



La Prensa del Béisbol Latino

A publication of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) Latin American committee

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Summer 2005

SABR's Latin American committee rolls on into another year

by Anthony Salazar

The recent meeting of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR)'s Latin American committee convened in Toronto, Ontario (Canada) this past month.

The Latin American committee reaffirmed its contribution to the organization this year, and recognized that there is much to be done in terms of research in our area.

There are 24 areas of research within SABR, and as many areas that the Latino committee can contribute to, such as Asians in Baseball committee, Business of Baseball committee, Minor League, Women in Baseball, and so forth. There's so much to contribute, and so much to be done.

With that, the committee will undertake a long-term project to create a Latino baseball anthology covering various aspects of Latino baseball history. Thus far, over 20 authors are signed up to write articles. According to SABR's publication director, the committee can expect to see the anthology release to SABR's

membership sometime in 2008.

The committee's website will be developed and this year to complement our YahooGroup! newsgroup. The website will include news and information on Latinos in baseball. Look for the site to come online sometime this year.

Paying homage to our host city, the committee's co-vice chair Edwin Fernandez presented a his-

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MLB to sponsor All-time Latino baseball team

by Anthony Salazar

The Office of Major League Baseball and corporate sponsor Chevrolet have announced a balloting program honoring the rich and illustrious history and tradition of Latinos in baseball.

The program features 60 Latino players from seven Latin American countries and territories selected by MLB and the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Fans will be able to choose their favorite Latino players by going to MLB.com from August 29 through October 10. Ballots will be available in via English or Spanish online or at participating Chevrolet dealerships. Opportunities to write-in names will be provided as well.

One lucky fan entering the sweepstakes can win a trip for four to Game Four of the World Series where the 12 Latino players selected as the All-Time Latino team will be announced.

Go to MLB.com for more details.

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Latin Champions in the United States

By Tito Rondón

Three professional teams made up of mostly Latin American players have won championships in the United States, one in the Negro National League and two others at the Triple A level of Organized Baseball.

Managed by José María Fernández the 1947 New York Cubans had line-drive hitter Lorenzo "Chiquitín" Cabrera at first base; Horacio "Rabbit" Martínez at second; Silvio García in short and Orestes "Minnie" Miñoso at third.

The outfielders were, left to right, Claro Duany, Fernando Díaz "Bicho" Pedroso and Pedro "Gamo" Pagés, and Cleveland "Chiflán" Clark, with Homero Ariosa as a substitute.

The catchers were Louis "Tommy" Louden and Rafael "Son" Noble, while the pitching staff was headed by lefty Luis Tiant Sr. (10-0), Dave "Impo" Barnhill, Bill Anderson, Pat "Lord" Scantlebury, Lino Donoso and José "Pantalones" Santiago.

All the Latins were Cubans, with the exception of Martínez, from the Dominican Republic; Scantlebury, from Panama, and Santiago, from Puerto Rico. They beat the Cleveland Buckeyes in the Negro World Series.

The next champion was the Cuban Sugar Kings (Havana Sugar Kings in the United States), that beat the Minneapolis Millers (Lu Clinton, Roy Smalley Sr. and Carl Yastrzemski) in the Junior World Series of 1959 (Triple A).

They had Jesse Gonder and Enrique Izquierdo (C), Rogelio "Borrego" Alvarez (1B), Octavio

"Cookie" Rojas and Venezuelan Elio Chacon (2B), Leo Cárdenas (SS), Pompeyo Davalillo (3B) from Venezuela and outfielders Daniel Morejón, Tony "El Haitiano" González, Carlos Paula, Ray Shearer from double A and Larry Novak.

The pitchers were Miguel Cuéllar, Venezuelan Emilio Cueche, Raúl "Salivita" Sánchez, Pedro Carrillo, Ted Wiand, Bob Moorhead (AA), Walter Craddock and closer Luis "Tite" Arroyo from Puerto Rico. Pedro "Preston" Gómez was the manager and Ray Cordeiro the coach.

In 1972 the Junior World Series was played in Hawaii, and included the three Triple A champions. To make it an even number, several AAA Latins were hastily assembled into a team, called the Caribbean All-Stars. The organizers were afraid of financial disaster, so the local team was invited too. It was renamed the Kodak World Baseball Classic.

The pitching of the Latins was strong, with Oscar Zamora, Cisco Carlos, Ramón "Pintácora" de los Santos, Roberto "Pluto" Rodríguez and Ed Bauta, plus catcher George Peña, firstbaseman Ramón "Monchín" Webster and outfielder Pedro García.

