

Sport News Roundup February

19



Baseball

Granma appears today just 1 game from the top of the *54th Cuban Baseball Championship*, with its victory on Wednesday over Holguin and the 2nd straight loss of current leader Matanzas to Ciego de Avila.

The right-hander Lázaro Blanco spread 4 hits and 3 cleans in 7 innings to reach 11 hits and ratified ahead of the best winning pitchers of the Season in the victory of Granma's Los Alazanes over *Los Sabuesos* from Holguin with score of 9-3.

Guillermo Avilés hit a solo homer and Yordanis Samón hit 4-2 with 3 RBIs as the most outstanding in the winning offensive, while Yordán Batista and Eriel Sánchez homered for the defeated, with the loss to Yusmel Velázquez.

Ciego de Avila defeated the leader this time 3-2 with credit for reliever Yunier Cano and offensive role of 3rd baseman, Yeniet Pérez, author of 1 double and 2 trailers.

The Avilianians' *Los Tigres* took advantage of this result to own the 4th place in solo

and break the deadlock with Isla de la Juventud, which suspended against Industriales due to rain.

In turn, Pinar del Río reacted by beating 6-1 to Artemisa in a clash marked by solid opening of Yaifredo Domínguez, who just allowed 2 hits and 1 run in 6 episodes, while being supported by Dennis Laza's offensive, 3-2, with 3 RBIs.

So, Matanzas now commands with 41 and 24, followed by Granma (40-25), Industriales (37-27), Ciego de Ávila (36-29), Isla de la Juventud (35-29), Pinar del Río (35-30), Artemisa (33-32) and Holguin (30-35).

And more good news from this captivating sports says that USA Baseball and the *Cuban Baseball Federation* have announced the 2 international baseball powers will continue their *Home-and-home International Friendship Series* in the U.S. this July; thus, 2015 will mark the 4th consecutive year the two countries have met on the baseball diamond for a 5-game series. The U.S. hosted in 2013, while Cuba

hosted the *USA Baseball Collegiate National Team* in 2012 and 2014.

Co-hosted by the Durham Bulls and the Charlotte Knights, the 2015 games will be contested entirely in the state of North Carolina. Both nations will open and close the series at the USA Baseball National Training Complex in Cary, N.C., on July 1st and 6th, while the *Durham Bulls* will host games on July 2nd and 3rd at *Durham Bulls Athletic Park*, and the *Charlotte Knights* will host play on the 4th of July at *BB&T Ballpark* in uptown Charlotte.

"It is a thrill to bring the Cuban National Team to North Carolina for 5 competitive, entertaining games in Cary, Durham and Charlotte, this summer," said Paul Seiler, USA Baseball's executive director of CEO. "Building on the success of the first 3 years of this renewed Friendship Series should make for an incredible experience for the players, coaches, fans and the international baseball community."

After a 16-year hiatus, USA and Cuba resumed a yearly International Friendship Series on the baseball field in 2012 with the *USA Baseball Collegiate National Team* traveling to Havana for an intense 5-game series that saw the host nation score a 3-2 series victory. In 2013 (in the U.S.) and 2014 (in Cuba), the host nations dominated play with 5-game sweeps, and in 3 years of renewed rivalry, Cuba leads the series 8-7.

"It's exciting to be entering the 4th consecutive year of international Friendship Series between these two historic baseball countries," said *World Baseball Softball Confederation Ambassador*, Antonio Castro. "The games in Cuba in 2014 were an incredibly positive experience for the players and fans, and we look forward to the same kind of atmosphere this year in the States."

Durham Bulls Athletic Park has been good to the *Collegiate National Team*. Since opening in 1995, and becoming an unofficial yearly home to the team in 2003, this team has posted a 44-7 record in 51 contests there and have met with Cuba once before at the DBAP, with Team USA winning the final game of the 2013 series, 5-3, in front of the hometown crowd.

Tickets for the *USA Baseball vs. Cuba Series* at *Durham Bulls Athletic Park* go on sale on Friday, March 6th.

Toronto 2015

Cuba has ranked as 39 athletes and aims to bring a total of 63 competitors in the *Para-pan American Games* to be held from August 7th-15th in Toronto, Canada, informed local sports.

Of the 16 convened disciplines, the Cuban delegation will participate in athletics, judo and swimming, but most of the Island's tickets are focused on track and field specialties, with 16 qualified so far, while another 12 will seek to ensure their presence through the *Caixa Lotteries* qualifier event next April in Brazil.

Four Cuban swimmers will also seek their classification in the above-mentioned Brazilian competition in weightlifting and 6 others will pursue on the same objective during the *Open Tournament* of the discipline to be held next April in Mexico.

The experts also said that Cuba will attend *Toronto 2015* to match or surpass *Guadalajara 2011* results where the Island's delegation won 54 medals, covering 27 gold, 16 silver and 11 bronze medals, to end up in 4th place behind Brazil, the United States and the hosts.



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