



DRSEA INFORMER

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Confrontación Al Medio Dia En Santo Domingo (High Noon In Santo Domingo) – Remember those great Westerns where the townspeople bring in a hired gun – even pinning a badge to his chest – to clean up their lawless society?

Sandy Alderson, baseball's new sheriff in the Dominican Republic, has taken recent steps to address the corruption that has undermined the integrity of the game, instituting new policies including the fingerprinting of prospects as young as 15.



The fingerprinting of prospects was first advocated in the **DRSEA INFORMER** last August and I wondered then if anyone would listen. Apparently someone has, with Alderson admitting that age and identity fraud continue to be major problems in the Dominican Republic and that fingerprinting technology can make a difference in establishing true identities. In the past year, baseball voided some \$15 million in signing bonuses after age and identity fraud were discovered.

The August **INFORMER** suggesting fingerprinting as an identification mechanism also pointed out that there are quality scanning machines available and those machines will now be installed at all team facilities in the Dominican Republic and will be used to track unsigned prospects as they showcase their talents prior to signing at age 16.

There have also been increasing incidents of performance enhancing drug use among Dominican prospects and Alderson said that drug testing will now be part of a wider process that will include background checks players must consent to in order to be signed by teams. There will also be a series of drug education workshops for prospects.

The top 50 prospects in the country will be subject to the new rules this year; all Dominican players will be incorporated next year.

Previously, Alderson, who was hired by baseball Commissioner Bud Selig to police Dominican baseball, expanded baseball's Scouting Bureau to cover all of Latin America, enabling evaluators to provide scouting reports on players currently not subject to the draft. This has led many to

speculate that enhancing the responsibilities of the Scouting Bureau is a prelude to an international draft.

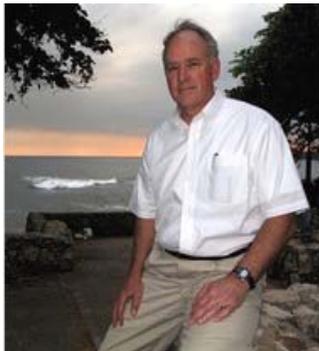
That fear sparked protests at a meeting Alderson held with team representatives, protests by *buscones*, prospective players and others concerned that the reform movement will destroy the current system. At one point *buscones*, the independent scouts who find prospects for teams, refused to show their players to the Scouting Bureau; Major League Baseball retaliated by refusing to allow a prospect league game to be played at a team facility.

But, in a breakthrough development, the Dominican government reportedly has proposed licensing *buscones*, a move that would presumably regulate their actions and address some of the corruption associated with them.

Reliable sources tell me that while most people in baseball embrace the need for reform, Alderson is still viewed as an outsider coming to a foreign country to force and enforce change, something many are not comfortable with. "On the surface, this looks like another attempt at American Imperialism," one insider told me. "He has to be careful not to build resentment that he will never be able to overcome."

Already, there is talk that if an international draft is implemented, the Dominican Republic might refuse to cooperate; I find that unlikely, given how life changing even a small signing bonus can be in this country.

Alderson has gone out of his way to try to convince people in the Dominican Republic that his mission is a peaceful one and that he wants to preserve the institution of baseball here while eliminating problems. But he has already admitted that the problems he has to address are far more complicated and complex than he imagined when he accepted the job of reform cop.



Sandy Alderson



Gary Cooper

He has said publicly and privately that he does not want to institute an international draft, but has been dangling that potential like the sword of Damocles, stating that if current problems can't be addressed, the more likely a draft. The value of the sword, of course, is not that it falls, but that it hangs – and what is accomplished while it remains suspended.

Alderson has also told people that while he understands the value of education, providing a well-rounded education to prospects is not one of his priorities. The gunslinger is shooting blanks here.

If Alderson's goal is as he says – to enhance the overall reputation of baseball in the Dominican Republic – than he also has to take into account both national interest and social responsibility. He is on record as saying, "Major League Baseball is committed to collaborating with all of the appropriate parties to educate young players and expand the resources available to them as they pursue professional careers."

Baseball spends \$100 million a year in the Dominican Republic, but 95 percent of prospects will never have successful pro careers. With that sort of collateral damage, there needs to be more responsibility for those who don't make it, understanding that the overwhelming drive to succeed in baseball is part of the reason for age and identity fraud, for the use of steroids, all of which impact the integrity of baseball which gets so much of its talent from the Dominican Republic.

Providing extensive education – either academic or vocational – would not only be in the best interest of the thousands of prospects being developed in the Dominican Republic, it would also be in the best interest of baseball, which is desperately trying to implement reform while maintaining a positive reputation.

If drug education is seen in the best interest of both baseball and Dominican prospects, why not expand educational opportunities, expand the resources available to them when the statistical inevitability is there will be no professional career for most? Comprehensive education should also be one of Alderson's goals if he is truly about positive reform.

Desplantando Arizona (Razing Arizona) – With almost a third of its membership born outside the United States, the Major League Baseball Players Association has taken a swing at Arizona's new immigration law, calling for an immediate repeal or modification. The new law, which goes into effect in midsummer, makes it a crime for illegal immigrants to be in the state and gives police the power to check individuals for proof of legal status to be in the United States. Critics claim the new law will lead to racial profiling; Michael Weiner, head of the players association, said the Arizona statute "could have a negative impact on hundreds of major league players."

