

# *Sports News Roundup June 04*

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## **Baseball**

The Cuban star pitcher Hector Manuel Mendoza debuted in the main circuit of *Japan Professional Baseball* in the 2-1 win of his team, the *Yomiuri Giants*, over the *Orix Buffaloes*.

Mendoza starred in 2 scoreless innings as relief against 6 rivals, including 2 strikeouts, showing his excellent pace as the speedy pitcher from Isla de la Juventud.

Before being called to the first team of the *Yomiuri Giants*, Hector Manuel Mendoza successfully transited through the Japanese minor league totaling 6 innings in 7 matches with a 1.42 ERA and 9 strikeouts.

Mendoza is part of the Cuban pre-selection and is eligible to participate in the *Pan-American Games* in the Canadian city of Toronto next July, as well as his companions Alfredo Despaigne and Frederich Cepeda, who are also playing in the Japanese baseball circuit.

Despaigne, who is currently injured, offensively highlights with the *Chiba Lotte Marines* averaging .279, result of 31 hits in 111 at-bats, including 8 homers and as many doubles, plus 22 RBIs.

Meanwhile, Cepeda hits .279 with 4 homers and 11 RBIs in his passage through the 2nd division of the *Yomiuri Giants* after a fateful performance with the first team this season when summarized 18 at-bats without hits.

## **NORCECA's Cup**

The *NORCECA Women's Final Four Champions Cup* will take place at the Havana's *Sport City Coliseum* from June 5th-7th with 2 tickets available for the *FIVB World Cup*, the first qualifying event to the *2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games*.

The 4 non-qualified top ranked teams from NORCECA, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Canada, will play under a single round-robin tournament for the 2 berths to the event in Japan next September, as the United States, the confederation's top ranked team, is already qualified to the *World Cup* as reigning women's world champions.

NORCECA No. 2 Dominican Republic faces No. 5 Canada in the opening match on Friday at 13:30 (local time) followed by the match of No. 3 Cuba against No. 4 Puerto Rico at 15:30.

Teams are already in Havana since Wednesday June 3rd with the members of the control committee.

The matches of Friday and Saturday will be played as preliminary contests to the *FIVB Men's World League Intercontinental Round, Pool C* featuring Bulgaria vs. Cuba.

The *NORCECA Men's Final Four Champions Cup* was held in Detroit, USA last month, with Canada and United States earning the tickets to the *FIVB World Cup* also in Japan.

## **Golf**

It was almost a century ago that *golf* first appeared in Cuba, between 1910 and 1920, thanks to amateur players from the United States who lived on the island and 10 golf courses had been built, —some were part of *PGA (Professional Golf Association)* circuits— by 1959.

From that history, only 2 remained: the *9-hole Club de Golf de La Habana (Havana Golf Club)*, and the *18-hole Varadero Golf Club*. The latter —which is the best course in Cuba today and holds the added attraction of the attained international fame in 1999, with the *European Challenge Tour Grand Finale*, one of the chief tournaments for this sport in the world.

In addition to being a sport now included in the Olympics, *golf* is an excellent option for attracting high-standard tourism, with higher-than-average purchasing power.

Figures for this market segment indicate that worldwide, golfers travel twice yearly on average to play, tend to go back to their favorite courses, and spend more than sun-and-beach vacationers.

This is not news to the executives of the local *Palmares Group*, which oversees Cuba's 2 existing golf courses and its growth strategy for that tourist product in Cuba.

Very close to Varadero, an initial project is now under construction following the signing of an agreement with the *Esencia Hotels and Resorts* British company. With an investment of \$350 million, *The Carbonera Golf and Country Club* is being created, comprising the construction of a golf course, 2,000 real-estate units, a shopping center and a hotel.

A 2nd joint enterprise has as its foreign partner the Chinese company *Beijing Enterprises Holdings Limited*, and its project is being developed in the *Bellomonte* east of Havana. Two more projects are to be developed with Spanish companies that are prestigious in the industry: in *El Salado*, west of the capital, and in *Punta Colorada*, in Pinar del Río province.

And so, perhaps soon, we may see a resurgence of *golf* in Cuba, not just for tourism, but also for Cubans who are showing a growing interest in this sport.

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