

# La Prensa del Béisbol Latino

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

Vol. 7 No. 1

Summer 2014

## Annual report grades MLB with “A”; Latino ballplayers show slight increase

by Anthony Salazar

With a score of 91.2 points, Major League Baseball (MLB) earned an “A” grade on its racial hiring practices, while Latino ballplayer numbers saw a small bump to 28.4 percent, up from 28.2 percent in 2013, this according to the annual Racial and Gender Report Card from the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) at the University of Central Florida.

The report looks at baseball’s hiring practices among MLB teams, as well as its central administrative offices, in terms of racial and gender components. While the sport earned an “A” in its racial hiring practices, baseball scored a “C+” in its gender hiring, giving MLB an overall grade of “B/B+” with 84.4 points.

The report also indicates that baseball rosters are comprised of 39.1 percent players of color, which also includes two percent Asians (down from 2.2 percent last year) and 8.2 percent African Americans (down from 8.3 percent in 2013). Baseball’s lack of African Americans has been a source of frustration for the sport, as well as others studying the problem. This, in spite of baseball’s efforts in the Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) program, and MLB’s Urban Youth Academy.

Further, the Report Card looked in-depth at MLB’s central office noting that of the 527 employees there, only 12.9 percent are Latino; three percent

Asian; and 9.3 percent African American. Additional breakdowns include owners, general managers, managers and coaches, as well as team vice presidents and senior team administrators.

*See REPORT CARD, page 12*

## New Cuban Regulations Block Any Détente with Big League Baseball

by Peter Bjarkman

My return recently from a weeklong sojourn in Havana was met with a firestorm of media requests for my opinions on a breaking news item apparently suggesting sharp reversals in Cuba’s long-standing Cold War with North American professional baseball. As NPR and other stateside outlets misreported the story, Cuba’s sports ministry had suddenly and unexpectedly announced that their best ballplayers would now be free to negotiate contracts abroad and thus that we were about to witness an immediate and long-awaited floodtide of top Cuban talent into the clutches of major league baseball clubs.

Like so much that involves Cuba-USA relations, the true motivations behind the Cuban government’s announcement went unnoticed; the facts of the INDER press release were both distorted and misapprehended, and worst still, fantasies about a new explosion of Cuban big league talent were fueled by a

*See CUBA, page 8*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**1**

Cuban Détente

**3**

1st Cuban card?

**6**

Book reviews

**13**

Latino baseball lists (2013)

**16**

Hello again!

## Latino Identity and Pioneers

By Edwin Perez, Orlando Cepeda Chapter

MORE THAN 1,700 LATINO PLAYERS HAD DONE A MAJOR LEAGUE UNIFORM SINCE THE CREATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL SPORT . THEIR BIRTH ORIGINS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN SIXTEEN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA.

THE MOST USED INSTRUMENT IN FINDING OUT THEIR NATIONALITY IS LOOKING FOR THEIR BIRTHPLACES. BUT THERE ARE MANY OTHER LEGAL CONCEPTS IN WHICH WE CAN ESTABLISH NATIONALITY.

SPORTS MEDIA , WRITERS , AND BASEBALL FOLLOWERS CREATE THEIR OWN NATIONALITY LIST TO DISTINGUISH PLAYERS FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER . THIS HAPPENS NOT ONLY IN THE USA , BUT IN ALL OF OUR LATINAMERICA. AND, OF COURSE, THESE LISTS DIFFER FROM ONE CREATOR TO ANOTHER. SOME LIST CREATORS WILL STATE THAT OTHER LISTS OFFER TOO MANY PLAYERS FOR A GIVEN COUNTRY. OR, ON THE CONTRARY, NOT EVERYBODY IS LISTED. IN RESEARCHING FOR MY OWN BOOK ON LATINOS I WENT OVER DOZENS OF BOOKS , NEWSPAPERS MAGAZINES , AND ELECTRONIC SITES . FOUND OUT TOO MANY DISCREPANCIES. SO, WANDERING WHY THERE WERE SO MANY, I TRIED TO CREATE MY OWN LISTS IN THE MOST COMPLETE WAY I COULD FIGURE OUT.

BY THE USE OF THE CONSTITUTION OF ALL LATINO COUNTRIES THAT HAD AT LEAST ONE BIG LEAGUER I CREATED MY OWN LISTS. ALL OF THEM ESTABLISH THE BIRTH PLACE AS THEIR FIRST WAY OF HAVING THEIR NATIONALITY. AND ALL OF THEM ALSO PROCLAIM THAT THE CHILDREN OF A NATIONAL – NO MATTER WHERE HE OR SHE WAS BORN IS ALSO A NATIONAL. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS LIKE MARRIAGE, RESIDENCE, MILITARY, AND OTHER SERVICES TO THE COUNTRY APPLY WITH VARIATIONS FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY. THE LINE OF BLOOD WILL GIVE RIGHTS TO GRANDCHILDREN, AND FURTHER IN SOME COUNTRIES, NOT IN OTHERS.

IN WORKING WITH MY LISTS I HAVE PLACED MANY USA BORN PLAYERS WHO ARE LATINO VIA THEIR PARENTS . OFTEN THESE PLAYERS ARE NOT MENTIONED IN SOME PUBLISHINGS. THERE ARE A LOT OF MEXICAN PLAYERS FROM CALIFORNIA , SOME PUERTORRICANS , AND DOMINICANS FROM NEW YORK, AND THE NEW TREND IS CUBANS FROM THE FLORIDA. IN TERMS OF INTERNA-

TIONAL SPORTS THESE GUYS HAVE DUAL NATIONALITY AND THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE A TEAM.

IN MY ALL LATINO LIST MY FIRST ONE IS ESTEBAN BELLAN FROM CUBA. HE PLAYED BACK IN 1871 WITH TROY OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION. MANY PERSONS WOULD NOT CONSIDER HIM BECAUSE THEY UNDERSTAND THE N.A. WAS NOT A MAJOR LEAGUE. I AM GOING TO KEEP HIM THERE BECAUSE ALL MY RATIONALE ABOUT THIS LEAGUE SAYS: MAJOR. SURE, IS MY OPINION, BUT BELIEVE ME, I HAD STUDIED THIS SITUATION BACK AND FORTH. BUT NO PROBLEM HERE WITH NATIONALITY. NO MATTER WHAT, ESTEBAN IS STILL CUBAN.

