



DRSEA INFORMER

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Perez To Be Honored – Rafael Perez, Director, Dominican Office Operations for Major League Baseball, has been selected by the DRSEA to receive our ***“Making A Difference In The Dominican Republic”*** Award for his outstanding and sustained commitment to the advancement of Dominicans and the Dominican Republic, particularly in the area of education. It will be presented to him June 27 in New York City

Perez was the first head of the MLB’s office in the Dominican Republic when it opened in 2000, and he returned to the position in 2011.



Rafael Perez

After graduating from high school in the Dominican Republic, Perez went to Chipola Junior College in Marianna, FL, transferring in 1987 to the University of South Alabama where he finished his college baseball career while obtaining a degree in accounting. He then played for two seasons in the Pittsburgh Pirates organization.

After a stint with an international software company, Perez became a consultant with the Toronto Blue Jays, advising players on transitioning to playing baseball in the United States. In 2000, he took over Major League Baseball’s new office in the Dominican Republic. While there, he established standards for all MLB academies in the country. His oversight of Major League Baseball operations in the Dominican Republic ended when he left for the New York Mets in 2005, despite an offer to remain in Santo Domingo.

With the Mets, Perez was Director of International Relations, responsible for the team's operations in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela, coordinating the Winter Leagues, and developing an international education program as well as special international projects.

The return of Perez to head MLB's Dominican office signaled a new, tougher attitude towards reform in the Dominican Republic. When he originally headed MLB's office in the Dominican Republic, he fought to curb the influence of *buscones*, and sought to address age and identity fraud and the use of steroids, problems that have plagued Dominican baseball.

Perez also took on the task of addressing the lack of education among prospects and during his current tenure, Major League Baseball adopted a program where released players can continue their education.

Under Perez' leadership, MLB recently unveiled a program designed to improve reading, writing, critical thinking and English skills among prospects; five teams signed up for the 20-week pilot program that started in January.



Rafael Perez at DRSEA reading program

I have always liked and admired Perez because he has been an advocate for educating young baseball players and MLB has followed his lead. As a Dominican who came through the system, he has an intimate knowledge of its complexities and the odds and obstacles that face these kids. He knows that ultimately it is education, not baseball, that will prepare them for life.

“I am blessed to do something I love and have passion for,” Perez said. “Even though it is nice to be recognized for the work I do, it is not the reason I do it. I believe that MLB can make a difference on and off the field. I have no doubt that we can make a big difference in our industry, but most important in the life of kids.”

Perez recently took time to visit the DRSEA class in San Pedro de Macoris and he was very blunt in describing the odds young Dominicans face in becoming baseball players, something that is not often provided. He explained that out of 100 top prospects, fewer than five have even a chance of success.

He added, however, that an educated baseball player has a better chance of success, explaining that the game is 80 percent physical and 20 percent mental, so the ability to engage critical thinking increases the odds of success.



Rafael Perez makes a point to DRSEA students

DRSEA To Hold Two Fundraisers – In addition to our fourth annual ***Making A Difference In The Dominican Republic*** event in New York City on June 27 at the 809 Lounge, 112 Dyckman St., the DRSEA is also holding a fundraiser in the Dominican Republic - ***Jazz Under The Stars With The Legends Of Baseball***, on June 6 at 7:30 p.m. at The Galleries en Las Terrazas del Mesón de la Cava, Avenida Mirador Sur No.1, Santo Domingo.

As in previous years at the New York event, we will honor an individual or organization that has demonstrated an outstanding and sustained commitment to the advancement of Dominicans and the Dominican Republic, particularly in the area of the advancement of education and other youth issues. This year's recipient is Rafael Perez, head of Major League Baseball's Dominican Republic office (see above).

Previous award recipients include retired Major League Baseball executive Lou Melendez, and the Pittsburgh Pirates, the only MLB team with a mandatory comprehensive education program for its Dominican baseball prospects.

The Santo Domingo event is shaping up to be a memorable evening with music under the stars with the renowned group Eric Litman & the Wavelengths, at a remarkable site that is a natural acoustical marvel that has to be seen to be believed. Joining us will be some of the true legends of Dominican baseball; it is a night you should make plans to attend. Cigars will be smoked; rum will be sipped!



Las Terrazas del Mesón de la Cava

See you in New York or Santo Domingo – or better yet BOTH! For more information on the events, check out our website www.drsea.org.

Dominicans Again Top Foreign Born Players – As usual, Dominicans formed the largest percentage of Major League baseball players born outside the United States, but the total percentage of foreign born players went down slightly for the second straight season.



The commissioner's office reported that 82 Dominicans were among 853 total players on opening day rosters and inactive lists, with a total of 223 players born outside the 50 states. At 26.1 percent, the share is down from 28.2 percent last year and 28.4 percent in 2012.

The number of Dominicans was down from an all-time high of 99 in 2007. Players this season come from 16 countries and territories, the most since 2008.

Venezuela followed the Dominican Republic with 59, followed by Cuba, which set a high with 19 — four more than its previous mark set last year.

Puerto Rico had 11, followed by Canada (10), Japan and Mexico (nine), Curacao (five), Colombia and Panama (four), Nicaragua (three) and Australia and South Korea (two).

Boston's Xander Bogaerts became the first player from Aruba on an opening-day roster since St. Louis' Sidney Ponson in 2007. Cleveland's Yan Gomes is the first Brazilian on an opening-day roster.

Texas has the most players born outside the 50 states with 15, trailed by San Francisco (13), Seattle (11) and the Chicago Cubs and Milwaukee (10 each).

Figures include active rosters, 101 players on the disabled list and two on the restricted list.

The commissioner's office also reported that the percentage of foreign-born minor leaguers was 47.8, up from 47.3 last year.

Charles S. Farrell

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