

Sports News Roundup March 7



Baseball

The legendary *Latinoamericano Stadium* in the Cuban capital is undergoing a complete refurbishment, including the infield and outfield areas.

The iconic stadium, which was built in 1946 and with a seating capacity of 55,000 spectators, is getting ready for the big friendly game between the *Cuba Team* and the *Tampa Bay Rays*, MLB from the United States on March 22nd.

Both US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro will attend the game, the first between an American baseball team and a Cuban team since the *Baltimore Orioles* beat Cuba 3-2 in Havana in 1999 during an exhibition match.

The game comes as American Major League baseball hopes to reopen ties with Cuban baseball, and begin pre-season games on the Island by some major league baseball teams.

And regarding Cuban baseball, it was announced that Pinar del Rio will try to get the 3rd place today among the 4 teams already classified for the post season at the *55th National Baseball Series*, when facing Industriales on the 3rd day of the games suspended from the 2nd stage of the tournament.

Fencing

Senior foil fencers worldwide will compete from March 11th-13th in the *Grand Prix of Havana*, which is organized by the International Fencing Federation (FIE) and its counterpart in Cuba since 2013.

Most of them are fencers qualified for the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, confirmed the methodologist of the *Cuba's National Fencing Commission*, Mercedes del Risco.

Though 86 women and 112 men are so far confirmed, the organizers expect the number of contestants will grow in the coming days.

The event has the attraction of being held just 3 months before Rio while re-known stars such as the Italian Elissa Di Francisca, defender Queen of *Havana 2015* and Olympic gold medal in *London 2012*, along with some others great figures of the stature of the Russian Inna Deriglazora, South Korean Jeon Hee Sook and French Ysaora Thibus, are expected.

Other stars confirmed are Italian Rianna Rigo (3rd in the world ranking) and Lee Kiefer (USA-the 6th), while American Race Imboden, world holder in 2014, his compatriot Alexander Masialas (silver last year), the Russian Dimitri Rigin (Gold in 2015), and Italian Daniel Garozzo (bronze in 2015) stand out among the many men stars also to attend the prestigious event in the Cuban capital.

Wrestling

Cuba and Venezuela each won two Greco-Roman titles as the 3-day Pan-American Olympic Games Qualifier concluded on Sunday night at the *Dr. Pepper Arena* as the last 12 Olympic wrestling qualifying spots of the weekend were determined also on Sunday in suburban Dallas.

The top 2 finishers in each of the 6 Greco-Roman style clinched their berths to advance to Rio de Janeiro as well as the top 2 finishers in each of the 18 Olympic weight classes who competed in Texas, 6 weight classes in each style, also qualified to Brazil 2016.

Past Junior World champion, Cuban Yasmany Lugo Cabrera won by medical forfeit over Venezuelan Luillys Perez Mora to take the gold medal at 98kg, while the also Cuban Yurisandy Hernandez Rios gained a workmanlike 6-0 win over Colombian Carlos Munoz Jaramillo in the finals at 75kg.

Cuba has now qualified for the Olympics in Greco-Roman wrestling in 5-of-6 weight categories, as well as 5-of-6 weights in men's freestyle.

Cuba Unveils Powerhouse Olympic Team and Other Sports Briefs

Team Cuba is fired up and ready to go to the Olympic Games in Rio next August, with a total of 58 athletes qualified for 9 different disciplines.

The 42 men and 16 women, will compete mostly in track and field events, but also volleyball, boxing, modern pentathlon and gymnastics, among others.

The number of Cubans qualified for the competition could increase in the next months with further preliminary events.

In *London 2012*, Cuba came 16th out of 204 nations, the highest out of any Latin-American nation, an extraordinary feat for an island with a population of 11 million.

"Cuba has a very particular characteristic, being a small country it is an Olympic power thanks to our sport movement. It is the only country that is distinguished as a sports management model different from other

countries, where commercialization dominates,” said Cuban sports chief René Romero Esquivel.

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