MY SECOND LATINO IS VICENTE SIMENTAL. WHO ? OH, WELL I SHOULD HAVE WRITTEN SANDY NAVA. HE STARTED WITH PROVIDENCE IN 1882. HE WAS BORN IN CALIFORNIA FROM A MEXICAN MOTHER. LOOKS LIKE NOBODY KNEW WHO WAS HIS FATHER. AS A CHILD HE LIVED IN DURANGO, MEXICO, HIS FIRST LANGUAGE WAS SPANISH, AND HE WAS SOME 5'6" TALL, DARKER THAN ALL HIS TEAMMATES, AND HAD A MEXICAN PHYSICAL LOOK.

OUR THIRD GUY IS LUIS MANUEL CASTRO. FROM COLOMBIA, SOUTH AMERICA, NOT COLUMBIA (USA ). PLAYED FOR THE ATHLETICS IN 1902. ATTENDED MANHATTAN COLLEGE WHERE HE WAS A STAR PITCHER. IN HIS CASE I HAVE READ THAT HE SHOULD NOT COUNT AS LATINO BECAUSE HE LEARNED TO PLAY IN THE USA. SURE, I LOVE SPAGHETTI, AND THAT DOES NOT MAKE ME AN ITALIAN. LIKE IN THE CASE OF VICENTE THERE IS A LOT OF INFORMATION OF CASTRO IN OFFICIAL US GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS ABOUT HIS ORIGINS.

IN THE CASE OF CHICK PEDROES ( ORPHANS 1902 ) I HAVE TO DIG DEEPER. SO I AM NOT GOING TO INCLUDE HIM NOW. LOOKS LIKE HIS FATHER WAS JUSTO – A SPANISH NAME – BUT I NEED TO FIND OUT BOTH IN CUBA, AND IN THE USA. TWO DIFFERENT BIRTHPLACES HAVE APPEARED.

WE ALSO SHOULD CONSIDER SOME POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS THAT COULD HAVE AN IMPACT IN FINDING OUT THE IDENTITY OF MORE THAN ONE PLAYER IN ANY GIVEN ERA.

## Is This The First Cuban Baseball Card?

*Special from The Rucker Archive*

This Cuban baseball card has me intrigued.

The card shown, featuring a photo of the Al-mendares Blues – or Bando Azul, was advertised as a cabinet card, and indeed the little photograph was glued onto a piece of card-board. But I knew something was up when I saw the scan of this photo, although it took me about four days to figure out what was familiar. After the image of this card floated through certain synaptic channels, it was the black border of the card that caught my attention, though it was not conscious. It was familiar – only this one did not encircle the image as with the cards in the Nacionales set issued in 1924.

The piece is photographic, 2 3/32" wide and 31/32" high. The back of this card is blank with an iridescent black border trimmed on two sides.

Those Nacionales photographic cards are 2 7/16" x 1 5/8" with a shiny, 1/4" iridescent black border all the way around them.

Noting the measurements, if I place the Bando Azul card on top of a Nacionales card, it fits and looks proper when placed so that the upper left corners meet.

This card has a date of 1903 on it.

That does not insure that the piece was produced in that year. But it is likely. In spite of the card's primitive photo quality, one can still make out Abel Linares the manager, Regino Garcia the catcher, Alfredo

Cabrera the first baseman, and at least one of the Prats brothers. This is indeed the integrated Al-mendares team from the 1903-4 Cuban winter league, with a number of Cuban Hall of Famers present.



All this information is good, but I have now reached an impasse. The oldest known cards (postales, in Havana) with baseball images produced in Havana are the Cabañas set of printed cards. The first *photographic* postales issued were the Punch cards from 1910. That places this card, if 1903 is the date, six years earlier, or if 1904, five years earlier. The information on Cuban tobacco issues is limited. The American Card Catalog does not list dates, and only a few of the sets issued in Cuba. The web does not disclose any books or experts on early tobacco issues from the island, and as of now I have nowhere to go. But, there is someone out there who does. If you have the info, please comment below.

And so, the question remains – is this the first baseball card from Cuba?

## José Fernández ROY Award Ups Slim List of Cuban Winners

By Peter Bjarkman

Nothing underscores more dramatically the recent influx of young Cuban talent into the big leagues than the recent Rookie of the Year vote totals which found island refugees occupying three of the top four slots in the respective league polls. Miami Marlins novice hurler José Fernández walked off with the senior circuit title on the strength of a 12-6 won-lost mark and sterling 2.19 ERA that also marks him as a strong contender in the yet-to-be-announced Cy Young category. Fernández (born in Villa Clara but largely raised in Tampa) was trailed in the ROY polls (142-95) by flashy Dodgers outfielder Yasiel Puig, an actual Cuban League “defector” who early-on seemed a top-heavy favorite but in the end garnered only four of thirty first-place ballots.

Over in the junior circuit the ROY title went to Tampa outfielder Wil Myers who edged another Cuban League refugee, Detroit shortstop José Iglesias (131-80 was the final vote total). Ironically, Myers’ overall offensive stats (88 games 13 homers, .293 BA) did not match those compiled by National League runner-up Yasiel Puig (104 games, 19 homers, .319 BA). Iglesias (who began the season in Boston) was technically still a rookie, although he had already appeared in a Red Sox uniform briefly during both the 2011 (10 games) and 2012 (25 games) American League campaigns.

With his ROY title Fernández becomes the third Cuban native to win the award, joining José Canseco (1988) and Tony Oliva (1964) in that exclusive club. Oliva remains atop the list with the most sensational debut season by a Cuban big leaguer, having also claimed a league batting title (the first ever to do so) during his maiden campaign in the big time. Oliva would also claim a second batting title the very next year (again a big-league first) and later capture



still a third crown (in 1971) before his injury-riddled career took a precipitous dip during the late seventies.

Despite the heavy presence of Cubans in this year’s top rookie balloting, the actual ledger of Cuban MLB award winners remains quite small, totaling only eight entries for the three most prestigious ballot-determined honors: MVP, Cy Young (top pitcher), and Rookie of the Year. All six honors captured by Cubans have come in the post-1962 epoch, again suggesting that Cuba’s post-revolution-era baseball boasts a more lustrous face than the island game of the pre-Castro epoch. Liván and Orlando Hernández between them picked up a trio of post-season MVP honors to up the Cuban ledger to a grand total of nine trophies. Ironically, when it comes to non-ballot-determined honors (batting championships, home run titles, and RBI and ERA crowns), the overall Cuban list also now checks in at an identical total of nine total winners. And here again, all except one (Dolf Luque’s 1923 ERA crown) have come during the post-1962, post-revolution epoch. It should be noted, however, that despite all the hoopla surrounding the small flood of recent Cuban League “defectors” only Liván and El Duque in that group have so far found their way onto the below list of native Cuban MLB award winners.