A round robin was played to eliminate one team, and Hawaii and the Latins tied for last.

But the All-Stars then won four games in a row, and were the winners of that unique event (which was a financial disaster).

Tito Rondón can be contacted at titorondon2002@yahoo.com.

DID YOU KNOW?

- **Emilio Navarro** was the first Puerto Rican to play in Negro Leagues. He played with Eastern Colored League Cuban Stars (1928-29), and is a member of the Puerto Rican Hall of Fame.
- **Horatio Martinez** appeared in more Negro League East-West All-Star Games than any other Latin player.

BÉISBOL TRIVIA CHALLENGE

1. What Latino Negro Leaguer was known at the “Black Diamond”?

- Cristóbal Torriente
- Perucho Cepeda
- José Méndez
- Luis Tiant Sr

2. In what year did the New York Cubans win the Negro League World Series?

- 1932
- 1947
- 1949
- 1952

3. In 1965, the United States invaded what country to stabilize that government?

- Dominican Republic
- Vietnam
- Cuba
- El Salvador

4. Prior to the Baltimore Orioles trip to Cuba in 1999, what team visited the island in 1977?

- Chicago White Sox
- New York Yankees
- Los Angeles Dodgers
- Houston Astros

5. What retired Latin player just had a bobblehead day?

- Tony Perez
- Juan Marichal
- Edgar Martinez
- Rod Carew

Trivia answers: 1) c; 2) b; 3) a; 4) d; 5) a

RESOURCES TO CHECK OUT

Salud y Béisbol

<http://espanol.geocities.com/saludybeisbol/>

Liga Norte de Sonora

www.liganortedesonora.com.mx

Solo Béisbol

<http://www.solobeisbol.4t.com/>

Hitazos

<http://www.hitazos.com/index.php3>

Member Spotlight: Peter Bjarkman

by Anthony Salazar

NAME: Peter C. Bjarkman

SABR CHAPTER: none

AREAS OF EXPERTISE: Cuban baseball history (especially after the 1959 communist revolution); Latin American baseball (Latin winter leagues); international and Olympic baseball; IBAF Baseball World Cup; Caribbean Series (winter leagues championship); Cuban National Team (1939-2005).

FAVORITE BASEBALL MOMENT: It was the dramatic ninth-inning of the Cuba-Canada semi-final game at the 1999 Pan Am Games in Winnipeg. With Cuba leading 3-1 and ace José Ibar on the mound, the game was interrupted by an ugly on-field intrusion by the same anti-Castro demonstrator who had stormed the field in Baltimore during the Orioles-Cuba game only two months earlier. When order was restored Pedro Lazo raced to the mound from the bullpen and struck out the side to lock up Cuba's 2000 Olympic berth in Sydney.

FAVORITE LATINO PLAYERS: Yulieski Gourriel (20-year-old second baseman for the Cuban national team at the Athens Olympics and the top Cuban prospect in decades); Omar Linares (Cuban League star of the 1980s and 1990s and the best third baseman never to play in the majors—sorry Ray Dandridge!); Osmani Urrutia (current Cuban national team right fielder who won his fifth successive Cuban League batting crown this past season and narrowly missed (at .386) hitting over .400 for the fifth straight year!); Maels Rodríguez (recently defected Cuban League ace pitcher who was clocked over 102 mph at age 19, set the all-time Cuban League strike-out mark in 2001 at age 20, and was the best arm I have ever seen before his career was ended at age 22 by a shoulder injury).

RECENT BOOKS PUBLISHED: “Diamonds Around the Globe: The Encyclopedia of International Baseball” (2004 Sporting News-SABR Baseball Research Award); and “Baseball’s Mysterious Island: The True History of Baseball in Fidel Castro’s Cuba” (forthcoming from McFarland in Spring 2006).

All Caribbean Champions Should Be Recognized

By Tito Rondón

When the Cuban Winter League decided not to import players for the 1960-1961 campaign, the Caribbean Series stopped play.

Since 1949 the champions of Cuba, Panama, Puerto Rico and Venezuela had been playing for the supremacy of the region and of Winter Baseball. It was suspended, to wait until conditions in Cuba returned to normal... They haven't yet.

However, international competition continued, but was unfairly ignored until the "real Caribbean Series" was restored. Finally, it was restarted in 1970 by Puerto Rico, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, although Cuba and Panama were missing. When Mexico was added in 1971, the "magic" number of four participants was achieved once more, meaning that all teams played every day. However, this does not mean that the region did not have official champions in the missing years.

