

Sports News Roundup February

03



Mexico & Puerto Rico Support Cuba's Return to Baseball's Caribbean Confederation

The presidents of the *Roberto Clemente League of Professional Baseball of Puerto Rico*, Hector Rivera, and that of the *Mexican League of the Pacific (LMP)*, Omar Canizalez, have voiced their support for Cuba's *permanent* return to the *Confederation of Professional Baseball of the Caribbean*.

Puerto Rico's stance was against Cuba's participation just as a *guest* "because we want it to take part as a *full-fledged member*, as it is one of the founding nations of the *Caribbean Series*", Rivera told Cuban reporters in San Juan to cover the 57th edition of that tournament, which runs from Monday until Sunday.

Cuba, a founding member of the *Caribbean Series* in 1949, stopped participating in the tournament in 1960 and returned to the event as a *guest* team last year.

"We always told the Cuban brothers that we were against Cuba being a *guest*. I want it to be a *full-fledged* member of the Confederation because it is the least it must be," Rivera stressed.

However, he added, as there were issues to be solved, "we then agreed that it will return as a *guest*, but strongly hoping it will become a *permanent* project and the total integration of the Caribbean countries under professional baseball", he clarified.

Asked about Cuba's possibility to organize one of the tournaments, Rivera answered that "we obviously want it to be the venue of those events, because it deserves it after so many years".

About the presence of a Cuban team in the current 57th Series, the president of the Puerto Rican League of Professional Baseball pointed out that Cuba added a great deal to the competition, because the high quality of Cuban baseball had always been respected. "It is acknowledged and it will have a good participation here", he said.

He recalled that when returning to the event in Venezuela last year, the Cuban team did not do well, but it had been reinforced now and is willing to fight to the end.

For his part, Canizalez pointed out that Mexico strongly supported Cuba's return as a *full-fledged* member of the *Confederation*. "We are even willing to support it in whatever is necessary and right now, we decided that it has our moral and economic support, and of any kind... I would love Cuba to be the venue of one of these events, because a Caribbean Series in Cuba would be wonderful, with such a beautiful people," the LMP president underlined.

Caribbean Series

Cuban national champion Pinar del Rio's *Vegueros* lost their opening game by 1-2 against Mexico's *Tomateros de Culiacán* at the *Caribbean Baseball Series* underway in the Puerto Rican city of San Juan.

The heavily reinforced Cuban team, filled with players of the national squad, didn't show much in the 1st game, with only 1 run after 2 bad plays by the Mexican defense, seemed helpless against the pitching staff of the Mexicans, led by starter, left-handed Anthony Vásquez.

Cuba took the early lead in the 4th inning against Vasquez, when after a dead ball to Yulieski Gourriel, the Cuban stole 2nd, and with a drive line by outfielder Frederich Cepeda, badly played by the Mexican right fielder, Gourriel scored from 2nd base.

Cuban starter Freddy Asiel Alvarez was in great shape, allowing just a couple of hits in the first 5 innings, even sorting out a difficult situation in the 3rd, when with 2 outs, *Tomateros* had men in 2nd and 3rd bases, but Asiel struck out the batter.

But in the 6th inning, the Cuban pitcher threw to 3rd instead of to 1st base, and with a ground out to 2nd base, the Mexican squad tied the game. Later, Mexico scored the winning run in the 7th inning, which Cuba couldn't match due to its poor offensive.

Chess

The *Confederation of Chess for America (CCA)* will meet in Cali early next March, to agree its schedule of activities for the rest of this year, said the *Olympic Committee of Colombia*.

The main leaders of the continental science game also will make adjustments to the rules and regulation of regional tournaments and project the structure of the calendar for next year, as well as dealing with the formation of committees to monitor schoolchildren categories.

The call will be led by Mexican Jorge Vega, president of the CCA, and Allan Herberg (Barbados), treasurer of the entity, whose sessions, at continental meeting, will be held from March 5th to 8th, include reviewing of the preparations for the *Pan-American Youth Tournament* to be held next June.

IAAF

The *International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF)* highlighted the strength of its anti-doping program, shaken by recent doping cases in Russian sports.

In this sense, the IAAF said in a statement that the disciplinary proceedings against five Russian marchers are the latest sign of the robustness of the program.

The cases, that include the current Olympic champion of 3 000 meter hurdles, Yulia Zaripova, rely on irregularities in their biological passports.

So far, more than 40 elite athletes have been sanctioned by abnormalities in the biological passport, recalled the entity.

The message of the IAAF towards cheaters is that it is increasingly clear that there is no place to hide, says the note.

FIFA's Presidency

The *International Football Federation (FIFA)* confirmed today that only 4 candidates will aspire to the presidency of the organization, including its current president, the Swiss Joseph Blatter.

Blatter will go against the former Portuguese player Luis Figo, the president of the Dutch Federation, Michael van Praag, and Jordan's Prince Ali bin Al Hussein, vice president of the entity.

FIFA's Electoral Committee announced that former player David Ginola and the former president of the association Jerome Champagne, both French, failed to gather the necessary support.

FIFA presidential elections will take place on May 29th in the Swiss city of Zurich, and the *Electoral Committee* will now check each candidate through its *Ethics Committee*. The official announcement of candidates is expected initially on February 9th.

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