## Cuban MLB Award Winners

**Red**= Post 1962, **Blue**= Pre-1962, **Green**= Player who performed in Cuban National Series ("Defector")

### Voting Awards (9)

#### Most Valuable Player (2)

**1988 José Canseco (Oakland A's) American League**

**1965 Zoilo Versalles (Minnesota Twins) American League**

#### Cy Young Award (1)

**1969 Mike Cuéllar (Baltimore Orioles) American League (Tied with Denny McLain)**

#### Rookie of the Year (3)

**2013 José D. Fernández (Miami Marlins) National League**

**1986 José Canseco (Oakland A's) American League**

**1964 Tony Oliva (Minnesota Twins) American League**

#### World Series MVP (1)

**1997 Liván Hernández (Florida Marlins)**

#### National League Championship Series MVP (1)

**1997 Liván Hernández (Florida Marlins)**

#### American League Championship Series MVP (1)

**1999 Orlando Hernández (New York Yankees)**

### Non-Voting Awards (9)

#### Batting Champions (3)

**1971 Tony Oliva (Minnesota Twins) American League**

**1965 Tony Oliva (Minnesota Twins) American League**

**1964 Tony Oliva (Minnesota Twins) American League**

#### Home Run Champions (2)

**1991 José Canseco (Oakland A's) American League (Tied with Cecil Fielder)**

**1988 José Canseco (Oakland A's) American League**

#### RBI (Runs Batted In) Champions (1)

**1988 José Canseco (Oakland A's) American League**

#### ERA Champions (3)

**1972 Luis Tiant (Boston Red Sox) American League**

**1968 Luis Tiant (Cleveland Indians) American League**

**1923 Adolfo Luque (Cincinnati Reds) National League**

*Peter C. Bjarkman has been Senior Writer for [www.BaseballdeCuba.com](http://www.BaseballdeCuba.com) since 2007 and is author of A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006 (2007). His memoir recounting 17 years of travels with Cuban baseball will be published in 2014 by McFarland & Company under the title of The Yanqui in Cuba's Dugout.*



**BOOK REVIEW**by *Anthony Salazar*

**The Rise of the Latin American Baseball Leagues, 1947-1961: Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico and Venezuela**

by *Lou Hernandez***Paperback:** 264 pages**Publisher:** McFarland Publishing Co., 2013**ISBN:** 978-0-7864-7141-6

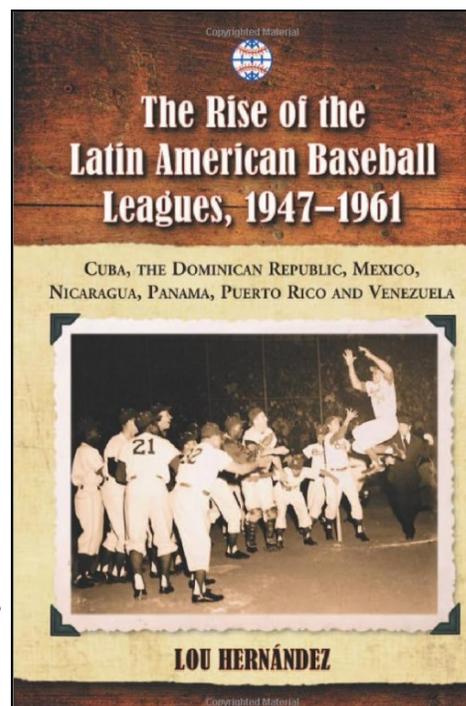
Lou Hernandez's latest effort, "The Rise of the Latin American Baseball Leagues, 1947-1961: Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico and Venezuela," is not your typical story type of work. In many way, it's much more important than your run-of-the-mill history book. Hernandez takes a look at the human side of baseball. That is, what were the players of the era doing and observing, and thinking about life around them in their Latin American host countries during pivotal times of history? In some cases, these players were eyewitness to world events unfolding around them.

Consider the players in Cuba and the Dominican Republic at this time. The political landscape certainly was not exactly what you would call conducive to baseball play. The ballplayers toiling in these countries had much more think about then those playing elsewhere in Latin America. Hernandez strikes a fine balance with those whom he interviewed. In all, he inter-

viewed 40 players, the majority playing in Cuban and Puerto Rico. The cross-section of players is equally interesting.

Ballplayers from Jim "Mudcat" Grant and Monte Irvin, to Ed Roebuck and Dave Roberts, as well as Latino players such as Minnie Miñoso, Luis Olmo and Chico Fernández.

Issues from food, housing, racial relations and ballpark conditions become central themes that Hernandez poses to his subjects throughout the book. The responses vary, from those who provide insightful and well-thought out answers, to those who might provide short retorts. The key element in each case is that these 40 players loved playing baseball. From Mayagüez and Escogido, to Sixto Escobar Stadium and Balboa Stadium, the experience of playing baseball in these locales was something that these guys would never forget. Hernandez provides the key insights needed to understand life in the Latin American baseball leagues.



**Hey! Get in on the action, and join the Latino committee listserv at: [latinobaseball-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:latinobaseball-subscribe@yahoo.com)**

