

University of Tampa Baseball Team Heads to Exhibition Games in Cuba



Jan 15, -- In a trip with few precedents, the University of Tampa's defending national champion baseball team has arrived in Cuba to play four exhibition games on the Caribbean island.

The Spartans will be in Cuba for a cultural exchange until January 19th. They'll tour Old Havana, meet local kids, eat at the home-based restaurants known as *paladares* — and play at least two of Cuba's best baseball teams.

"An amazing cultural opportunity," UT head coach Joe Urso said. "The coaching staff, the players are thrilled right now. This is trip of a lifetime."

UT is one of a handful of U.S. college baseball teams —and is believed to be the only one from Florida— to travel to Cuba to play. The Spartans' opponents there include the Industriales Blue Lions, Mayabeque Hurricanes and Artemisa Hunters.

The team is traveling on a cultural literacy and international education license through the organization People to People. U.S. travel to Cuba is permitted only under strict cultural exchange rules, due to the 50-year-long U.S. blockade on Cuba.

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