

Sports News Roundup Jan. 22



Baseball

Alberto Bicet reached 100 wins in the *Baseball National Series* to lead Industriales by a score of 5-4 over Holguín, consolidating the Havana team in the 3rd seat of the current *54th Cuban Baseball Championship*.

Bicet, now as a reinforcement of Industriales, achieved this feat after allowing 1 earned run and 10 hits in 7 innings, supported by Yohandri Portal's salvage.

Yulieski Gourriel hit a double and drove in 2 to command the winning offensive while Yordan Batista and Yunior Paumier homered for Holguin's *Los Sabuesos*, the losers, and the ace Norge Luis Ruiz took the loss.

Parallel, the still monarch Pinar del Río gave a blow of authority when beating for 2nd consecutive day the leader Matanzas, this time with a score of 5-1; the winner was Erlis Casanova, supported by great relief of Liván Moinelo, who only allowed 1 hit in 3 and 2 third chapters. Outfielder Ramón

Lunar, was the offensive leader by hitting a 2-run homer off the defeated Yoanni Yera.

During evening hours, Isla de la Juventud and Granma played 2 matches. In the first one, Granma's *Los Alazanes* knocked out 15-2 to *Los Piratas* by hitting 16 hits, offensive led by 1st baseman Yordanis Samón, who hit 4 for 4 including 3 doubles, 4 RBIs and 3 runs scored.

Lázaro Blanco shone from the mound with only 2 hits allowed in 6 innings of work, to achieve his 10th win of the Season, while the loss corresponded to Luis Manuel Suárez; however, Isla de la Juventud took revenge in the 2nd game by winning 5-4 in a match marked by the 7th victory of the undefeated reliever Danny Aguilera, while Yusniel Ibanez hit 3 for 4 with a homer and 3 RBIs to lead the attack of *Los Piratas*.

Finally, in the other evening match, Ciego de Ávila defeated 6-3 to Artemisa thanks to a 17 hits offensive, with highlight for Ariel Borrero, 4 for 5 with 2 doubles and 3 RBIs, and the 7th win of ace pitcher Ismel Jiménez.

And another good one from baseball says that *Major League Baseball* clubs will allow minor-league players to participate in the *Pan-American Games* in Toronto this July.

MLB-affiliated players who aren't protected on 40-man rosters are expected to be eligible for the 7-team tournament, which includes the United States and defending Pan-Am champion Canada, baseball officials told *FOX Sports*.

The commitment can be viewed as evidence of MLB's support for the Pan-Am Games in particular and international baseball overall. A higher level of participation, i.e., major leaguers from 40-man rosters, would not be practical for an in-season tournament.

Let's remember that the *International Olympic Committee* dropped baseball and softball after the *2008 Summer Games in Beijing*, but *MLB* is a major financial supporter of the *World Baseball Softball Confederation's* effort to reinstate both sports for the *2020 Games* in Tokyo.

In addition to Canada and the U.S., 4 teams have secured bids: Cuba, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. The 7th ticket from South America will be determined by a qualifier in early March. Rosters for the tournament will consist of 24 players, according to *Toronto 2015* spokesman Teddy Katz.

Canada defeated the U.S., 2-1, in the final of the *2011 Pan-Am Games* in Guadalajara, Mexico. The U.S. team for that tournament included a number of players such as pitchers Matt Shoemaker and Drew Smyly, infielder Jordy Mercer, and outfielder A.J. Pollock, who are established major leaguers now. According to *Baseball Canada*, this year's *Pan-Am* tournament will run from July 11th-19th in Ajax, Ontario, outside Toronto.

Baseball at the Pan-American Games typically hasn't generated much interest among North American fans, but the timing and location of this year's tournament should provide a modest bump in publicity. Local organizers were wise to ensure games would take place on two days (July 15th and 16th) when there are no MLB events during the *All-Star break*; then, the July 19th final will take place on a Sunday, 1 week before the *Baseball Hall of Fame* induction ceremony.

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