**Coming soon — a FACEBOOK page! Watch for announcements!**



## Book Review

By Anthony Salazar

### Arriba Baseball!: A Collection of Latino/a Baseball Fiction

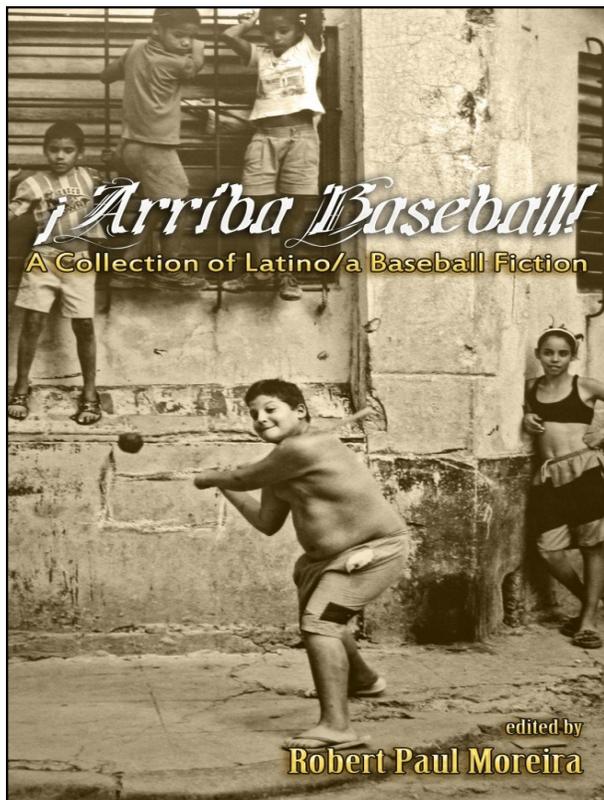
edited by Robert Paul Moreira

**Paperback:** 196 pages

**Publisher:** VAO Publishing Co., 2013

**ISBN:** 978-0-615-78483-9

In many respects, *Arriba Baseball!* provides the stories that we wish we could write. It's about the personal connection to baseball and how it makes us feel. The hope, the anxiety, the disappointment and the sheer delight of victory. In total, the human experience. *Arriba Baseball!* is an anthology of 15 works of Latino baseball fiction. These short stories and poetry to bring you into the moment of time when everything stood still. The characters presented are believable, and the voice understandable. In quite a number of the works, I even see myself, how I felt as a (very bad) player, as a fan, as a student and worshipper. I could have



been the high school benchwarmer, or watched and cheered for the Noble Roman, in Chicago, Veracruz or the Rio Grande Valley.

The fiction presented works because the characters are engaging, and do their job in selling the story-line. Their voices resonate because we have, at one time or another, have all been there. In the bleachers, on the field, listening to the radio, and other-

wise found some way to be a part of the game. Their stories are authentic because their lives matter to us. Their stories resonate with us because they are familiar. In familiarity we find comfort and security. The stories can also provide us with our link to the past. Consider "Down the Line" which quickly describes a Chicano kid, in the shadows of Dodger Stadium and East LA, appreciating his turn at bat, and 'the leather mitts that were passed down from...older siblings with spit stains, and - if they were lucky, a Steve Garvey autograph.'

*Arriba Baseball!* is a wonderful work because so much of life can be found in these pages. Editor Roberto Moreira hoped to bring together an elite class of Latino/a authors,

to "succeed in (re)defining the game of baseball and all its nuances through the prisms of Latino/a experience, craft and imagination." I would have to say whole-heartedly: mission accomplished!

## YOUR IDEAS WANTED!

SABR's tech czar will be helping the Latino baseball committee come up with our own website. We need a few folks to help us come up with a user-friendly, informative and interesting site.

*CUBA from page 1*

North American press corps rushing to be first in print with a sensational and attention-grabbing headline. No one actually bothered to do their homework on this “too good to be true” story.

But there were a few experienced Cuban League watchers who got it all essentially right. My colleague Ray Otero this weekend published an excellent Spanish-language account of the complexities of the INDER bulletin on our website at [www.BaseballdeCuba.com](http://www.BaseballdeCuba.com), and the always informative Cuba-based “Zona de Strike” website has also posted a report (<http://zonadestrike.wordpress.com/2013/09/28/implementara-cuba-pago-a-jugadores-de-beisbol-en-el-campeonato-nacional/#more-21297>) which details the new INDER policies for any who wish to read and analyze them with more care. It is time here for a brief and concise analysis of the situation for our English-language readers.

First and foremost, the announcement released in Cuba on Friday makes no mention of Major League Baseball per se, and its contents offer little possibility of Cubans reaching the big leagues by any route outside of the current practice of abandoning their homeland (what is referred to stateside as “defection”). The raw truth of the matter remains that there is no reasonable possibility of any MLB-INDER détente or any free flow of Cubans northward under the current political and economic climate. More specifically, until the Cuban government changes its socialist framework and embraces free market capitalism, and until the US government completely abandons the embargo policies of the Helms-Burton legislation, there can be no accord. More damning yet is the fact that, even if the above two transitions were somehow miraculously to transpire, there is still a third obstacle here and that is MLB’s current business practices which involve the league’s complete contractual ownership of all its ballplayers. A player under contract to an MLB club is owned by MLB and does not share his contractual

obligations with the sports federation from his nation of origin. The implications of the latter fact will become clear here as the story unfolds.

Nonetheless, the recent surprising policy reversal by INDER does certainly have major implications within Cuba itself. The main thrust of the announcement was a revolutionary new pay scale for Cuban players participating in the domestic National Series season. League players will now be divided into several categories based on their talent-level, service time, achievement (the common Cuban term being “*rendimento*” which means productivity), and whether or not they have earned slots on the various Cuban national squads chosen for international tournaments (such as the MLB World Baseball Classic, the Haarlem Baseball Week event, or the Pan American Games). Top level players will now receive 1,500 Cuban pesos per month (about \$60 US) plus a bonus of \$300 US for national team status. There are also bonuses that will be paid out in US dollars for players on national squads that earn medals or individual trophies (MVP or all-star awards for example) in international events. And players receive free housing plus additional perks.

The revelations (played up heavily here stateside) concerning players contracting with foreign leagues was only a secondary phase of the INDER announcement and not the main thrust as suggested by US press accounts. And that “new” condition was a actually confirmation and formalization of a policy that had already gone into partial effect this past summer when three Cuban leaguers (Alfredo Despaigne, Yordanis Salmon and Michel Enríquez) were contracted out to the Campeche ball club of the AAA Mexican League. This precedent will apparently now be expanded and we can expect more top Cuban stars playing in Mexico (and perhaps also in Taiwan and maybe even the Dutch League) in coming summers. But this situation must be understood in context. Cuban players are not now suddenly free to hire agents and negotiate openly with pro ball clubs outside Cuban shores (after the stateside capitalist

*See CUBA next page*

*CUBA from previous page*

model); such contract negotiation will work through INDER (the Cuban sports ministry and baseball commission) and any player's primary contractual obligation (at least under the current regime) will remain with the Cuban League.

Two conditions are clearly stated under the new regulations: Cuban ballplayers can perform overseas with INDER approval, but (1) they must be free to bring their salaries back home to Cuba, and (2) they must fulfill their homeland obligations by performing with the national team if selected, and more importantly, by returning each winter to play a full November-March schedule with their domestic ball clubs in the Cuban National Series. An example of the policy is currently found with the case of slugger Alfredo Despaigne who performed in Mexico this summer and is now back on the hometown Granma roster for the November start of a new Cuban League National Series season.

