

La Prensa del Béisbol Latino

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LATINO BASEBALL COMMITTEE CELEBRATES IN CLEVELAND; BJARKMAN WINS VALERO AWARD

by Anthony Salazar



Peter Bjarkman (center) shows award, flanked by Anthony Salazar (left) and Edwin Fernandez (right). Photo by Becky Bristol.

The Society for American Baseball Research (SABR)'s Latino baseball committee met at this past summer's national convention in Cleveland, Ohio.

Committee chair Anthony Salazar

presided over the meeting which included vice chair Edwin Fernandez and his presentation on the history of Latinos playing for the Cleveland Indians organization. During each national convention Latino committee meeting, Fernandez presents on the local team's Hispanic history.

SABR's new director of special projects, Becky Bristol, was also on hand to tell the group about her charge within SABR and her aspirations for creating new websites for each of the committees and the regional chapters. This announcement was greeted with great cheer from the members of the Latino committee and the Orlando Cepeda chapter, located in San Juan, Puerto Rico, also headed by Fernandez.

The most important presentation celebration Latino baseball writer, Peter Bjarkman, as the first

Annual recipient of the Eduardo Valero Award.

The award was created to honor the committee's former chair, who passed away several years ago.

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More scouts charged with taking kickbacks in Latino bonus scandal

By Anthony Salazar

Over the past several months several Major League Baseball clubs have revealed internal investigations centering on their scouts and others within their organization taking kickbacks from signing bonuses given to Latin American prospects.

The officials for the New York Yankees, Chicago White Sox, and Boston Red Sox have launched inquiries into the extent of which their employees skimmed illegal money from players.

When the extent of the scandal was revealed, the matter was turned over to MLB, while the FBI has launched their own investigations.

The White Sox fired their director of player personnel, along with Dominican two scouts in May for allegedly taking kickbacks from local buscones. The director, apparently was discovered coming back from the Dominican Republic with approximately \$40,000 in cash.

One Dominican player was signed by the Pale Hose for

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CUBA TAKES THE SILVER IN 2008 BEIJING SUMMER OLYMIPICS; US GETS BRONZE

In a stunning upset on the world stage, South Korea defeated defending champion Cuba to take the gold in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The South Koreans (9-0) were perfect throughout the Games, capping a 3-2 victory over Cuba (7-2), the perennial international champions.

While Cuba and Japan were widely favored to play in the final games (as they had in the 2006 World Classic), Japan ended up losing 8-4, to the United States, which claimed the bronze medal.

South Korea becomes the first unbeaten Olympic champion since Cuba posted perfect scores in the 1992 and 1996 Games.

Cuba had been trying to win its fourth gold medal within five Olympic tournaments.

The 2008 Games will mark the end of baseball (and softball) in competition. A recent IOC decision left the sport off future programs, beginning with the 2012 London Games, with no guarantee of a return in 2016, despite the lobbying efforts of baseball's international federation, and MLB.

Medal table					
Rank	Nation	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Cuba	3	2	0	5
2	United States	1	0	2	3
3	South Korea	1	0	1	2
4	Japan	0	1	2	3
5	Australia	0	1	0	1
	Chinese Taipei	0	1	0	1

Olympic Baseball Medal Winners			
Games	Gold	Silver	Bronze
1992 Barcelona	Cuba	Chinese Taipei	Japan
1996 Atlanta	Cuba	Japan	United States
2000 Sydney	United States	Cuba	South Korea
2004 Athens	Cuba	Australia	Japan
2008 Beijing	South Korea	Cuba	United States

Baseball set to honor 2008 Clemente Award recipient

Since 1971, Major League Baseball has annually presented an award to recognize a player who combines outstanding skills on the field with devoted work in the community. In 1973, the award was named in honor of Clemente, who died on December 31, 1972 during a humanitarian mission to assist earthquake victims in Nicaragua.



During the season, each Major League club selects a local Roberto Clemente Award recipient. The local honoree is then eligible for the national Roberto Clemente Award, which is presented annually at the World Series.

The 30 club nominees for the 2008 Roberto Clemente Award were announced in September as part of Roberto Clemente Day. Roberto Clemente Day was cre-

ated by Major League Baseball in 2002 as a league-wide effort to honor the memory of Roberto Clemente and recognize the local club nominees.

In recognition of each local club recipient and national nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award, John Hancock Financial Services made a \$2,500 donation in the name of each local recipient to his charity of choice.