The Interamerican Series was created in 1961 in order to crown a champion, and was played four times. The winners were Industriales de Valencia (Venezuela), in Caracas in 1961; Cangrejeros de Santurce (Puerto Rico) in San Juan in 1962; Chiriquí-Bocas (Panamá) in Panama City

in 1963, and 5 Estrellas (Nicaragua) in 1964 in Managua.

Around that time, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic were trying a united front, even experimenting with an interlocking schedule, and playing a series at the end of the season. However, they were unable to crown a winner.

In 1964 in Santo Domingo Valencia from Venezuela and Licey from the Dominican Republic tied, and in 1965 in Caracas the two Dominican teams tied for first: Aguilas Cibaeñas and Escogido.

In addition, in 1958, the Panamerican Series was played in Managua, and León (Nicaragua) beat Vanytor (Colombia) and the Mazatlán Deer (Mexico) for the championship. However, the participants in this series acknowledged the winners of the Caribbean Series as regional champions.

But Valencia, Santurce, Chiriquí-Bocas and 5 Estrellas were true monarchs of the Caribbean. It is high time this was universally acknowledged.

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tory of Latino Toronto Blue Jays. The club has an impressive history of accomplishments by Latinos, from Rico Carty to Tony Fernandez and Jose Cruz Jr. to Carlos Delgado.

Rounding out the meeting was a lecture by Arturo Marcano Guevara, co-author of "Stealing Lives: The Globalization of Baseball and the Tragic Story of Alexis Quiroz." Marcano presented a lecture on baseball's drug policy as it related to Latino players in Latin America. An interesting proposition as presented by Marcano suggested that while Major League Baseball

lists what supplements players are not allowed to take, but should indicate (in plain English) what supplements players can take. Perhaps baseball can one day take this suggestion under consideration.



Arturo Marcano (left), Anthony Salazar (center) and Eduardo Valero (right).

SABR's Latino committee will continue to provide a valued resource to the organization for the years to come.

La Liga Norte de Sonora

By Jay Berman

It's called the Liga Norte de Sonora, and seven of its 10 teams are in that northwestern Mexican state, but the league, now in its 10th season, operates all the way from Ensenada and Tecate, Baja California, on the west, to Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, on the east.

The league, which began its playoffs in mid-August, includes, alphabetically, the Vaqueros de Agua Prieta, Rojos de Caborca, Mineros de Cananea, Indios Rojos de Ciudad Juarez, Marineros de Ensenada, Ostioneros de Guaymas, Membrilleros de Magdalena, Tiburones de Puerto Peñasco, Misioneros de Sonoyta and Cervancieros de Tecate. Juarez, Ensenada and Tecate joined the league this year.

Priscilla Mungarro, director of public relations for the league, says predecessors to the league had existed for several decades, but that a new phase began in 1996. This has led to expansion to 10 clubs which has in turn resulted in an increase in scouting from the north. Edgar Gonzalez, who pitched with Magdalena in 2000, is in his third season with the Arizona Diamondbacks, and Sergio Lizarraga, also a pitcher, is with Arizona's PCL team in Tucson. Shortstop Ramiro Peña, with Puerto Peñasco last year, is now with the Double A Trenton Thunder (New York Yankees – Eastern League), and at 19, is the youngest player in that league.

This spring at the 37th Annual National Baseball Convention in Mexicali, the Liga Norte de Sonora officially became the third-highest-rated league in the country, following the Mexican League and the winter Liga Mexicana del Pacifico.

Equally important, Mungarro said, the league entered into an agreement with the Mexican League that establishes it as the main farm league for the Mexican League from Yucatan to Tijuana: Agua Prieta has an agreement with Tabasco and Monclova, Caborca with Campeche and Laguna, Cananea with Oaxaca and the

Puebla Pericos, Juarez with Yucatan, Ensenada with Tijuana and Veracruz, Guaymas with Cancun and Aguascalientes, Magdalena with Saltillo, Puerto Peñasco with Monterrey and San Luis, Sonoyta with Mexico and Tecate with the Puebla Tigres.

Mungarro said league officials hope to give ball-players a foundation to compete with the best players of the world, and eventually to execute their own draft agreements with players from the United States, Latin America and other parts of the world. They would also welcome greater participation in the Serie del Caribe, which includes teams from Mexico, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

Like the summer Mexican League and the winter Liga Mexicana del Pacifico, the Liga Norte de Sonora operates a split schedule. The winner of the first half this year was Magdalena, with a 25-11 record. Caborca was the second-half winner, at 21-11.

