



DRSEA INFORMER

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Cerrando Del Mannygate (Closing the Mannygate) – Mannygate, as the Manny Ramirez violation of Major League Baseball’s performance-enhancing drug policies is being called, has further tarnished the image of baseball, but in the Dominican Republic, people are angry at the Los Angeles slugger for embarrassing the country.



“Now, when a Dominican does something good, hits a bunch of home runs, people are going to say, ‘There goes another Dominican using steroids,’” said a good friend of mine who lives and breathes Dominican baseball. His sentiments are shared by legions of Dominicans who feel like their dominance of baseball is being threatened by the bad publicity. Interestingly, not that long ago, there was a developing feeling that Dominican dominance actually threatened baseball.

Shortly after Omar Minaya took over as general manager of the New York Mets, becoming the only Latino to hold such a position, he was labeled a “racist” by many because he significantly

increased the number of Latinos on the team. I defended Minaya in an opinion piece for the New York Daily News, saying it was more a case of him looking to significantly improve the Mets by acquiring quality players who happened to be Latino.

“You would hope that fans would think his motives in bringing in players of any race, color or creed are to field the best team possible because if Omar doesn’t win, he too will join the unemployment line,” I wrote at the time. “If that means importing players from Tibet to reach the World Series, let’s get the Yak Express up and running.....To those who continue to question Minaya’s moves as part of some sort of Latin conspiracy, I have only this to say: *Buscate una vida!*”

But the conspiracy theory continues as the number of Latino players increases; I honestly believe some fans consider that increase a compromise of America’s pastime.

Baseball, more than any other sport, is a game of statistics and records. Batting averages, slugging percentages, on-base percentages, hits with men in scoring position, runs batted in, walks-to-strikeouts, are the measuring stick of performance. And the records: number of hits, stolen bases, batting streaks, number of consecutive games played, saves, strikeouts, and, the big one – home runs – are revered the most.

Currently, there are a number of Latino players breaking many of those records, or are on target to break records as they also garner many of the most coveted awards in baseball including a number of MVP awards. Latinos will continue to post impressive statistics and will most likely hold many of the major baseball records in the years to come. I can’t help but feel that that riles many fans who consider baseball America’s game, not Latin America’s game. And incidents like Mannygate, coupled with allegations of age and identity falsification, will permit them to minimize and marginalize the contributions of Dominican players to the game of baseball.

My hope is that Dominican baseball players will become more proactive in the situation, given the hero and role-model status they enjoy in their country.



David Ortiz, the Boston slugger who hails from the Dominican Republic, when asked if the Ramirez suspension upset him, replied that it shocked and confused him. He is not alone as Dominicans lament their *compadre*’s fall from grace and its impact on baseball and their country. In fact, Ortiz and other Dominican players are blaming current slumps on their frustrations over the latest steroid scandal; some Dominicans speculate the slumps are because the players *stopped* taking steroids.

I have been advocating for awhile that Dominican baseball players need to form their own union, not to oppose the MLB Players Association, but to protect their own interests and that of Dominican baseball. After all, they are the ones who have gained so much and have so much to lose. I think if Dominican baseball players can become advocates against steroid use, can promote the need for honesty in age and identity, can be guardians of baseball *and* Dominican integrity, they will help to restore some of the faith Dominicans have lost, as well as inspire the next generation who play on the crude diamonds scratched in sugar cane fields and other plots of earth with aspirations of following in the footsteps of David Ortiz, Albert Pujols, Jose Reyes and hundreds of others living the Dominican dream.

The Association of Dominican Baseball Players, or the ADBP as I like to call it, could also be the watchdog of how Major League Baseball treats players under development in the Dominican Republic, working with MLB and the MLBPA to assure that not only are their needs as young players met, but that other needs, such as a quality education, are also provided. That will go a long way towards restoring some of the pride their countrymen have lost as a result of the actions of a few that have cast aspersions on all.

Déjà Vu Denuevo (Déjà Vu All Over Again) – As we turned down the dirt road rutted by the torrential rains that had poured over the previous week, I had that sense of going down this path before, and sure enough, at the end of the road I recognized the buildings as ones I had seen before. The Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim academy in San Pedro de Macoris is one that I had visited back in 2000 as part of a Major League Baseball sanctioned fact-finding expedition to take a look at baseball academies in the Dominican Republic and develop a proposal, to be considered by MLB, to improve conditions.

I went there with Gary Hale, who, with his wife, Allison, is building a school in San Pedro that includes a baseball ministry. Hale serves as chaplain to several of the baseball academies in the area and we connected after he read about the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy. I had the pleasure of spending a couple of days with Gary and Allison, sharing my vision with them and vice versa.

San Pedro is known for producing baseball players, including Sammy Sosa, and several academies are located there, including the Angels, which has seen some improvements since I last visited, including the addition of a second field. A new coat of paint has spruced the place up, and there is now a weight room. Still missing is a classroom.

Gary also took me to the Houston Astros camp, which was more droll and Spartan, with only one field and a mediocre dorm. But I was impressed with the Atlanta Braves academy, an immaculately groomed facility with classrooms that I hope are being used wisely.

We also visited a training facility for youngsters aspiring to be signed by one of the 29 academies currently operating in the Dominican Republic. These young wannabes toiled in the hot sun, taking batting instruction and fielding tips from coaches under the watchful eye of *buscones* eager to see their protégés latch on to an academy and claim a piece of their signing bonuses.

The Hales see the hopes and dreams of young Dominican baseball players as well as the exploitation of those players and are using their ministry to educate at least a few. They own a plot of land near San Pedro where they plan to build their school as well as an orphanage that will offer hope to the disenfranchised. They are also using baseball as a teaching tool; the hope is that their school will become a feeder school to the DRSEA. They plan on opening with kindergarten through fourth grade within the next year.