According to Weiner, the new law could affect the 15 Major League Baseball teams that conduct spring training in Arizona as well as all teams who come to play the Arizona Diamondbacks. "All of these players, as well as their families, could be adversely affected, even though their presence in the United States is legal," Weiner said. "Each of them must be ready to prove, at any time, his identity and the legality of his being in Arizona."



Michael Weiner

The Arizona law was obviously implemented to stem the tide of illegal Mexican immigrants, but many players fear the worse; that enforcing the law will make all Latinos suspect. Many teams typically take foreign players' visas for safekeeping, leaving players without the documentation Arizona now requires. "It doesn't make sense to carry those papers all the time," one Dominican player said, "because of the fear of losing them. And what happens if you just forget to carry them on a trip to the grocery store? Now you have a young kid subject to arrest and possibly spending the night in jail. It doesn't make any sense. It is just plain racist."

Many are now calling for Major League Baseball to pull the 2011 All-Star Game out of Arizona in protest of the law; some sports organizations did boycott the state when it refused to adopt the Martin Luther King holiday, and many organizations already have protested the new law by pulling conventions and other events out of Arizona.

Major League Baseball has a lot at stake in this game and can wield a huge bat in striking against this flawed law by yanking the All-Star Game. While the U.S. and its 50 states have every right to protect against illegal aliens within their borders, the odds that Arizona's law will target Latinos is a bet that would bankrupt Las Vegas. Waiting until some young prospect from the Dominican Republic is wrongly jailed will be too late.

No Puedo Regresar A Casa (You Can't Go Home Again) – I recently returned to the United States after a seven month absence and while the trip was good, it was distinctly different from other trips I have made there in the 18 months I have lived in the Dominican Republic.

I was anxious before the trip but didn't really know why. Previously there had been great anticipation about seeing friends and old familiar places, but this time I didn't feel that way. I actually considered canceling the trip, but could ultimately find no logical reason to do so.

But when I saw the skyline of New York City from the plane, a great realization hit me; I was essentially flying into a foreign country. I was not going home, I was going for a visit. And I was okay with that new comprehension.

I spent a lot of time eating foods I love in the U.S. like fried chicken, cheeseburgers, bagels, chili, nachos, and ice cream. Oh, most are available in the Dominican Republic, but for some reason, never taste the same, or as good.

I was amazed at how rapidly some things have changed. Several stores and restaurants I wanted to visit were closed, to my immense dismay. I even learned of a few deaths that saddened me. But there was still joy in seeing my friends again, even though I am in contact with most of them frequently by e-mail or phone. There is still nothing like seeing them face to face.

One of the reasons I chose to return to the U.S. when I did was to attend Commencement at my alma mater, Lincoln University, though doing so was bittersweet. I love Lincoln. I grew up there, went to college there, and returned frequently over the years, so I always get a special feeling on the campus. But it is also the school where my father attended, where both my parents taught, so being there without them is emotional.



So many of the alumni who returned for Commencement had their lives touched by my parents and they reminded me as much. One guy walked up to me, admitting that he saw me across the room and remarked to others how much I looked like Dr. Farrell. "Hey, he should," the man said he was told. "That's his son."

Another friend had hundreds of photos from his Lincoln years on a computer and there among his collection were photos of my mother, which took me way back. She looked so young; it was like I was looking at another lifetime, and in many ways I was.

Not a day goes by when I don't think about my parents, particularly my father, who I share the bond of Lincoln men. I often wonder if they would be proud of my efforts in the Dominican Republic and have to conclude that they would because I am following my dream, which is what they always told me to do.

I also went to Washington, DC, in particular to visit one of my best friends who had had serious surgery. He is doing well, but I have reached an age where mortality among my peers is increasingly frequent, so his well being was important to me, and his friendship increasingly essential to my soul. I also got to catch up with other friends, including one whose daughter was preparing to come to the Dominican Republic for a Spanish immersion program. Hopefully I was able to provide some useful advise.

As nice a time as I had, I was glad to return to the Dominican Republic, return home, resume this adventure, pursue my dream of creating the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy. My roots are in the U.S., but my life is here now and I am loving every minute. God is good.

Perdiendo Lena (Losing Lena) – My heart skipped a beat when I learned of the passing of Lena Horne at age 92. I have been in love with Lena since I can remember. She was not only a classic black beauty, a terrific singer, a great actress; she was also a trailblazer who stood tall in her belief of racial equality.

She starred in numerous movie musicals such as “*Ziegfeld Follies*,” “*The Duke Is Tops*,” “*Cabin in the Sky*,” “*The Wiz*” and most notably “*Stormy Weather*,” in which she sang the title song that will always remain my favorite Lena tune. I get goose bumps every time I hear her rendition.

She was one of the first black stars in Hollywood but didn’t bow to stereotypes or second-class treatment for herself or others, which may have hurt her career. She was outspoken about the treatment of black soldiers during World War II. When the Army refused to allow integrated audiences, she performed for a mixed audience of black U.S. soldiers and white German POWs.



While known for tearing down barriers in Hollywood, she was also a star on Broadway with the 1934 musical “*Dance With Your Gods*,” 1957’s “*Jamaica*,” and the Tony Award winning tour de force “*Lena Horne: The Lady And Her Music*,” which also garnered two Grammy Awards in 1982.

Though she was reclusive in her later years, I fondly remember a 1985 appearance on “*The Cosby Show*” that captured her legendary status as a singer, actress and icon all in one. “I’m me, and I’m like nobody else,” she once said in an interview.

There is no doubt she was the one and only Lena Horne. Let me go listen to “*Stormy Weather*” one more time.

Charles S. Farrell

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