Group A* with 2 wins and no defeats.

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