

MLB and Cuba reach agreement that will allow Cuban players to sign big league contracts



Havana, December 20 (RHC)-- An historic agreement signed Wednesday between the Cuban Baseball Federation and Major League Baseball (MLB) and its players' association will allow players from the island to sign big league contracts.

The deal, reached after three years of negotiations, paves the way for a cooperative, stable and non-politicized relationship between the two federations.

In making the announcement in Havana, the head of the Cuban Federation, Higinio Velez, described the occasion as a "happy day" for Cuban baseball since it will provide a safe route for the players of the island and will give peace of mind to their relatives.

According to the provisions of the treaty, as of December 19, 2018, players under contract to the Cuban Federation are covered by the agreement, and the Cuban Federation will release players 25 and older with at least six years of professional experience.

The Cuban Federation may, at its discretion, release younger players to sign minor league contracts with MLB organizations.

Any players allowed to sign with Big League clubs can do so without leaving Cuba, and the fee paid by the signing team will be covered by the same rules as in MLB's other posting systems: 20 percent of the first \$25 million of a major league contract, 17.5 percent of the next \$25 million and 15 percent of any amount over \$50 million. There will be a supplemental fee of 15 percent of any earned bonuses, salary escalators and exercised options.

The players' release rate will be paid thanks to the permission granted by the OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control), and that money will be invested in the country in the formation of baseball players from the base.

The agreement, which runs through October 31, 2021, allows Cubans to sign under rules similar to those for players under contract to clubs in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

"For years, Major League Baseball has been seeking to end the trafficking of baseball players from Cuba by criminal organizations by creating a safe and legal alternative for those players to sign with major league clubs," U.S. Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement Wednesday.

Reacting to the announcement, Sen. Patrick Leahy, a Vermont Democrat, said: "Baseball has always been a bridge between our two nations, facilitating people-to-people connections and larger agreements that have brought our countries closer together."

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