It is precisely the two above-specified conditions that effectively block any immediate contracts with big league clubs. OFAC regulations and embargo policies completely rule out Cuban ballplayers sending home salaries earned on American soil, salaries that might benefit their families on the island but that are also seen in Washington (and much of Miami) as shoring up an enemy communist government now headed by Raul Castro. It is precisely these embargo regulations that require all "defecting" athletes to be first cleared (unblocked) by OFAC (the US Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control administering Helms-Burton embargo provisions) before they can sign contracts with any big-league clubs. Players like Aroldis Chapman, Yoenis Céspedes, Yunieski Maya and Yasiel Puig were delayed in signing (some for longer periods than others) by precisely these regulations. So stingy is OFAC in controlling cash flow to Cuba that the monies earned by the Cuban teams and players for participating in the second and third editions of the World Baseball Classic (2009 and 2013) – funds already duly paid out by MLB – are still being frozen by OFAC

and have not yet been received by INDER and thus by the Cuban players who participated. Ballplayers representing all other countries were long ago paid their earned contractual amounts for WBC participation.

But OFAC is not even the largest obstacle here. The newly stated Cuban requirement that INDER maintain the primary contracts with ballplayers, putting them under obligation to play a full winter National Series season, is something that will never fly with MLB ball clubs. No MLB clubs now allow their players (especially big-investment top-dollar stars, or carefully limited pitchers with strictly monitored annual pitch counts) to opt for winter league service. Risk of injury or excessive wear and tear is always the rationale. That is precisely why the winter leagues have died on the vine in Puerto Rico, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic. No more names like Ivan Rodriguez, Roberto Clemente, Pedro Martinez or Albert Pujols entertaining the locals back home with an annual full slate of native-soil winter league games. If Yulieski Gourriel or José Miguel Fernández were to be playing in Boston and San Diego during summer months they assuredly would not be also logging games in Havana and Matanzas during the winter season.

Take this even one step further. Olympic baseball has now disappeared largely (if not entirely) because MLB owners are unwilling to release players to man USA, Dominican or Dutch squads during Olympic events that might overlap with regular-season or post-season play. How then can we imagine MLB releasing Chapman or Céspedes or a newly signed Yulieski Gourriel or Erisbel Arruebarrena for a Cuban squad in playing the July Rotterdam World Port Tournament should Cuban officials decide to insist on it? In short, the new Cuban regulations do not at all open the door to an MLB pipeline; instead they add a further dead bolt to the already tightly sealed portal.

*See CUBA next page*

*CUBA from previous page*

Why then, one might ask, did the Cuban baseball officials release this series of new regulations at precisely the time they did? This is a question completely overlooked by most US media outlets in the rush to salivate over fantasies about plucking the island clean of all its remaining talent in order to staff big league stadiums. The reasons are not hard to uncover. The announcement and the changes specified were aimed largely if not almost exclusively at disarming an increasingly tense situation on the home front and thus letting some of the potentially explosive steam out of the pressure cooker that is the current National Series scene.

Hundreds of young players have left the island in the last five years and the past two years have seen an even more alarming abandonment by a significant number of front line stars – Céspedes, Puig, Leonys Martin, Alex Guerrero, Leslie Anderson, Daliel Hinojosa, Miguel Alfredo González and José Dariel Abreu are among the most recent and most celebrated. While the national squad remains strong, and while the bulk of the young escapees harbor only small hopes for professional careers up North, the loss of so many mid-level athletes has weakened the league considerably. Cuban League teams are now forced to carry increasing numbers of 17 and 18 year old prospects who lack proper seasoning and should still be in the Cuban minors (what they call the Developmental League). Morale is noticeably low on the home front and Cuban fans are growing more disillusioned. Under the embargo athletes are forced to play with inferior equipment and on sandlot-level fields. Something drastic had to be done to shore up spirits at home by providing larger financial incentives and rewards that might stem the “defection” tide and keep more players at home. The days are disappearing when playing for national honor alone is sufficient to sustain the island’s national sport.

And there was also likely another motive here. The Cuban Baseball Federation, like the Cuban govern-

ment itself and certainly the bulk of the Cuban people, is chafing under a long and unproductive US economic embargo; stadiums are dilapidated, balls and bats are in short supply, uniforms are often of industrial-league quality, and the squeeze on cash flow under the embargo is a major culprit here. At the same time the drum beat heard up north remains that tired repeated mantra that Cubans can’t play big league baseball simply because of the odious restrictions of what we like to call the “Castro regime.” But the Cubans have another view and it is not an unreasonable one. As far back as the 1999 Cuba-Orioles exhibition in Baltimore star Omar Linares voiced the opinion that he would love to play big league baseball, and many Cuban stars have subsequently echoed that opinion. But the embargo means that players like Linares or Gourriel or Cepeda must abandon the homeland (“defect”) in order to do so. And they must take that difficult and life-altering step not only because their own government blocks free departure, but also because OFAC restrictions will not allow them to return to their homeland with their hard-earned salaries.

Victor Mesa captured the Cuban ballplayers viewpoint perfectly for me last week in Matanzas. “We would love to pay our players more here in Cuba but we simply cannot because we have no resources thanks to the American embargo.” And Victor was quick to state another Cuban viewpoint. “I love the big leagues and our guys would love to play there if only they could come back every winter with all their earnings and thus improve their lives and families back here.” And Mesa also captured the bottom line at the root of the Cuban stance. “What the Americans have to do, both the government, and the big league bosses, is to open the doors to us but yet also let us keep our own values and our own system and our own way of doing things.” In brief the point being made here is that American relations with the Cubans must be based on some form of détente that doesn’t involve any plans for American-imposed regime change. And history has taught us over the past five and more decades that this is ap-

*See CUBA next page*

*CUBA from previous page*

parently a very tough hurdle to jump.

The timing of the Cuban announcement detailing conditions on foreign professional play seemingly had a well-crafted (even if secondary) motivation. By placing precisely those conditions on professional contracts (first, pay returning to Cuba, and second, players available for winter league service) that OFAC and MLB cannot abide, a clever way was found to send a message that the problems do not reside on the Cuban side of the fence but are found rather in the American camp. The signal here is that it is the policies of OFAC and MLB that are the true insurmountable obstacles to any reasonable accord in the ongoing baseball cold war. At least that is the Cuban viewpoint, and it is not entirely without merit.