Eight of 10 teams made the playoffs, with only Puerto Peñasco and Cananea missing out. Ensenada opened at Caborca, Guaymas at Magdalena, Ciudad Juarez at Sonoyta and Tecate at Agua Prieta. Winners of those best-of-seven series would advance to the next round. Last year's winner was Caborca.

For the first year, the league has its own Web site, www.liganortedesonora.com.mx. Mungarro called the site the most important contact with the outside. It is updated daily with news from the league, the two other primary Mexican leagues and from Major League Baseball. After less than a month, the site had registered more than 1,300 visitors.

League headquarters are at Avenida Niños Heroes No. 213-b, Col. Centro, Magdalena, Sonora. The telephone number from the United States is 011-52 (632) 322-2705.

Recent Latino Invasion of Japanese Besuboro

By Peter Bjarkman

Arguably the biggest story on major league diamonds during the past two-plus decades has been the steady “Latinizing” of our one-time “American” national pastime. All-Star Game rosters and annual post-season award lists are now regularly jammed with the likes of Albert Pujols, Vlad Guerrero, David Ortiz, Miguel Tejada, Johan Santana, and Bobby Abreu. Pujols and company, in the first years of the new century, have donned a mantle worn in the eighties and nineties by Juan González, Pedro Martínez, Pudge Rodríguez, Robbie Alomar and Sammy Sosa. Baseball’s relentless Latin invasion has even of late morphed into a full-fledged internationalization of the “American” game with the noisy arrival on the scene of a host of top-flight Japanese League refugees, headlined by flame-throwing Hideo Nomo and Kazuhiro Sasaki, fence-busting Hideki Matsui, and incomparable batting magician Ichiro Suzuki. Major league baseball imperialism has never been more fully in evidence than with the recent draining of Japan’s top stars to fill out sagging big league rosters.

But baseball’s trade winds have never blown only in a single direction. Nor has the tide of “foreign” player talent flooded only to the west and north. North American talent has found the doors to winter league action shut tightly on the island of Cuba ever since the 1959 communist revolution. Few US stars—or even Caribbean natives for that matter—find winter league play in any Caribbean port of call to be an attractive option in light of today’s big-dollar MLB contracts. Since the early 1960s, however, a small if significant handful of big league rejects and washouts have nonetheless extended their careers in Japan, and such North American re-treads as Randy Bass, Leron Lee, Bob Horner, Cecil Fielder, Daryl Spencer, Greg “Boomer” Wells, and Don Blasingame have left small if indelible legacies in the Japanese record books over the years. Less noted by the North American press has been the considerable impact

during the past three campaigns of a handful of potent Latin sluggers fronted by Dominicans Alex Ramírez and José Fernández and Venezuelan Alex Cabrera who have been heavily impacting Japanese pennant races in both Central and Pacific circuits while overturning some of *besuboro*’s most prestigious slugging marks previously owned by such native icons as Sadaharu Oh and Katsuya Nomura.

Perhaps the most intriguing story involving migration of Latino players to Japan’s professional game involves a surprising late-2001 accord between Japanese League officials and Cuba’s Fidel Castro, an arrangement that for the first time formally linked the world’s two most passionate baseball-playing nations. Making their way to Japan in July 2002 were four of Cuba’s biggest stars: all-world third baseman and Cuban League career batting average pacesetter Omar Linares, home run king Orestes Kindelán, all-time Cuban League base-hits leader Antonio Pacheco, and agile shortstop Germán Mesa, the latter spurring frequent comparisons with Ozzie Smith. All-four stars were at the end of brilliant international careers and were obviously being moved to Japan to clear room for stellar young talent on a Cuban national team roster in transition. Linares alone joined the pro Japanese circuit as a member of the Central League Chunichi Dragons. The remaining trio was ticketed to serve as player-coaches in the top-level semi-pro industrial league and would thus enjoy only a short tenure in the Land of the Rising Sun. Pacheco and Kindelán were back on their native island by fall 2004 as manager and hitting coach for their former Cuban League club in Santiago de Cuba.

