



DRSEA INFORMER

Volume I, Issue 6: A Publication For Your Reading Enjoyment

Recortes Presupuestarios De La Educación De La República Dominicana Por Año Nuevo (Dominican Republic Education Budget Cuts For New Year) –

The need for the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy becomes more evident every day. Constraints for 2009 have led the Dominican Republic Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (SEESCYT) to announce a cut in the number of new scholarships for next year. The 2008 budget was for RD\$6.5 billion, which provided funding that enabled 1,590 students to travel abroad for graduate and undergraduate university studies. SEESCYT's 2009 budget will be reduced to RD\$5.2 billion. Minister Ligia Amada Melo says that the reduction in the budget is due to the 15% increase in the salaries of public employees, which forced government to look for the money elsewhere, resulting in educational budget cuts. The Minister added that the national scholarship program would be suspended for the first quarter of the year. She stressed that students who have already received scholarships would not be affected. Melo says that of the RD\$5.2 billion that the Ministry will receive, RD\$3 billion will be transferred to local higher learning centers, leaving the remaining RD\$1.5 billion for educational and administrative costs. She announced that scholarships would from now on only be awarded for graduate studies in order to benefit more students.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Melanio Paredes has announced the ambitious goal of reducing illiteracy in the DR to 0% by 2015. Paredes said that the only thing that liberates people is the ability to overcome ignorance. The Dominican Republic reports that the illiteracy rate currently stands at 11%. Paredes did not provide concrete details about how this goal would be accomplished. In 2008, the DR spent just 2% of its GNP on education.

Currently, there are 2,710,524 children registered in public and private schools around the nation; 2,096,532 in public schools and 613,992 in private schools.

The DRSEA will at least provide some educational opportunities that don't currently exist, or are being curtailed.

Cuente Sus Bendiciones II (Count Your Blessings II) – Last May, I attended my 35th college reunion at Lincoln University (PA), the oldest historically black college in the United States. My father also graduated from Lincoln and one of my great joys before he passed away three years ago was seeing him celebrate his 70th reunion, so I am halfway to his milestone.

Since May, four of my classmates have passed away, including one just a week ago. Two of them I saw at the reunion in May, and in retrospect I am now cherishing that even more. Life can be so fleeting; tomorrow is not promised.



Harold Méndez Es Una Persona Especial (Harold

Méndez is a special person) – Harold Méndez is my co-founder of the DRSEA and is also the interim chairman of the Board of Trustees. He has served as an advisor and consultant to numerous world class sporting events, professional sports teams, sports management firms & entertainment firms around the world including Nike, Latino Sports Marketing, LLC, and Host Communications. His experience includes representing athletes in MLB, NBA and professional soccer in Europe. Méndez has focused his practice on the growing Latino presence in sports. As founder and president of ESTRELLA Management International, Méndez represents and advises Latino sports and entertainment personalities in both on and off the field endeavors. Bringing his extensive experience in cross cultural marketing and representation, Méndez is equally proud of the opportunity he has to help his clients build a strong foundation for life outside of and after sports. Méndez sits on the Board of the National Hispanic Media Coalition, the Philadelphia Latino Media Alliance, Temple Alumni Association, and is a senior advisor to Sports Perspectives International. He holds a Juris Doctorate from Temple University School of Law.

Harold has become not only my business partner, but one of my best friends as well, because he has dared to share the dream. Having someone working with me as equally committed to the challenges we have faced, and will face, makes things a lot easier. Harold, *gracias por ser mi amigo, siempre.*

Pocas noticias del béisbol (A Little Baseball News) – New York Yankees star Alex Rodriguez has told Dominican fans that he will play for the Dominican team in next year's World Baseball Classic. He told reporters, "I am 100% sure that I am going to play for the Dominican Republic." Rodriguez was speaking at a press conference in Punta Cana, in the east of the Dominican Republic where he was playing in a charity golf tournament organized by David Ortiz.

The slugger generated local controversy in the first World Classic in 2006 when he announced that he would play for the DR only to end up playing for the US.

On this occasion, Rodriguez promised that he would not change his mind. "This time there is no doubt and this is my mother's dream and I intend to fulfill it, and it is my dream too." For some time, rumors have circulated about Rodriguez's participation in the series. The Dominican team organizing committee said that they were quite happy with the superstar's commitment.

According to Stanley Javier, the general manager, "This is great news. It is good news that Alex has decided to play with the Dominican team. The rules are clear, just signing now is enough for him to play with the Dominican team." Rodriguez pointed out that the rules of the Classic permit him to play for either team, since he was born in the US but his parents are Dominican. He said:

"It will be a very special day for my family to see me wearing the Dominican team uniform again."

