



# DRSEA INFORMER

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***No Me Diga So-sa (Say It Ain't So-sa)*** – When Sammy Sosa announced his retirement recently, he pontificated on his worthiness as a future candidate for baseball's Hall of Fame, believing that his record would catapult him to immortality. Many of the individuals who vote on Hall membership supported that contention even in the face of rumors that Sosa enhanced his stats by using steroids, saying there was no evidence.



But that posture took a severe hit recently when information was revealed that Sosa was one of 104 baseball players who tested positive for steroids use back in 2003, before Major League Baseball banned steroid use and began regular testing.

The revelation further damaged the integrity of baseball, as well as the reputation of other Dominican players. Sosa, a living legend in the Dominican Republic, joins Alex Rodriguez as the only two players of the 104 whose names were revealed on a test that was forever to remain anonymous, and this comes on the heels of the suspension of fellow Dominican Manny Ramirez for using a banned substance. One sports writer for a Dominican newspaper, in pointing out that Rodriguez and Sosa were the only two players on the list of 104 who have been "outed," raised the question of whether it was coincidence or persecution. It certainly is not a coincidence.

Remember, steroids were not on the list of baseball's banned substances when Sosa and Rodriguez are accused of using them. Don't get me wrong. I would never condone the use of steroids. They undermine the integrity of the game, betray the trust of fans, and ultimately are just plain dangerous.

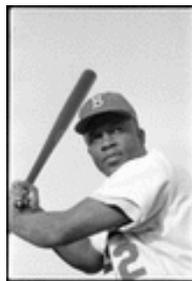
But the 2003 test results were not meant to be revealed, meaning someone betrayed the trust of the players who were promised confidentiality. I can't believe that baseball would cut its own

throat, but nonetheless, players have no reason to trust Major League Baseball in the future, which is going to lead to more problems.

But the problem facing baseball now is one of the character and integrity of players, and the implication that Dominican players routinely use the shortcut of performance enhancing drugs to become better players. I have been told that half of the 104 players on the list are Dominican, again not a coincidence, but an indication of a deeper-rooted problem. Baseball is not going to stop mining the Dominican Republic for talent; it has invested too much and reaped too many rewards, but Major League Baseball is going to have to address its problems in the Dominican Republic or risk further undermining the integrity of the game.

My belief is that just as talent and skills are assessed, baseball in the Dominican Republic will, conscientiously or not; start looking at the character and integrity of the players it is developing here. Baseball can make all the rules and regulations it wants, but it can't legislate integrity and character, which are inherent traits that can be developed in individuals. I think baseball is at least going to start asking the question, "Does this player possess the kind of character and integrity that is going to make him a good representative of the game," and not be someone whose name is going to pop up in the future on a list of suspected steroid users, or who may have lied about age or identity? It is in baseball's self interest to ask such questions of future stars.

When I think character and integrity, Jackie Robinson always comes to mind. Breaking the color line was inevitable in baseball, but when Branch Rickey stood poised to cross that line, he made a conscientious decision with Robinson. "We'll be in a tough position," Rickey said at the time. "We can win only if I can convince the world that I am doing this because [Robinson is] a great ballplayer, a fine gentleman." Robinson was not the most talented of the Negro League players that Rickey could have picked, but he possessed the intangibles that made him the perfect choice. Robinson understood exactly what was at stake and his role in making it work. He could strike out at the indignities sure to come his way, or turn the other cheek, which he did. To do so required tremendous character and integrity.



Remember also that Robinson was well educated. He dropped out of UCLA just short of graduation because of financial difficulties, but had a life-long thirst for education, for bettering his mind, and his people. In the Army, he took a noble stand against segregation and was court martialed, but later vindicated.

And, as the first Negro in the big leagues, he endured racial hatred and bigotry that would be unimaginable today. But he exhibited extraordinary grace and dignity that made him not only a pioneer in the game of baseball, but a catalyst to social and cultural changes. After he retired from the game, Robinson said, "The way I figured it, I was even with baseball and baseball with me. The game had done much for me, and I had done much for it."

Will Rodriguez, Sosa and Ramirez be able to say the same thing? What about future Dominican stars? Of the 250 plus players who have tested positive for steroid use since Major League

Baseball banned their use, half are Dominicans. Unless baseball does something to stem their use, particularly by Dominicans, educate them on the dangers as part of the consequences of using them; there will continue to be a blight on the game that could haunt baseball well beyond the careers of players like Sosa.

The DRSEA, as part of its curriculum, includes social responsibility and integrity in its goals for students. Education is part of a process where people can develop character and integrity and learn to exercise better judgment. Cheating in any form diminishes the game of baseball, which should be held to high standards, and those standards begin with the people who play the game.

***Desde La Boca De Las Mujeres (Out Of The Mouth Of Babes)*** – I have to admit that I am a notorious girl watcher, and my skills were finely tuned in New York City where its international status allowed me to see women from all over the world. I have come to believe that Dominican women stand out as some of the most beautiful in the world, with a unique grace, style and charm that enhances their physical loveliness. I love nothing better than to sit on a park bench in Santo Domingo, kick back with a favorite cigar, and watch the women walk by. But please understand that I am not a leer-and-jeer, no stares or cat calls here; just quiet respect and admiration for beautiful women.

But a lot of women here don't get the same treatment and, in fact, many are faced with what I can only call extreme sexual harassment when they walk down a street. Hoots and hollers are often followed by commentary about female anatomy and what some men would do with it if they had the opportunity; polite sexual innuendo it is not. Women's responses vary from indignation to indifference to, unfortunately, encouragement.

I have chastised some of the men I know for this practice, telling them they probably would be arrested for such behavior in the United States, to which they generally reply, "Good thing we are not in the United States."

