



DRSEA INFORMER

Volume I, Issue 3: A Publication For Your Reading Enjoyment

Las Estrellas Salen En La Noche (The stars come out at night) – I had expected to see baseball players in the Dominican Republic, just as you would expect to see sand at the beach, but I never expected to see so many, so soon and all in one place. I had the honor of being invited to a reception at the U.S. Ambassador’s home, to announce a joint venture between Major League Baseball and the USAID called MLB-USAID-Dominican Development Alliance. The Alliance, which seeks to use baseball as a catalyst for improving the lives of the less fortunate in the Dominican, is a partnership between Major League Baseball, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Peace Corps and six well-known charitable non-profit institutions – World Vision, Save the Children, Plan International, Esperanza International, Batey Relief Alliance and the Dominican Institute for Integrated Development.

The reception was a gala affair, attended by government and corporate dignitaries representing both the Dominican Republic and the United States, MLB and USAID officials, and, a host of baseball players, current and former. Imagine my surprise and delight to be shaking hands with Big Papi, with Robinson Cano, Pedro Martinez, and a few other stars? And old school players such as Cesar Geronimo, Manny Mota and Jesus Alou. And, I got to meet a star of the future, Michael Inoa, a 16-year-old pitcher who received a record signing bonus of \$4.25 million last summer from the Oakland Athletics.

I did make one faux pas, I must admit. I was introduced to one gentleman and asked if he was in baseball. “Yes,” he said, “I am the manager of the Washington Nationals.” So, I will never forget who Manny Acta is. He showed his sense of humor when I said that I didn’t recognize him because I usually saw him on TV in the dugout with his hat on. He said, “Not likely; we don’t get on TV that much. You only get on TV if you are real good, and we are not there yet.” Well, Acta made a Nationals fan out of me.

Qué Sucede A Un Sueño Diferido (What happens to a dream deferred)? – Langston Hughes’s poem was on my mind recently, after a discussion with an associate here who leveled with me about something and I admire her honesty for it, but it did cause a lot of reflection, including again wondering if I made the right decision to come to the Dominican Republic.

She basically said that some people aren't embracing the DRSEA, don't believe in the project because they perceive me as a..... I filled in the blank myself; "Dreamer?" Yes, she said, and I told her it was a label that I not only embrace, but covet.

Where are we without dreams? I often think of my dad, who passed away three years ago at age 91. He was the kindest, sweetest, most generous person I ever knew; he was and is my hero, in part because he dared to dream.

He was raised by his mother along with two siblings during the Depression because his father abandoned the family. He went to college at age 16 and was salutatorian of his class. After a stint in the army, he came home to pursue his dream of becoming a college professor. Remember, those were still the days of legal segregation. He applied for a position as a graduate assistant at Ohio State University to work on his PhD, but there were concerns whether white students would listen to or follow a black man. My father excelled in the position and went on to become the first African American to receive a PhD in English at Ohio State.

He still couldn't teach there, so he returned to his alma mater, Lincoln University (PA), the oldest historically black college in the United States, where he taught for 38 years, and even though he later had offers to go elsewhere, he stayed, because his dream was to teach people who could benefit most from what he had to offer.

Over the years I have met many of my father's students and their gratitude is universal. "Your dad taught me to follow my dream, to try to be the best I could be by doing the best I knew I was capable of." These people are now doctors, judges, professors in their own right, who dared to dream.

I wonder what would have happened if, 35 or so years ago, someone had pulled young Barack Obama aside and told him not to dream of being president of the United States?

What does happen to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the hot Dominican sun, withering and disappearing? Maybe it stinks like rotten meat, becoming a sickening reminder of what will never be? Perhaps the dream will crust and sugar over, like a sweet pineapple left in the night air? Or does the deferred dream explode, the obvious severity of a postponed dream.

The DRSEA is a dream I refuse to defer. Dinner is often a dream in the Dominican Republic. Fresh water is often a dream in the Dominican Republic. *Tomorrow* is often a dream in the Dominican Republic because today is often a matter of just surviving. I want to offer opportunity where there is none; the dream of a better life, but I need others to share and embrace the belief and the vision. That is why I make appeals in the **DRSEA INFORMER** for others to get involved. Yes, we need money. Dreams aside, bricks have a cost; we need to buy money mud to grow money trees, to fund the vision, so we do hope you will find it in your heart to make a donation.

But there are so many other ways you can help besides financially. We need help with our website, with research, with identifying other people who can support the DRSEA, who can help with making the vision a reality. Drop me a note with suggestions, comments, and criticisms, whatever is on your mind about the DRSEA [See **LETTERS below**]. Your feedback may just include some answers we need. Meantime, follow the link for an inspirational message http://home.att.net/~hideaway_today/t130/frog.htm.

