

# *Sports News Roundup Jun 01*

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## **New York Cosmos Arrive in Cuba for Historic Match**

The US *New York Cosmos* team landed in Havana on Monday, with Brazilian soccer royalty among the delegation, for a slightly unusual slice of the U.S. and Cuba's efforts to improve bilateral relations as it's the first trip by a major American soccer club to Cuba since 1978.

"We are extremely privileged and honored to accept this opportunity," said *Cosmos* chairman Seamus O'Brien, ahead of Tuesday's game. "This happened naturally, very quickly. There was instant reciprocity from both sides, wanting to do the game."

Planning for the match began earlier this year, when the *Cosmos* first spoke to officials in the U.S. and Cuba about the possibility of organizing a game. Last week, the United States dropped Cuba from its so-called blacklist of state sponsors of terrorism, as the two countries seek to restore diplomatic ties frozen for 5 decades.

The project gathered pace when *Cosmos* coach Giovanni Savarese traveled to Jamaica in January and met Cuban officials on the sidelines of regional qualifiers for the *U-20 World Cup*. The *Cosmos* side then coordinated the trip with the US State Department, Justice Department and White House.

This is a unique historical game, indeed. The match itself, which will be played at the Havana's *Pedro Marrero Stadium*, will also see European stars Raul Gonzalez Blanco and former Villareal player Marcos Senna line up for the *Cosmos* against Cuba, the world's 109th ranked national team.

For the *Cosmos*, Tuesday's match continues a long list of unique, overseas tours. This year they've already played friendlies in Hong Kong and El Salvador, and Cuba will be the 42nd country the team has visited in its history.

Though the *Cosmos* team, which brought its entire lineup, currently do not play in the biggest US league, the *MLS* --but they compete in the resurrected *NASL*-- they remain one of the most well-known clubs in US soccer. In the 1970s, for instance, they managed to attract players like Pele, Franz Beckenbauer and Giorgio Chinaglia to their ranks.

"We hope that our match will be an important step forward in growing the popularity of the global game in Cuba and improving relations between the two nations," O'Brien said, commenting that he was impressed by journalists and the crowds present, even late at night, while leaving the Jose Marti International Airport.

According to the program, on Monday the visiting team will have a training session at the *Pedro Marrero Stadium*, and in the afternoon they'll offer a press conference at the Melia-Cohiba hotel to finally face off the national team of Cuba on Tuesday afternoon in a match that will serve as warm-up ahead of the Gold Cup to be discussed in July in the United States, said Luis Hernandez, president of the *Cuban Football Federation*.

## **Handball**

The Cuban women's handball team finished 2nd in the *Pan-American Championships*, headquartered at Havana's *Kid Chocolate* multipurpose sport complex. In a hard-fought match from start to finish, the team of Brazil, current world champion, beat 26-22 Cuba, a worthy rival who had to settle for the silver medal and left a good impression to the public that supported it at all times.

Francielle Da Rocha (6 goals) was the scoring leader for Brazil, which is currently the top winner of these contests, now with 9 titles while Lisandra Lussón, champion in *Veracruz 2014*, highlighted for Cuba with 10 goals.

For Cuban this was the 2nd silver medal in the history of the *Pan-American Women's Handball Championships*, where they have also won a bronze medal.

In the bronze discussion, Argentina easily defeated Puerto Rico 33-16; while Uruguay finished 5th when winning 27-21 over Greenland, results that qualified them to the playoff for a ticket to the World Cup.

The 3 medal winners earned a ticket, along with Puerto Rico, to that competition, to be held on Denmark, next December.

The standings was completed by Paraguay, which finished 7th, followed by Mexico, Chile, United States, Venezuela and Guatemala.

## **Cuban Children's Company La Colmenita Will Perform in Toronto-2015**

*La Colmenita*, the Cuban children's theater company, will perform in Toronto during the next Pan-American Games.

This company, global ambassador for UNICEF, will represent the work *Falls*, inspired by the eponymous poem by Cuban José María Heredia, as part of the cultural program of Toronto-2015.

Carlos Alberto Cremata, director of *La Colmenita*, explained that the Canadian producer and prima ballerina, Veronica Tennant included the play *Falls* in a show that will be performed in Toronto.

Mrs. Tennant, also *UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador*, said she knew of these young artists through the choreographer Litz Alfonso, and then filmed in this famous *Falls* version.

'Now I am in charge of the cultural side program of the *Games*, I thought of developing a play that will pay homage to Heredia', also said the theater director.

*Falls*, a Pan-American history, will be released on July 23rd in Toronto, and possibly next year in Cuba.

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