But two recent incidents, both which took place in my favorite cigar shop, give me hope that at least some men will start using their brains when it comes to thinking about women.

The first one took place when a very attractive woman entered the shop and my friend who works there gave me a wink as he engaged the woman in Spanish, then spoke to me in English in admiration of her physical attributes. He did this a couple of times before the woman said, in perfect English, "I hope you know I understand every word you are saying." Jaws dropped, of course, but it was a lesson learned.

Another common practice of the men in the cigar shop was to run to the door every time a pretty woman passed and make suggestive comments, often shouting louder and louder as they got further and further away. One day a woman came in and pulled the owner aside, saying she had witnessed this on numerous occasions, and was embarrassed – for them. She pointed out that it was bad for business, as potential cigar buyers had also seen the behavior.

Since that day, the men in the store have toned it way down. There is no more running to the door; the commentary is much more subdued. Women have a way of putting men in their place.

***El Rey Esta Muerto (The King Is Dead)*** – The news was so surreal I had to call someone and ask, "Did you hear that Michael Jackson died?" Even in the age of CNN and Internet, there is still sense of disconnect living in the Dominican Republic, as if I may have missed something. But the news of Michael Jackson's death was like a blitz; e-mails started

popping up within minutes, all of them sharing the disbelief that the King of Pop was gone at age 50.

My immediate memories were of the young boy fronting for the Jackson Five; popularizing easy to remember tunes such as *ABC*, *I Want You Back*, *I'll Be There*, *The Love You Save*. Recalling that the ballad *Ben* was about a rat. That *Thriller* thrilled. Jackson was an iconic legend who created some of the most memorable music of all time.

He was also a strange bird, to say the least, and his behavior in his last years unfortunately will be remembered as well. I can't help but believe that someone who had such fame for such a long time, and from such an early age, missed something in growing up normal and that manifested itself. I think he was a tortured soul, never completely fitting into the real world, lost in a masquerade.

The news ways have been filled with tributes, rumors, speculations, and postulations about the manchild that was Michael Jackson. I prefer to remember him as the little boy with the fantastic voice and electrifying personality who gave the world so much of his talent. Never can say goodbye, Michael.



***El Trece Es Mi Numero De Suerte (Thirteen Is My Lucky Number)*** – On July 13, I will celebrate another anniversary of my birth, and yes, I was born on a Friday. I remember it was a hot, stormy day.

It is sure to be hot this July 13 as the Dominican Republic is experiencing a heat wave, but I will take it all in stride, even though my birthday in recent years has been bittersweet at best. My mother passed away seven years ago on July 12, so I can't help but remember the anniversary of her death when the anniversary of my birth comes around.

When she died, we had already planned a small birthday party for me and we went ahead with those plans as we knew my mom would have wanted us to remember her by celebrating life. We took a picture in the backyard that day of me, my father, my brother and two nephews; the Farrell men, we called it.

My friends here in the Dominican Republic are planning a small party for me, a “Dominican party,” they say, and I am looking forward to it. Birthdays are big here, to be enjoyed with gusto – good food, good music and good friends. As always, I feel blessed.

For those of you who I know are planning on sending expensive gifts, I kindly ask you to refrain. A small donation to the DRSEA will suffice.

***América La Hermosa (America The Beautiful)*** – I have come to be identified by some here as simply “*Americano*,” and it reflects the fact that I have never felt as American in my life; living in a foreign country does that. But it is an increasingly good feeling as I look back on the past year of my life, and the past year of America’s life. We both have undergone some significant changes for the better.

America’s changes are most notable in its new president, the first African American to hold the office, and it makes me so proud; it signifies that the American Dream can be realized by anyone who believes that all men – and women – are created equally to pursue life, liberty and happiness.

I have consistently been called a dreamer with regards to creating the DRSEA, that I am too idealistic in my vision. America was built on idealism and continues its quest for prosperity for all its people. That American Dream includes the desire for one's children to grow up and receive an education and its consequent career opportunities. Should the people of the Dominican Republic expect less? I think not.



**Happy Birthday, America!**

*“The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.”*

– Historian James Truslow Adams

### ***Otras Noticias De Interés (Other News of Interest)***

***Martinez And Wife Pitching For Dominican Republic*** – In a unique partnership with Major League Baseball, USAID and Esperanza International through the umbrella organization called Dominican Development Alliance (MLB-DDA), Pedro Martinez and his wife, Carolina Cruz de Martinez, recently inaugurated their project, “***Hay Poder En Aprender***” (There Is Power in Learning) in their hometown community of Manoguayabo in western Santo Domingo.

The project seeks to empower 200 adolescents through a combination of vocational training and educational programs. The program is designed for its participants to recover their self-esteem and dignity, discover their talents, and become productive citizens for their community and country. “*Hay Poder en Aprender*” is aimed at adolescents who are exposed to difficult environments but have great potential.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by over 150 guests, including Roland Bullen of the United States Embassy and John Seibel from the Major League Baseball office in the Dominican

Republic. During the inauguration, Bullen and Seibel said "*Hay Poder en Aprender*" is the first of many projects in which baseball will be giving back to Dominican communities.

The MLB-DDA was founded in November 2008 to tap the potential combined resources of baseball in community-outreach programs in the Dominican Republic. USAID provides financial support through a matching grant fund, and Major League Baseball provides office and staff support. Six community development organizations – Esperanza, Plan, World Vision, Save the Children, IDDI and Batey Relief Alliance – provide technical assistance and project management abilities.

*We're Having A Heat Wave* – The Weather Department (ONAMET) is forecasting a heat wave for the Dominican Republic, with few rains expected. Miguel Campusano of ONAMET warned that the hot weather would continue through September and said that in some areas temperatures are exceeding 100 degrees.

*Charles S. Farrell*

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