I cannot leave this piece without voicing some editorial comments about a few politics-inspired blind spots held by American fans and press when it comes to discussing Cuban baseball. The first has to do with the whole distorted notion of “defection” as it is applied to Cuban players like Yoenis Céspedes or Orlando Hernández. The Cuban players themselves reject (and largely abhor) the very term. They leave home not to make a political statement or to undercut the Communist government, but rather they do so to improve their lives economically and to test themselves at the highest level of athletic ability. It is not a stretch to suggest that the Mexican grape picker or construction laborer who risks his life to sneak over the Texas border is essentially doing the same thing (seeking to better his economic life) as the Cuban “defecting” ballplayer, and yet the Mexican wetback is never labeled a “defector.” Many (especially many in the Miami community) who protest vehemently that Cuban ballplayers should be allowed to sneak onto Florida soil in order to entertain us in big league stadiums (and also grab roster spots from homegrown California or Nebraska-bred talent), are among the same voices who scream the loudest that despicable “illegal” Mexican immigrants should be shipped home immediately as perceived leeches who steal American jobs. Some will protest that there is a world of difference here because the Mexicans can turn around and hightail it home with their paychecks and the Cubans athletes can't. But is that more the fault of the Castro regime policies or OFAC legislations? I have long struggled with the irony here.

And then there is the issue of the Cuban baseball system itself. For many here it is despicable to have top athletes playing with a spirit of amateurism (but without top dollar compensation) for community, flag and country without permitting them to negotiate to huge dollar for their services. Time and again we are told the Cuban players are slaves used by the state without proper reward. But then how does one explain one of America's most popular sporting spectacles – big time NCAA college football where top athletes perform for campus, school banner and sacred Alma Mater and do so as faux amateurs? Are not Division I college football players in the same sense “slaves” of lucrative collegiate athletic departments? The naysayers here will again argue that this is very different because footballers at Oklahoma or Notre Dame receive other forms of remuneration like four-year scholarships, plus educations (for that percentage that actually graduate) plus other hefty perks. But the top Cuban players receive houses or apartments, automobiles, and the privilege of foreign travel. Where exactly does the difference lie? How can one condemn Cuban baseball as a system of “slavery” and then cheer loudly for the patriotic spectacle of Nebraska or Ohio State or Miami University football? It is all a matter of perspective one presumes.

But let's desist with editorial sidebars here. Those who greeted last week's Havana announcement with hardy cheers and began celebrating the imminent opening of the Sugar Cane Curtain surrounding Cuban baseball have again been somewhat duped by American media outlets who failed to do their homework and thus failed to reveal the full story behind transpiring events. As long as there is a US embargo of Cuba there is not likely to be any “normalization” with baseball or any other phase of Cuban-American relations. That was in large part the message Cuban officials were sending both to the Obama administration and to the Bud Selig MLB regime. So let all the misguided celebrations die down and instead let the much-needed serious negotiations now begin.

*Peter Bjarkman is author of A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006 (McFarland, 2007) and is widely recognized as a leading authority on Cuban baseball, past and present. He has reported on Cuban League action and the Cuban national team as senior writer for www.BaseballdeCuba.com during the past half-dozen years and is currently writing a groundbreaking book (“The Yanqui in the Cuban Dugout”) on his two decades of travel throughout Cuba and his adventures covering the Cuban national team abroad.*

REPORT CARD, from page 1

going from 36% in 2005 to over 45% in 2013. Latino

With respect to Latinos in baseball's empire, Arte Moreno (Los Angeles Angels) remains the only Latino owner, while there are two Latino GMs: Jeffrey Luhnow (Houston Astros) and Ruben Amaro, Jr. (Philadelphia Phillies), there are also two Latino managers: Fredi Gonzalez (Atlanta Braves) and Rick Renteria (Chicago Cubs).

With respect to positional breakdown, the report looked at the various ethnicities and their playing positions. From 2005 to 2013, there has been a

slight fluctuation of Latino pitchers and outfielders, with certain peaks during the middle years. Meanwhile, Latino catchers show a marked improvement,

infielders show a six percent decrease in the ensuing years, going from 39% in 2005 to nearly 34%. See graph.

### LATINO PLAYERS BY POSITION, 2005-2013

| YEAR | P     | C     | IF    | OF    |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 2013 | 25.3% | 45.3% | 33.7% | 21.1% |
| 2012 | 26.0% | 33.0% | 32.0% | 23.0% |
| 2011 | 30.0% | 40.0% | 35.0% | 19.0% |
| 2010 | 29.0% | 36.0% | 33.0% | 18.0% |
| 2009 | 26.0% | 33.0% | 35.0% | 16.0% |
| 2008 | 26.0% | 35.0% | 35.0% | 16.0% |
| 2007 | 28.0% | 37.0% | 39.0% | 18.0% |
| 2006 | 28.0% | 37.0% | 39.0% | 18.0% |
| 2005 | 26.0% | 36.0% | 39.0% | 22.0% |

#### MLB: 2013 MLB Latino Awards

By: Tony Menéndez

[www.menendeztony.mlblogs.com](http://www.menendeztony.mlblogs.com)

The 2013 season is long gone however here they are my Latino MVP Awards winners:

#### AMERICAN LEAGUE

Most Outstanding Player: Miguel Cabrera, Detroit Tigers  
 Most Outstanding Pitcher: Bartolo Colón, Oakland A's  
 Most Outstanding Rookie: José Iglesias, Boston Red Sox  
 Comeback of the Year: Mariano Rivera, New York Yankees

#### The 2013 All-Star American League Latino Team:

C-Carlos Santana (Cleveland); 1B-Edwin Encarnación (Toronto); 2B- Robinson Canó (New York Yankees); 3B-Miguel Cabrera (Detroit); SS-José Iglesias (Boston); OF-José Bautista (Toronto); OF-Alexis Rios (Texas); OF-Alfonso Soriano (New York Yankees); DH-David Ortiz

(Boston); SP-Bartolo Colón (Oakland); PR-Mariano Rivera (New York Yankees)

#### NATIONAL LEAGUE

Most Outstanding Player: Yadier Molina, St. Louis Cardinals  
 Most Outstanding Pitcher: Francisco Liriano, Pittsburgh Pirates  
 Most Outstanding Rookie: José Fernández, Miami Marlins  
 Comeback of the Year: Francisco Liriano, Pittsburgh Pirates

#### The 2013 All-Star National League Latino Team:

C-Yadier Molina (St. Louis) 1B-Adrián González (Los Angeles Dodgers); 2B-Marco Scutaro (San Francisco); 3B-Pedro Álvarez (Pittsburgh) SS-Hanley Ramírez (Los Angeles Dodgers); OF-Carlos Beltrán (St. Louis); OF-Carlos Gomez (Milwaukee); OF-Yasiel Puig (Los Angeles Dodgers); SP-Francisco Liriano (Pittsburgh); RP-Aroldis Chapman (Cincinnati)

## The 2013 Latino Baseball Lists

By Tony Menéndez / [www.menendeztony.mlblogs.com](http://www.menendeztony.mlblogs.com)

### MLB: All-Time Top 10 Latino Pitching Leaders

Once it was said that records and numbers are to be broken. Possibly, someday rookie phenomenon Marlins' José Fernández will be among the greatest starters; how far Reds' Aroldis Chapman will arise and good to know who will be the next Latino reliever to surpass "The Greatest" Mariano Rivera.

