

Sports News Roundup March 18



Baseball

The president of the Cuban National Baseball Federation (FCB), Higinio Velez, assured his nation today that Cuba would, "go back to being one of the principal countries in the sport."

"We have asked to be members of the Caribbean Professional Baseball Confederation (CPBC) as demanded by Cuban baseball fans and the government and therefore Cuba needs it and have the right conditions to organize classic baseball tournaments." Velez told local Prensa Latina news agency.

This is one of the main reasons for the restructuring and remodeling of the *Latinoamericano Stadium* in the Cuban capital, which will host a friendly match between the MLB team Tampa Bay Devil Rays (American League) and the Cuban national team on the 22nd of March.

Former MLB Cuban-born players, Luis Tiant (former pitcher) and José Cardenal (former outfielder), together with New York Yankees retired captain Derek Jeter (US), will come

to Cuba as part of the match.

"We will not only raise the level of the Cuban sport, but we will honor the quality and history of our baseball by becoming a new venue for events of the highest quality and also the Caribbean Baseball Series," said Velez after an appearance before local and international press media at the *Latinoamericano Stadium*.

"To achieve this goal, it is indispensable to have a stadium that meets the current technical requirements," he added.

The *Latinoamericano Stadium* was built in 1946. It is the biggest baseball stadium in Cuba and was the site of the Caribbean Baseball Series in 1949, and several series of the extinct World Baseball Cup.

Although relations between the USA and Cuba have improved, it was still too early to say what impact this would have on the relationship between the US MLB and the Cuban FCB, he added.

"We will wait. Meetings, agreements, negotiations, will come through. We want to take part in the process of introducing Cuban baseball players in the MLB in a legal and safe manner," Velez concluded.

Futsal

The Cuban Futsal team was placed in *Group B* of the FIBA Americas tournament, to be held from May 4th in Costa Rica, as determined by the draw made on Wednesday in San José, the capital.

The Cubans, who have participated in 4 World cups, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008, will debut on May 8th to Curacao, at 7.30 pm (local Cuban time).

One day later, they will face locals and will close on May 10th against the United States or Canada, teams will have to define in a playoffs, from May 4th-6th, its presence in this world qualifying Fair.

Moreover, the teams of Mexico, Panama, Guatemala and a 4th selection from the play-offs between Honduras and Trinidad and Tobago, were placed in *Group A*.

CONCACAF Futsal Championship semi-finalists will qualify 4 teams to the World Futsal Cup, to be played in Colombia later this year.

Table Tennis

The Cuban Andy Pereira will look for from next April his 2nd consecutive participation in Olympic events, when involved in the pre-Olympic table tennis tournament of Santiago de Chile.

Immersed in his preparation in Denmark, the leading figure of the discipline in Cuba, said he was optimistic and motivated to achieve his goal in the South American headquarters, but acknowledged an increase in the quality of Latin-American players.

The Cuban will arrive in Chile with the disadvantage of not being located in the continental ranking because of his competitive inactivity for 8 months.

"Andoba", as his friends know him from childhood, will be joined in the men's sector by promising racket player Jorge Moisés Campos, also with ambitions to obtain a quota to Rio Olympics next August.

Meanwhile, in the women branch, still it has not decided who will attend the qualifier next month, among Idalys Lovet, Lisi Castillo and Yuneisy Galván.

The Chilean fair distributes 5 tickets for men and 6 among the ladies for the Olympics in Rio.

Softball

Men's softball teams of Santiago de Cuba, Ciego de Avila, Havana and Holguín are already qualified for the semifinal phase of the *National Softball Championship*, based in the eastern city of Ciego de Avila.



Radio Habana Cuba