

Sports News Roundup Jan. 20



Cuba Triathlon Attracts International Crowd and Cooperation

Cuba will this weekend see the *2015 CAMTRI American Cup* and *Iberoamerican Championships* contested in Havana, offering sprint, middle and long distances races for both elite and age group athletes from January 24th-25th.

While Cuba organized an international triathlon that was sanctioned by ITU in 2006, this race marks the first time American triathletes will compete in the country.

Open to athletes of all National Federations, not only Iberoamerican countries, a total of 17 elite and age group athletes from the United States have been cleared to travel to the event making the US team the 2nd largest in attendance, as the athletes will join a short list of less than 250 Americans who have competed in athletic competitions in Cuba since 2007, according to an article from *USA Today*.

Although Cuba has a team of elite athletes that compete in ITU races, this weekend's caps will serve to boost the sport of triathlon

amongst the Cuban population, especially if we take into account that triathlon has already attracted participation from 25 countries, with Mexico boasting the largest team with more than 100 athletes slated to toe the start line.

"We know hosting international races is an important and effective development tool for the sport, which is the main goal here," ITU President and IOC Member Marisol Casado said. "This is a great project, a project of cooperation that is bringing so many different people together. I'm very happy ITU is also involved in supporting the race."

The races have been organized with cooperation from the *Cuban National Federation*, *ITU*, the *American Triathlon Confederation (CAMTRI)*, and its member National Federations.

"It was always clear we wanted to support this event," said Spanish Federation President José Hidalgo at a press conference announcing the race last year. "We have learned a lot in this cooperation, as countries like Italy and Spain have been working with Cuba to organize the race, and how sport can bring cultures together."

"Sport is about much more than just competing. It has the ability to transcend prejudice, to move people

and build relationships in a pacifistic manner,” said Spanish Director General of Sports Ana Muñoz at the press conference. For more information, please contact: Erin Greene, Senior Media Manager, International Triathlon Union Email: erin.greene@triathlon.org Phone:+34 645 216 509 Visit ITU Online Media Centre: www.media.triathlon.org

Cuba 2, Canada 1 CONCACAF U-20 Championship Match Recap

Canada's hopes of qualifying for the FIFA Under-20 World Cup may have taken a fatal blow on Monday, when the Canucks fell 2-1 to Cuba at the *CONCACAF U-20 Championship* in Montego Bay, Jamaica.

Forward Frank Lopez had both goals for Cuba, who entered Monday's match with a 0-2-1 record and a negative-11 goal differential in the tournament thus far.

Canada (1-3-0, 3 points) now sit in 5th place in Group B, 1 point behind both Cuba. They must now hope for some help from other teams and win their final group stage match against 3rd-place Honduras on Thursday to have any shot at qualifying for this summer's U-20 World Cup.

The top team from each group at the CONCACAF U-20 Championship will automatically advance to this summer's World Cup in New Zealand, while the second and third-place teams will enter a 4-team playoff for the confederations final two World Cup spots.

Canada cannot finish first in Group B, but could catch Honduras or El Salvador for 2nd or 3rd if results break the right way.

If 2nd-place El Salvador beat 1st-place Mexico and Honduras top group cellar dwellers Haiti later on Monday; however, *Canada's U-20 World Cup* qualification hopes would be dashed.

After closely watching the two remaining *Group B* matches on Monday night, Canada will return to action on Thursday, closing out the group stage in Montego Bay against Honduras (5:30 pm ET).

Maritime Youth Baseball Players Headed to Cuba for 'Goodwill Tour'

At the end of this month, more than 400 young baseball players from Atlantic Canada will be traveling to Cuba, to enjoy the sun and spread some goodwill, Ray Bradshaw reports for *Global News Canada*.

It's called the *Goodwill Tour*. Bradshaw says the idea is to play some baseball, establish friendships and support the Cubans in improving their baseball system and school programs.

The *Goodwill Tour* has grown from two Nova Scotia teams in its first year, to five from this province --two of them female-- plus two from PEI, and one each from Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Winnipeg. The players from 10 to 16 years of age will play baseball over a 3-week period in February in Matanzas, Cuba.

“It's one of the safest places I've ever seen and one of the most passionate places I've ever been in regards to baseball,” says Dennis Woodworth, Program Developer of the *Goodwill Tour*, when asked why the group chose to go to that region.

Besides playing ball each day, Woodworth has other plans for the Cubans and Canadians. “We have bus tours throughout the week,” he says. “We have Cuban kids coming to our resorts on Thursdays, we visit schools on Wednesdays, so we give a real depiction of what it's like to live in a third world country.”

As part of the exchange program, Canadian teams will hand out \$75,000 worth of baseball equipment and school supplies, donated by companies and minor baseball associations across the Maritime provinces.

A bonus for the Canadian team: former major league players Bill Lee and Devon White will be guest coaches with the teams during the first week of the tour. In March, the organization will hold fund-raising dinners in hopes of bringing a Cuban team to the Maritimes in late June.

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