— Major League Baseball

Latino 2008 nominees include:

Melvin Mora (ORIOLES), Magglio Ordoñez (TIGERS), Raul Ibañez (MARINERS), Carlos Peña (RAYS), Albert Pujols (CARDINALS), and Luis Gonzalez (MARLINS).

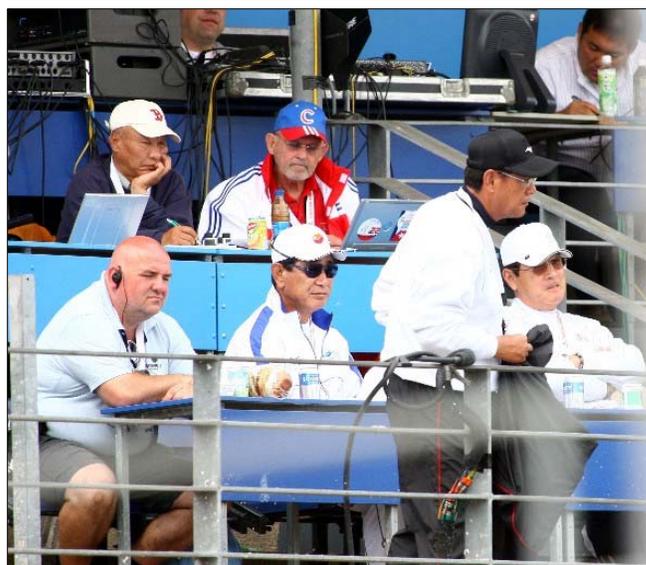
Fans can vote (English or Spanish) for their favorite nominee at:

http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/fan_forum/chevyclemente/index.jsp

BÉISBOL TRIVIA CHALLENGE

1. According to MLB, the Latino fan base grew by ___ percent from 1998-2007?
 - a. 12
 - b. 15
 - c. 17.5
 - d. 18.5
2. What team invested \$1.5 million to build a baseball complex in Hermosillo, Mexico?
 - a. San Diego Padres
 - b. Arizona D-backs
 - c. San Francisco Giants
 - d. Los Angeles Dodgers
3. Cubans Ignacio & Ubaldo Aloma were generally regarded as introducing baseball to what country?
 - a. Dominican Republic
 - b. Nicaragua
 - c. Venezuela
 - d. Mexico
4. Who is the youngest Latinos to reach 500 career RBIs?
 - a. Orlando Cepeda
 - b. Alex Rodriguez
 - c. Jose Reyes
 - d. Miguel Cabrera

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



The photo (above) is the entire Cuban baseball press corps (MEI) here covering the Haarlem tournament and crammed in with the Japanese press table delegation during today's Cuba-Japan game. On my left is Japanese journalist Yasumasa Ishikawa. Below (left to right) are former Japanese League batting leader Kohji Yamamoto (former manager of the Hiroshima Carp), current Japanese Olympic team manager Senichi Hoshino (former manager of the Tyunichi Dragons and Hanshin Tigers and currently the Hanshin GM), and former Japanese League home run king Kohichi Tabuchi.

— Peter Bjarkman

KICKBACKS, from page 1

\$525,000, but received only \$75,000, with the remainder of the bonus divided between buscones and White Sox scouts. This one of five White Sox players currently under review.

The Yankees, meanwhile, fired their director of Latin American scouting and their Dominican scouting director, for allegedly skimming proceeds from signing bonuses of Yankee Latin American prospects.

The Red Sox let go a scout, who had been on the job for Boston in the Dominican Republic, for taking kickbacks. The scout, a 22 year-baseball veteran, had indicated that all he did was accept a gift from a buscone. The Red Sox indicated the scout was fired for violating team policy.

Thus far, six scouts have been dismissed, though as the investigation progresses, more firings are expected, as up to eight teams may be involved in the investigations.

With over \$33 million flowing into the Dominican as of last season, MLB has been forced to watch more

closely how money is handled, and how teams operate in Latin America.

The main problem, most experts in the baseball's global market would agree, is that the Dominican is not subject to MLB's draft system, thus players from the island can be signed by the age of 16.

This opens the door to a wide array of exploitation and complicated policies within the country and MLB, despite the fact that MLB has had a small Latin American office for the past several years, and has no way to regulate the buscone way of life.

MLB has also taken steps in working with a Dominican bank to help players with financial transactions that would have normally been problematic for those unaccustomed to dealing with large sums of money.

