

Sports News Roundup Sept 23

Baseball

Matanzas filed its 2nd victory in the newly opened *54th National Baseball Series* on Monday to overcome the current monarch, Pinar del Rio, by a score of 8-5.

The offensive of Matanzas' *Los Cocodrilos* was led by outfielder Yadiel Hernandez, with 1 homer with 2 on board, supported by veteran pitcher Jonder Martinez, who spread 5 hits and 2 cleans in 8 innings, while Felix Fuentes won the rescue; William Saavedra gave long homer by the defeated, his 2nd in the championship.

Meanwhile, *Industriales* debuted with a convincing 8-0 victory over *Mayabeque* with the win for Pedro Durán and saved game for reliever Alexander Rodríguez, in a game where the outfielder Yunieski Gourriel, with 4-2, 1 double and 2 RBIs, led the winning drive as the failure corresponded to José Norbelis Betancourt.

Parallel, Santiago de Cuba deployed a brutal offensive of 13 hits to knockout Guantánamo by 12-2, with individual homers of outfielder Alexei Bell and shortstop Daniel Aguilera, both with 3 trailers per capita in the challenge won by veteran Alberto Bicet.

In other results, Granma overcame 3-1 to Havana, Sancti Spiritus, 8-3 to Ciego de Avila, Artemisa 8-2 to Isla de la Juventud, Cienfuegos 3-2 to Villa Clara, and Camagüey surpassed 5-4 to Las Tunas.

Volleyball

Cuba now faces Belgium on the 1st day of the *World Women's Volleyball Championship* in their *Group D* match, based in Bari, one of the Italian cities that will host the tournament until October 12th.

Cuban will bump later with Puerto Rico on Wednesday, Japan (Thursday), China (Saturday) and Azerbaijan (Sunday), in that order, according to the website of the tournament, which brings together 24 selections in 4 keys for the 1st round.

Tuesday meetings also include Argentina-Croatia, Dominican-Germany and Italy-Tunisia, in *Segment A* in Rome, while those in *Group B* in the city of Trieste include Brazil-Bulgaria, Canada-Cameroon, and Serbia vs. Turkey.

That day will clash in *Group C* in the city of Verona, Kazakhstan-Netherlands, US-Mexico, and Russia against Thailand.

Top 4 teams from each group advance to the 2nd round, divided into *Group E* (A-D) in the city of Trieste; while *Group F* (B-C), in the city of Verona, where will give the 4 semifinalists, to finally discuss the gold and bronze medals in Milan.

Cuba, which concluded in 12th place in the last edition of Japan 2010, and world champion in 1978, 1994 and 1998, attends the event with a young team led by Melissa Vargas, a 14-years-old talent, and again all directed by Juan Carlos Gala.

Boxing

A 10-member team of elite Cuban boxers will compete at the *Mohammed VI Cup* in Morocco from Oct. 12th-18th, Cuban sports news website *Jit* reported.

Alberto Puig, president of the Cuban Boxing Federation, said the squad will compete in Morocco and various other tournaments in preparation for the upcoming *Central American and Caribbean Games*, hosted by Veracruz, Mexico in November.

"The goal is to add this experience to the work we are doing, so that we can make a good contribution to the (Cuban) delegation in Veracruz, where we hope to win a good number of titles," said Puig.

Cuba's Morocco boxing squad features the same 10 fighters who will represent the Caribbean island at the regional games, namely Olympic gold medal winners Robeisy Ramirez (56kg) and Roniel Iglesias (69), two-time world champions Lazaro Alvarez (60) and Julio Cesar La Cruz (81), and twice world silver medal winner Yasnier Toledo (64), as well as world junior boxing champion Erislandy Savon (91).

Boxing and other combat sports, such as judo and wrestling, are considered to provide Cuba with its best chances to garner Olympic and world titles.

Maradona's Confessions

Napoli legend Diego Maradona has stated that "he would have been an even better player than he was if he didn't take drugs during his career."

Widely regarded as one of the best footballers ever, the now 53 year old Maradona recently gave an interview to *TyC Sports* to talk about his career.

"Before arriving in Europe, I knew that with my technique I would have eaten up defenders," Maradona said. "When the ball was between my feet, others couldn't help but get excited.

"However, my daughters know that their old man, even though I am 53 years old, in reality it is as if I am 78 because my life has not been normal. It's as if I had lived 80 years... thus, "if I had not taken drugs I'd have been a phenomenal player."

Regarding his ill-fated departure as national team boss after the 2010 World Cup, the Argentinian star said: "After I left, I was hurt, I wanted to continue but I did not because I believed in a friend and today, stupidly, I would do it because friends are always friends."

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