It is always good to find someone who shares the DRSEA vision of making baseball a vehicle to more opportunities in life beyond the field. God bless them.

The Importance Of Being Self-Sufficient In Baseball

By Guille Esquivel

In a time when the world is facing an economic crisis where many have never experienced anything remotely like it before, there are those who are discovering the importance of being self-sufficient. This is forcing many to rediscover their inner strengths and abilities to do for themselves. I am predicting that in the next few years during this recession we will begin to see

many athletes, particularly in baseball, take their fate into their own hands and start to do what they are capable of doing for themselves. Many will start to realize that it makes more sense to hire a lawyer for contract negotiations rather than to pay them 5% for doing only that. It is easier and less expensive to hire a concierge and/or a publicist on retainer than to pay the exorbitant fees to an agent.

The NBA has already resorted to establishing a salary scale where a player is aware of what he will be making and can often negotiate his own contract. Some have taken advantage of the scale and have only sought help for endorsements and/or personal matters.

Salaries will drop in MLB and we will see that teams will be hesitant to hand out multi-year deals. Aside from the Yankees, there probably won't be too many teams willing to break the bank on one player in this age of uncertainty. Players have to become more involved in their financial matters. A player once told me that the object in playing baseball isn't how much money you can make, but instead how much you can keep.

It is understood that many of these baseball players are high maintenance, but have no other choice since some lack the education to know the value of the dollar and require guidance from others. Others who are educated enough will begin to see that it benefits them to be on top of their own affairs and handle their own business.

This is where the Dominican Republic Sports and Education Academy (DRSEA) will be beneficial to up-and-coming athletes who will be taught all this and much more and will have the opportunity to decide what they want to do with their futures.

The DRSEA has a curriculum that includes classes that will teach baseball players about financial matters and how to handle the media, aside from the basic formal education. Those youngsters who can attend should or they should definitely seek out classes that are geared for just that. Now is an ideal time for the DRSEA because the time is ripe for these athletes to become self-sufficient.



Guille Esquivel has served as coordinator for the Cuban team during the inaugural World Baseball Classic in 2006. She received her masters degree in Cultural Studies from Claremont Graduate University; her thesis focused on Dominican baseball players and their experiences in the US baseball system. During the last two Caribbean World Series, she wrote English articles for ebeisbol.com. She has also contributed articles to Listin Diario in the Dominican Republic. She has translated books and maintains her baseball blog elpunto.blogspot.com. Ms. Esquivel is the author of a new book, "Out Of The Park."

Una Llamada A La Subasta (A Call To Auction) – In the next few weeks, the DRSEA will begin auctioning sports memorabilia and other items to raise money to support its development. These items will include autographed equipment including balls, gloves, shoes and shirts, photographs and the like, as well as Dominican art work and other valuables. First up will be an authenticated basketball autographed by Shaquille O'Neal. The item, and items to follow, will be posted on E-Bay for bidding. We will keep you posted on items as they go up for bid; anyone wishing to donate items to be auctioned in support of the DRSEA, drop us an e-mail or simply send them to the DRSEA at 600 Anita Street, #16, Chula Vista, CA 91911.

Otras Noticias De Interés (Other News of Interest)

All In The Family – *Hoy* newspaper is reporting that the Dominican Republic needs 10,000 family practice specialists and that the Francisco Moscoso Puello Hospital is offering a residency in this field. This comes at a time when the new Social Security model for the country requires better primary care, yet specialists in this field have not reached 10% of demand. The Dominican Medical Association (CMD) is planning a conference to discuss the issue and others that are at the heart of the Social Security process. CMD representatives Sense Caba and Mauro Canario say that while there has been progress in training family doctors, as reflected by the offer of new residency programs in this area, there is still a huge unsatisfied demand for these specialists. The new public health model, which is contained in the General Health Law, the Social Security Law and the new constitutional reforms, stipulates that doctors who specialize in family medicine should be the first caregivers assigned to provide primary medical services to patients.

The Name Game – The Central Electoral Board (JCE) has rejected a resolution aimed at prohibiting parents from naming their children derogatory, hard to pronounce or sexually ambiguous names. The proposal, made by magistrate Jose Angel Aquino, did not get enough votes, according to JCE president Julio Cesar Castanos Guzman. The bill also proposed that Civil Registry Officials should not allow people to give their children more than three names, or last names as first names, as well as the same names as their brothers or sisters. Aquino made his proposal out of concern over the number of names that many Dominicans have that, in his judgment, should not be used. Among those he cited: "Fantasma Ruiz"(Ghost), "Mazda Altagracia", "Toshiba Fidelina", "Tonton Ruiz" (Stupid), "Querido Familia Perez" (Dear Family), "Winston Churchill de la Cruz", "Rambo Mota", "Rambo Olla" and "Furunculo Guzman" (Boil).

Making The Connection – According to the annual report on the telecommunications industry from the National Commission for the Society of Information and Knowledge (CNSIC), 7.2 million cell phone numbers are in use in the Dominican Republic, a country of 10 million people. In 2008, 1.7 million new cell phone numbers were added. The report indicates that 14 companies are providing these services in the Dominican Republic. It makes the point that the largest growth is in pre-paid plans, for 87% of all cell phone holders. One hundred percent of the cell phone network is digital. The report says that as of the end of 2008, there were 340,322 Internet lines in the Dominican Republic, or 3.5 accounts per 100 inhabitants and a growth rate of 28.8% compared to 2007.

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