What will happen in the future remains to be seen. At the end of 2013, these are the All-Time Top 10 Latino Pitching Leaders in the Majors.

#### WINS

Dennis Martínez, Nicaragua: 245  
 Juan Marichal, República Dominicana: 243  
 Luis Tiant, Cuba: 229  
 Pedro Martínez, República Dominicana: 219  
 Adolfo Luque, Cuba: 194  
 Bartolo Colón, República Dominicana: 189  
 Mike Cuellar, Cuba: 185  
 Liván Hernández, Cuba: 178  
 John Candelaria, Puerto Rico: 177  
 Camilo Pascual, Cuba: 174

#### ERA

Mariano Rivera, Panamá: 2.21  
 Juan Marichal, República Dominicana: 2.89  
 Pedro Martínez, República Dominicana: 2.93  
 Alejandro Peña, República Dominicana: 3.11  
 Mike Cuellar, Cuba: 3.14  
 Johan Santana, Venezuela: 3.20  
 Felix Hernández, Venezuela: 3.20  
 José Rijo, República Dominicana: 3.24  
 Adolfo Luque, Cuba: 3.25  
 Luis Tiant, Cuba: 3.30

#### GAMES PITCHED

Mariano Rivera, Panamá: 1,115  
 José Mesa, República Dominicana: 1,022  
 Roberto Hernández, Puerto Rico: 1,010  
 Julian Tavárez, República Dominicana: 828  
 Francisco Cordero, República Dominicana: 800

Armando Benítez, República Dominicana: 762  
 Octavio Dotel, República Dominicana: 758  
 Guillermo Hernández, Puerto Rico: 744  
 Guillermo Mota, República Dominicana: 743  
 Francisco Rodríguez, Venezuela: 730

#### INNINGS PITCHED

Dennis Martínez, Nicaragua: 3999.2  
 Juan Marichal, República Dominicana: 3507.0  
 Luis Tiant, Cuba: 3486.1  
 Adolfo Luque, Cuba: 3220.1  
 Liván Hernández, Cuba: 3189.0  
 Camilo Pascual, Cuba: 2930.2  
 Fernando Valenzuela, México: 2930.0  
 Javier Vázquez, Puerto Rico : 2840.0  
 Pedro Martínez, República Dominicana: 2827.1  
 Mike Cuellar, Cuba: 2808.0

#### STRIKEOUTS

Pedro Martínez, República Dominicana: 3,154  
 Javier Vazquez, Puerto Rico: 2,536  
 Luis Tiant, Cuba: 2,416  
 Juan Marichal, República Dominicana: 2,303  
 Camilo Pascual, Cuba: 2,167  
 Dennis Martínez, Nicaragua: 2,149  
 Fernando Valenzuela, México: 2,074  
 Johan Santana, Venezuela: 1,988  
 Liván Hernández, Cuba: 1,976  
 Bartolo Colón, República Dominicana: 1,950

#### SAVES

Mariano Rivera, Panamá: 652  
 Francisco Cordero, República Dominicana: 329  
 Roberto Hernández, Puerto Rico: 326  
 José Mesa, República Dominicana: 321  
 Francisco Rodríguez, Venezuela: 304  
 Armando Benítez, República Dominicana: 289  
 José Valverde, República Dominicana: 286  
 Ugueth Urbina, Venezuela: 237  
 Rafael Soriano, República Dominicana: 175  
 Fernando Rodney, República Dominicana: 172

## The 2013 Latino Baseball Lists

By Tony Menéndez / [www.menendeztony.mlblogs.com](http://www.menendeztony.mlblogs.com)

### MLB: All-Time Top 10 Latino Batting Leaders

Players such as Miguel Cabrera, Yadier Molina, David "Big Papi" Ortiz and Yasiel Puig are among over 300 active Latinos that are household names in the baseball world.

It is often said that records are made to be broken, and before it is all said and done maybe someday will have their names listed in the record books as all-time leaders in the Major Leagues.

As of the end of the 2013 season, these are the All-Time Top-10 Latino Batting Leaders in the Majors.

### GAMES PLAYED

Omar Vizquel, Venezuela: 2,968  
 Rafael Palmeiro, Cuba: 2,831  
 Tany Pérez, Cuba: 2,777  
 Luis Aparicio, Venezuela: 2,599  
 Alex Rodríguez, República Dominicana: 2,568  
 Iván Rodríguez, Puerto Rico: 2,543  
 Julio Franco, República Dominicana: 2,527  
 David Concepción, Venezuela: 2,488  
 Rod Carew, Panamá: 2,469  
 Roberto Clemente, Puerto Rico: 2,433

### BATTING AVERAGE

Rod Carew, Panamá: .328  
 Albert Pujols, República Dominicana: .321  
 Miguel Cabrera, Venezuela: .321  
 Vladimir Guerrero, República Dominicana: .318  
 Roberto Clemente, Puerto Rico: .317  
 Manny Ramírez, República Dominicana: .312  
 Edgar Martínez, Puerto Rico: .312  
 Magglio Ordoñez, Venezuela: .309  
 Robinson Canó, República Dominicana: .309  
 Mateo Alou, República Dominicana: .307

### RUNS

Alex Rodríguez, República Dominicana: 1,919  
 Rafael Palmeiro, Cuba: 1,663

Manny Ramírez, República Dominicana: 1,544  
 Roberto Alomar, Puerto Rico: 1,508  
 Sammy Sosa, República Dominicana: 1,475  
 Omar Vizquel, Venezuela: 1,445  
 Bobby Abreu, Venezuela: 1,441  
 Albert Pujols, República Dominicana: 1,425  
 Rod Carew, Panamá: 1,424  
 Roberto Clemente, Puerto Rico: 1,416

### HITS

Rod Carew, Panamá: 3,053  
 Rafael Palmeiro, Cuba: 3,020  
 Roberto Clemente, Puerto Rico: 3,000  
 Alex Rodríguez, República Dominicana: 2,939  
 Omar Vizquel, Venezuela: 2,877  
 Iván Rodríguez, Puerto Rico: 2,844  
 Tany Pérez, Cuba: 2,732  
 Roberto Alomar, Puerto Rico: 2,724  
 Luis Aparicio, Venezuela: 2,677  
 Vladimir Guerrero, República Dominicana: 2,590