Cecilia Mota Es Una Persona Especial (Cecilia Mota is a special person)



Cecilia Mota, a member of the board of trustees of the DRSEA, is the founder and president of Legends of the Game Caribbean Fantasy Camps, Inc., a company that offers weeklong instructional camps with world renowned sports figures that are held throughout various islands on Caribbean basin.

These camps allow participants to interact on a personal basis with sports legends like Manny Mota, Cecilia's father, Juan Marichal, Maury Wills, and Luis Tiant, among others, while enjoying turquoise waters, white sands, and the friendliness and warmth of people from this historical region.

As the Executive Director of the Manny Mota International Foundation (MMIF) for more than nine years, Cecilia is committed to causes that advance the economic, cultural, and educational development of both her native country of the Dominican Republic, as well as her adopted country, the United States.

Under the auspices of the MMIF, her efforts-and those of the entire Mota family-are fostering the development of programs that assist at-risk youth and their families in both countries by providing scholarships for higher education, health clinics, food drives, and instructional baseball clinics that stress the value of sports and of good sportsmanship. Cecilia also serves as advisor in the Advisory Executive Board of the Dominican Cultural Center in Los Angeles, and is an active member of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Female Executives (NAFE), For You Network, Ladies Who Launch and the National Latina Business Women Association (NLBWA-LA).

Cecilia has been a tremendous asset to the DRSEA, assisting with long-range development, fund raising, and helping to develop a network, both in the Dominican Republic and the United States.

Otras Noticias De Interés (Other News of Interest)

Dominicanos En El NCAA (Dominicans in the NCAA)

As the NCAA College Basketball season gets underway, Dominicans can look at the collegiate league with pride. Fifteen Dominicans will play important roles in Division I teams throughout the US. Four are freshman standouts expected to help their teams significantly. Among them is a pair of 6'10 power forwards Eloy Vargas (Florida) and Alex Rivas Sanchez (South Florida). Also, there is Dagoberto Pena (Marshall) and Steve Mejia (Rhode Island). This core will be joining Edgar Sosa (Louisville) who has already become one of the best young guards in the nation, Manny Quezada (San Francisco), John Garcia (Seton Hall), Alejo Rodriguez (Iona) and Antonio Pena (Villanova). Also, there is Luis Guzman, Dalky Melendez (Louisiana Monroe), Adris de Leon and Andy Genao (Eastern Washington), James Feldeine and Jonathan Cruz (Quinnipiac). Gerardo Suero will play for Wabash College (DII) this year and David Manaya and Leo Liriano could be midseason additions to Texas Tech. Chris de la Rosa and Danny Taveras are in the same position at Siena and San Diego State, where both talented players are currently not on the pre-

season rosters. While baseball has long been held up as the DR's national sport, basketball has squeezed its way into prominence over the last 15 years. This has been made possible by members of the Dominican community in the US, who are more likely to play basketball in the urban areas where they live. There is, however, a passion for basketball developing in the Dominican Republic.

If Dominicans are making an impact on the college basketball scene in the United States, think what an impact they will have on the college baseball scene once the DRSEA is in business!

LETTERS TO THE DRSEA INFORMER:

Bernard Fisher of Philadelphia asks: With Major League Baseball having such a presence in the Dominican Republic, are they supporting the DRSEA?

Major League Baseball is not providing any financial support for the DRSEA currently, but we enjoy a good relationship with the league, which is providing great advice and direction. You have to remember that MLB is not in the education business; it is in the Dominican Republic to develop baseball players. But there seems to be an increasing awareness that it has a social responsibility in the face of the fact that 95 percent of the players MLB is working with in the Dominican Republic will never make it to the majors. As it recognizes that responsibility, much has improved for players in the 29 academies MLB teams operate in the Dominican Republic. Projects like the DRSEA, with the continued support of Major League Baseball, are working on developing the educational opportunities these players need.

Carmen DeLaCruz of New York asks: How is life different in the DR?

Very different, but that is what makes living in a foreign country interesting. Things work at a different pace; there is not as much hurry to get things done, which is nice, but can be challenging after the hustle and bustle of New York, which offers immediacy in almost everything. The power goes out frequently, so you come to recognize how accustomed Americans are to flicking a switch and the power is there. You can't drink water from the tap, so bottled water is a staple. It is about 90 every day, but there is a late afternoon or early evening shower that cools things off. The people are very polite and speak just in passing. School kids say "Hola," as they pass in the morning. Ask for directions and people are likely to say, "Follow me," take you to your destination, then turn and walk the other way, causing you to realize that they walked blocks out of their way to help you. Sounds very un-American, huh?

Charles S. Farrell

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