

Sports News Roundup October 4



Cuban Baseball Beyond Domestic Stadiums

The magic of Cuban baseball keeps gaining ground in the world's major leagues as Cuba has allowed its players to take part in top foreign tournaments under a policy that is constantly being improved.

Cuban players and coaches are enhancing the prestige of championships in Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Brazil, Italy, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Canada and the major leagues in the U.S.. In the case of the latter, they are compelled to give up their Cuban nationality to be able to play in that country as part of an exclusive and mean policy criticized worldwide.

This latest episode of the history of Cubans playing in other major baseball leagues began 2 years ago with a pilot project when 3rd baseman Michel Enríquez, 1st baseman Yordanis Samón and slugger Alfredo Despaigne were allowed to play in Mexico's professional league.

That marked a milestone in the history of this country's baseball as, except for a very few cases, Cuban players had never been allowed to show their talent and skills in foreign professional leagues ever since professional sports were banned here more than 50 years ago.

Thanks to this new policy, Cuban players can add quality to tournaments in other nations and gain personal and professional benefits, among others.

They all have the chance to be signed by a foreign club, a goal which compels them to show their skills to the fullest and shine with their respective provincial teams in the domestic championships.

Among the recent players signed by foreign clubs are 3rd baseman Yulieski Gourriel, outfielder Frederich Cepeda and reliever Héctor Mendoza, all of them on Japanese teams at present. Meanwhile, center-fielder Yunieski Gourriel has joined Canada's Quebec Capitales, which is not affiliated to the U.S. major leagues.

In case I'm successful here, that may allow for other Cubans to play in Canada legally, said Gourriel, who has played 14 national championships at home.

Needless to say other players are likely to be signed in the face of the Cubans' inborn skills to play baseball which they have shown for more than a century in the world's major leagues.

There's no doubt the decision to allow Cuban baseball players to show their top class at foreign leagues will also add to the good quality of the sports back home and its results will be seen at major tournaments like the 2017 World Classic.

Jorge Luis Sánchez Discusses Projections of the Sport and the Status of Dayron Robles

Athletics has always been one of the leading sports in Cuba, although the results of recent years have not compared with those achieved decades ago, there continue to emerge a few stars for this sport.

Jorge Luis Sánchez, national commissioner of athletics, talks about upcoming events where the Cuban team will participate. "What is upcoming, staying in 2014, are the *Central American and Caribbean Games* that will be developed in Veracruz, Mexico. There athletes will be competing from November 24th to 29th in the city of Jalapa."

The celebration of this regional event will feature all the Cuban national team athletes, except decathlete Leonel Suárez who is recovering from injury. After the event, the athletes will have holidays in December and in January will begin the first macro cycle training with a view to the *Panamerican Games*.

Jorge Luis Sanchez also reported that the Cuban team will not participate in the next European winter season: "We've always attended as protagonists, but this time, athletes will not be prepared because of time and cannot take part in this circuit"

The Cuban commissioner also talked about the possibility of Dayron Robles, Olympic champion and world record holder in 100 meters hurdles, to compete again for Cuba after requesting to leave the selection and take several months competing in Europe. "Dayron Robles has the right to compete in Cuba at the scheduled participation of our country (...) can be incorporated into the province and take part from municipal championships, then provincials, until he reaches the Cuba Cup which is the national championship (...) to integrate the Cuba team or not, whether it would be a situation that would be analyzed in terms of its performance and features that our federation is to integrate the site with a view to the international stage."

Sanchez finished talking about the goals and objectives the Federation has set: "For this term we have as a main objective to relocate Cuban athletes among the 10 nations in each of the competitions in which we take part." To achieve this purpose we must work hard in preparation and training of athletes, as it has become clear that the skills of the younger generation are not as bright as in previous generations.

Volleyball

Cuba's men volleyball team will face off on Sunday Trinidad and Tobago in the 1st round of the *II Pan-American Volleyball Cup U-23* to be held until February 10th at the *Sports City Coliseum*.

Under the program, the Cubans will open the *All Against All* playoffs facing the Trinitarians, then come up with Guatemala, El Salvador, Dominican Republic and Mexico, 6, 7, 8 and 9, respectively.

On Friday the 10th will be the discussion of the positions 5th and 6th, and the gold and bronze medals in that order while preliminary meetings covering the 6 teams involved, clinical arbitration and a technical meeting at the *Tulip* hotel will be held on Saturday 4th.

Cuba has 20 players, 12 of whom will be chosen by Cuban coach Rodolfo Sánchez. The tournament will grants 2 tickets to the world cup via CONCACAF, as places of South America were held in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Cuba has already secured its presence at the U-20 and U-23 Women's World caps, as well as the Under-19 and Under-21 for men, so it only has to get the ticket for the U-18 (f), to be held in early 2015 in Havana.

Chess

Cuban GM Leinier Dominguez lost on Saturday against his Russian counterpart Sergey Karjakin in the 3rd round of the *Chess World Grand Prix*, which takes place till next 14th in the city of Baku, capital of Azerbaijan.

The Cuban, who led by 1st time black pieces, was beaten in 40 moves by the Russian GM, who reached his 1st victory in the tournament, and now collects 1.5 points, thanks 1 win, 1 draw and 1 loss, while the Cuban star left with 1 unit by his 2 draws against GMs Rustam Kazimdhanov of Uzbekistan and Russian Eugeny Tomashevskii.

This victory by Karjakin, 2767 points ELO and ranked 8th in the world list is the 2nd win achieved by the Russian against the Cuban in *Grand Prix tournaments*, as the first one was during the stage held in Tashkent last year.

The Cuban, with 2751 Elo points, and ranked at number 15th in the list of the world will face off Israeli GM Boris Gelfand (2748), and number 16th in the 4th round.

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