### DOUBLES

Rafael Palmeiro, Cuba: 585  
 Iván Rodríguez, Puerto Rico: 572  
 Bobby Abreu, Venezuela: 565  
 Manny Ramírez, República Dominicana: 547  
 Albert Pujols, República Dominicana: 524  
 David Ortíz, República Dominicana: 520  
 Alex Rodríguez, República Dominicana: 519  
 Edgar Martínez, Puerto Rico: 514  
 Tany Pérez, Cuba: 505  
 Roberto Alomar, Puerto Rico: 504

### TRIPLES

Roberto Clemente, Puerto Rico: 166  
 Rod Carew, Panamá: 112  
 José Reyes, República Dominicana: 111  
 Juan Samuel, República Dominicana: 102  
 José Cruz, Sr. Puerto Rico: 94  
 Luis Aparicio, Venezuela: 92  
 Tony Fernández, República Dominicana: 92

*See BATTING, next page*

**BATTING, from previous page**

Cristian Guzmán, República Dominicana: 89  
 Omar Moreno, Panamá: 87  
 Bert Campaneris, Cuba: 86  
 Tony Taylor, Cuba: 86

**HOME RUNS**

Alex Rodríguez, República Dominicana: 654  
 Sammy Sosa, República Dominicana: 609  
 Rafael Palmeiro, Cuba: 569  
 Manny Ramírez, República Dominicana: 555  
 Albert Pujols, República Dominicana: 492  
 Carlos Delgado, Puerto Rico: 473  
 José Canseco, Cuba: 462  
 Vladimir Guerrero, República Dominicana: 449  
 Juan González, Puerto Rico: 434  
 David Ortíz, República Dominicana: 431

**RUNS BATTED IN**

Alex Rodriguez, República Dominicana: 1,969  
 Rafael Palmeiro, Cuba: 1,835  
 Manny Ramirez, República Dominicana: 1,831  
 Sammy Sosa, República Dominicana: 1,667  
 Tany Pérez, Cuba: 1,652  
 Carlos Delgado, Puerto Rico: 1,512  
 Albert Pujols, República Dominicana: 1,498  
 Vladimir Guerrero, República Dominicana: 1,496  
 David Ortíz, República Dominicana, 1,429  
 Andrés Galarraga, Venezuela: 1,425

**STOLEN BASES**

Bert Campaneris, Cuba: 649  
 Cesar Cedeño, República Dominicana: 550  
 Luis Aparicio, Venezuela: 506  
 Omar Moreno, Panamá: 487  
 Roberto Alomar, Puerto Rico: 474  
 José Reyes, República Dominicana: 425  
 Omar Vizquel, Venezuela: 404  
 Bobby Abreu, Venezuela: 399  
 Juan Samuel, República Dominicana: 396  
 Luis Castillo, República Dominicana: 370

**TOTAL BASES**

Alex Rodríguez, República Dominicana: 5,480

Rafael Palmeiro, Cuba : 5,388  
 Manny Ramírez, República Dominicana: 4,826  
 Sammy Sosa, República Dominicana: 4,704  
 Tany Pérez, Cuba: 4,532  
 Vladimir Guerrero, República Dominicana: 4,506  
 Roberto Clemente, Puerto Rico: 4,492  
 Iván Rodríguez, Puerto Rico: 4,451  
 Albert Pujols, República Dominicana: 4,377  
 Adrian Beltré, República Dominicana: 4,109

**SLUGGING %**

Albert Pujols, República Dominicana: .599  
 Manny Ramírez, República Dominicana: .585  
 Miguel Cabrera, Venezuela: .568  
 Juan González, Puerto Rico: .561  
 Alex Rodríguez, República Dominicana: .558  
 Vladimir Guerrero, República Dominicana: .553  
 David Ortíz, República Dominicana: .549  
 Carlos Delgado, Puerto Rico: .546  
 Sammy Sosa, República Dominicana: .534  
 Moises Alou, República Dominicana: .516  
 Edgar Martínez, Puerto Rico: .516

**ON-BASE %**

Edgar Martínez, Puerto Rico: .418  
 Manny Ramírez, República Dominicana: .411  
 Albert Pujols, República Dominicana: .410  
 Miguel Cabrera, Venezuela: .399  
 Bobby Abreu, Venezuela: .396  
 Rod Carew, Panamá: .393  
 Minnie Miñoso, Cuba: .389  
 Alex Rodríguez, República Dominicana: .384  
 Carlos Delgado, Puerto Rico: .383  
 Bernie Williams, Puerto Rico: .381



## A note from the Editor

by Anthony Salazar

Hello again! I last checked with you all in 2010. It's amazing that four years have gone by. Surely, a lot of baseball, and a quite a number of Latino players have come and gone.

First, let me apologize to my contributors, who I had promised to get this issue out months ago. I hope you will forgive the extended delay. I'm sure you will agree that the new issue is surely a powerhouse! Leading off is our power slugger/writer, Peter Bjarkman, who is providing the ever-important perspective of Cuban baseball. Thanks, too to Edwin Perez from the Orlando Cepeda chapter, Tony Menendez. Be sure to check out an interesting question, as posed by The Rucker Archive.

Over the next several months, I'm anticipating that you will see some great changes for the Latino baseball committee, which will include a Facebook page, and a new website. What's going to make this an important accomplishment is your ideas, your stories, and your willingness to help us make the committee great, and help contribute to the overall success of the SABR organization.

You are a part of other committees, be sure to be mindful of cross-pollination, and synergies that may exist between multiple committees. This is your group. Let's make this thing great!

Thanks for your support on this journey of ours! S

ee you at the conference. Our committee meeting will take place at SABR 44 in Houston, Texas on Thursday, July 31st, from 5:15-6:15 p.m. in the Champions I/II room, on the 2nd floor, of the Royal Sonesta Hotel.

### SABR Latino Baseball Committee

Anthony Salazar

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](mailto:salazar8017@yahoo.com).*

*Copyright © 2014 Society for American Baseball*

#### La Prensa del Béisbol Latino

Latino Baseball Committee, SABR  
2400 NW 80th St Ste 141  
Seattle, WA 98117

[www.sabr.org](http://www.sabr.org)

[latinobaseball-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:latinobaseball-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)



**In This Issue**

***Cuban détente, more Latino players than ever, and much more!***