Rodriguez played winter league baseball with the Leones del Escogido in the 1994-1995 season before reaching the Major Leagues. That year the Dominican Republic finished third in the first World Baseball Classic, behind Japan and Cuba

Coach Offerman – Former MLB player Jose Offerman has been named the new manager of the Tigres del Licey in the Dominican Republic after former manager Hector de la Cruz was fired by the team. Last year Offerman played with Licey's Caribbean Series championship team. Though Offerman was known for his hitting skills in his 15 year MLB career, he is best remembered for an ugly incident in 2008 when he attacked two players from the opposing team with a baseball bat. Offerman, playing for the Long Island Ducks, was hit by a pitch and charged the mound

Andrew the Aguila – Former MLB All-Star center fielder Andrew Jones is in the Dominican Republic and will play with the Aguilas Cibaenas. The current Dodgers player looks to bolster the Aguilas line-up while trying to recover his form, which made him one of the best players in baseball throughout his 10-year career. Jones commented on the move saying that last year, for the first time in his career, he missed much of the season because he was injured. Jones says the Dominican League is a strong league and a great way to prove oneself as a player.

Road to the Big Leagues – I urge you to check out a film called *RUMBO A LAS GRANDES LIGAS* (Road to the Big Leagues) and look out for it on ESPN DEPORTES as well as the new MLB Network in the coming months. There is also just released the DVD and you can find it on Netflix or purchase it at <http://www.rumbofilm.com> (if you are interested in purchasing the film, type **CREW** in the promotional code window when you check out for a 25% discount).



Photo by Glenn Winston

“Campo de Suenos”



Happy Holidays

Merry Christmas

Feliz Navidad

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy, we would like to wish you the very best of holidays and a prosperous New Year.

The DRSEA made great strides this year. Without help and support such as yours, we would not have made those strides, and for that we are blessed. There is a sense of great expectation and hope in the air as we usher in a new presidential administration next month, but there is also uncertainty with the economy. It is our hope that even with that uncertain economy, you will continue to share our passion and vision for creating a unique education institution for which we can all be proud, and consider a year-end donation to the not-for-profit DRSEA.

Among DRSEA accomplishments this year:

- Held a successful fundraiser in New York City (Another fundraiser is being planned for January).
- A major article on the Academy appeared in the New York Daily News.
- Substantial development in the DRSEA course of study that establishes a solid academic foundation.
- The addition of several quality people to the Board of Trustees including baseball Hall of Famer César Gerónimo.
- Narrowing the search for a site for the DRSEA to a few select locations.
- Establishing a reading program for children that will brand the DRSEA and increase its presence and credibility in the Dominican Republic and elsewhere.
- Transitioning me to the Dominican Republic to help establish a firm base there, a base necessary for developing a strong presence and credibility.

Like so many other non-profits, we face the challenge of sustaining our momentum in the face of the current economic recession. So we again ask you to consider a gift to the DRSEA to sustain our growth on all fronts. Your support will allow our growth to continue and to be the catalyst for change in the Dominican Republic. Help us end the year with the same momentum with which we started. Together we can make this a season of *exceptional giving* so that future student athletes in the Dominican Republic can benefit from an *extraordinary DRSEA experience*.

Again, enjoy this holiday season as we thank you in advance for helping to make the DRSEA dream shine brightly.

LETTERS TO THE DRSEA INFORMER:

Leonard Ferguson of Philadelphia asks: How do you like the food in the Dominican Republic?

When I first met my ex-girlfriend, who is Dominican, she used to take me to her mother's home in New York, and I was always miffed why rice and beans accompanied every meal. I was more used to potatoes, or pasta, or variations. As time passed, I not only got used to the *arroz con habichuelas*, I expected them and have come to appreciate a variety of Dominican food, so it has made living here easier.

I do a lot of my own cooking, and finally have gotten my rice almost perfect. Still working on the beans, however.

One of my favorite dishes is something called *sancocho*, a rich stew of meats, yucca, plantain, potato, corn and other ingredients. No one makes it exactly the same; you can find chicken, beef, pork, and even goat included, often in combinations. I call it the ultimate Dominican comfort food.

I also love something called *mangu*, which is simply green plantains that have been boiled, mashed and served with a little sautéed pickled onion on top. It is superb with scrambled eggs and is therefore what I call Dominican grits.

Charles S. Farrell

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