Linares, Pacheco and crew were not the first Latino headliners in Tokyo, nor even the first of their Cuban countrymen to crack the closed world of Japanese baseball. That honor fell to

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Yankees, Pirates and Marlins washout first sacker Orestes Destrade, born in Santiago de Cuba and raised in Miami. Lefty-swinging Destrade starred as a designated hitter with the Seibu Lions across five seasons in the late 80s and early 90s, and broken into the Pacific League circuit with a considerable bang during 1989 by stroking 32 round trippers in only 83 league games. Destrade reigned as Pacific League home run champ for three straight seasons (1990-1992) and also won RBI crowns in the first pair of years. Before Cabrera and Ramírez in more recent campaigns, Destrade was the hottest Latino bat ever to appear on the Japanese circuit.

Undeniably the biggest chapter so far in the developing saga of Latin stars in Japan has been that currently being written by sluggers Cabrera, Ramírez and Fernández. Venezuelan first sacker Alex Cabrera earned Pacific League MVP honors in 2002 when he tied the 1964 Japanese single-season home run mark of 55 set by native legend Sadaharu Oh and later equaled by American Tuffy Rhodes (2001). Potent Dominican third baseman José Fernández (.285-33-94) teamed with Cabrera (.280-25-62) to provide Seibu with one of the heaviest hitting Pacific League lineups of 2004. (Cabrera was limited to only 64 games while recovering from a broken arm suffered in spring training.) Yakult Swallows left fielder Alex Ramírez (a Dominican former Indians and Pirates minor leaguer) continued the Latino slugging onslaught with 40 circuit blasts (tying for the Central League title) and a league-best 124

ribbies. Adding to the onslaught, Panamanian outfielder Fernando Seguignol (Nippon Ham Fighters) stroked 44 homers to tie for the Pacific League long-ball crown.

Even Americans of Hispanic decent have added to Japan's new Latino flavoring. Recent league standouts have been ex-Padres infielder George Arias (Arizona native) who bashed 38 homers and 107 RBI in 2003 for the champion Hanshin Tigers, and Linares's Chunichi teammate Alex Ochoa (Miami native) who posted impressive offensive numbers (.294-21-89) for the Central League leaders in 2004.

Notably absent so far have been any headliner Latin pitchers on the Japanese League scene. Dominican Domingo Guzmán has been the only notable Latino *gaijin* to date, posting a 10-5 record in the starting rotation for last season's Central League champion Chunichi Dragons. The explanation may lie in the fact that strong young Dominican and Venezuelan and Mexican arms are far too hot a commodity in the big leagues to make Japan an attractive alternative for promising Latino hurlers. But a José Contreras, El Duque Hernández or Pedro Martínez toiling for the Yakult Swallows or Nippon Ham Fighters may not lie too far down the road.

Peter C. Bjarkman is the author of the recent Diamonds Around the Globe: The Encyclopedia of International Baseball and has traveled the Cuban baseball scene extensively for the past decade.

UPCOMING LATINO-RELATED BASEBALL PROMOTIONS

- Arizona Diamondbacks (9/17):** Hispanic Heritage Celebration
- Florida Marlins (9/16-18):** Hispanic Heritage Weekend
- Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim (9/16):** Hispanic Heritage Poster Night
- Minnesota Twins (9/28):** Hispanic Heritage Night
- San Francisco Giants (9/12):** Latino Fellowship Night
- Seattle Mariners (9/13):** Salute to Latin American Baseball Night — Hispanic Heroes Trading Cards



A Note from the Editor

by Anthony Salazar

Within recent weeks there has been much news regarding Latinos in baseball, some good, some not-so-good.

The Rafael Palmeiro steroids scandal has caused much concern for Latino fans. Here we have a guy who has, up to now, been a likeable role model for young Latinos. This past spring, when called before Congress to testify under oath about his knowledge of steroids, he told legislators that he does not use the banned substance. Several months later, we find out that steroids somehow entered his system. The reputation of this future Hall-of-Famer will be forever tainted until we find out the truth. Did he, or didn't he? It's an unfortunate situation for all concerned. The truth, we are told, has yet to surface. Stay tuned.

Oh, and good news? How about that Felix Hernandez! The kid's got something there! Long live 'King' Felix!

Special thanks are extended to contributors, Peter Bjarkman, Jay Berman and Tito Rondón. La Prensa del Béisbol Latino enters its second year of providing great news and information. We look forward to providing our readers with greater coverage of Latinos in baseball. If you haven't already joined our newsgroup, please do so today!

Latin American Baseball Committee

Eduardo Valero	Chair
Edwin Fernandez	Co-Vice Chair
Anthony Salazar	Co-Vice Chair, Editor

La Prensa del Béisbol Latino is a newsletter published quarterly by the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR). Inquiries and submissions should be directed to Anthony Salazar at salazar8017@yahoo.com.

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