Despite the irregularities that exist due to the buscone system, the reality is that very little can be done to reform baseball's way of life in Latin America. Without solid intervention from baseball's Latin American countries and MLB, abuse will continue and scandals will continue to plague the National Pastime.

San Francisco Giants to Honor Pioneer Orlando Cepeda with Statue

From the San Francisco Giants



The San Francisco Giants announced that they will dedicate a bronze statue in honor of Hall of Famer Orlando Cepeda on Saturday, September 6 at 3 p.m. at the 2nd Street entrance to AT&T Park.

In celebration of the 50th Anniversary season, the Giants will pay tribute to Cepeda, who

played his first Major League game on April 15, 1958 - the first ever Major League game played on the West Coast. A lifetime .297 hitter with 379 home runs and 1,364 RBI during his 17-year playing career, Cepeda homered against the Dodgers in his big league debut in the first contest in San Francisco.

He went on to win 1958 Rookie of the Year honors, the 1966 Comeback Player of the Year award, the 1967 NL Most Valuable Player trophy and 1973 Designated Hitter of the Year laurels. A six-time All-Star and hit over .300 nine times in his career, he appeared in three World Series. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1999, becoming only the second Puerto Rico native to enter the Hall, joining the late Roberto Clemente.

As one of the 10 players in the Giants' 125-year history to have their jersey number retired, he joins Willie Mays, Willie McCovey, Juan Marichal and Gaylord Perry as the only five San Francisco players to receive such an honor.

Well-known American sculptor William Behrends was commissioned to design the Cepeda sculpture that stands nine feet tall on a five foot base. Behrends' other commissions at AT&T Park include: the Willie Mays sculpture located in Mays Plaza, Willie McCovey statue located in China Basin Park and the Juan Marichal sculpture in O'Doul Plaza.

September 6 also marks the third annual Fiesta Gigante, which pays tribute to the Giants' rich Hispanic tradition and recognizes Hispanic Heritage Month, the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries - Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Fiesta Gigante features live music, foods, arts and crafts, entertainers and community resource booths all highlighting and celebrating the Bay Area's Hispanic heritage and the diverse Latino communities located throughout Northern California.

ESPN Deportes to Broadcast Serie del Caribe through 2011

ESPN and Cultiva Entertainment have reached a multi-year agreement that makes ESPN Deportes the exclusive Spanish-language home in the U.S. to the Serie del Caribe tournament (Carib Series) through 2011. With this agreement, ESPN Deportes solidifies its position as "La Casa del Beibsol Invernal" (The Home of Winter Baseball), showcasing exclusive coverage of all the active leagues in the confederation - Dominican Republic, Mexico and Venezuela.

Under the terms of the agreement, ESPN Deportes will offer exclusive Spanish-language coverage of the six-day tournament beginning with the 2009 opening game in Mexicali, Mexico. The 2009 Serie del Caribe will begin February 2nd and run through February 6th. Additionally, ESPN Deportes will also carry official highlights show for the tournament, providing a complete re-cap of each game. The network will also air a preview show each day and provide extensive coverage of Serie del Caribe across news and information shows led by SportsCenter.

The 2008-2009 winter baseball season will kickoff with an exclusive presentation of *Rumbo a las Grandes Ligas*, a documentary that chronicles the voyage of three Dominican-born aspiring Major Leaguers and their road of breaking into the Majors. The show follows the aspiring major leaguers through tryouts, batting practices, and their day-to-day lives at some of MLB's most notable baseball academies in the Dominican Republic.

The documentary tells two stories - that of an athlete pursuing a career in the majors and that of a man out of the playing field. Using testimony from teammates, trainers, coaches, teachers, friends and family members of the main characters, *Rumbo a las Grandes Ligas*, brings to light what inspires these young players which most hail from poverty-stricken areas in the Dominican Republic. Boston Red Sox David Ortiz plays a feature role in the film, lending his perspective on a Dominican who made it big in the Major leagues.

— PRNewswire-HISPANIC PR WIRE

Béisbol Notes & Research Needs

Committee member Leonte Landino reports that this past July 29th, 2008 a Sports Journalism Forum was held in Maracaibo, Venezuela. Landino joined ESPN play-by-play announcer Ernesto Jerez as guest speakers focusing on interventions in baseball journalism, ethics and responsibility. This was the first event of its kind in Maracaibo, a city with an enormous baseball hunger (hometown of Luis Aparicio and over 20 major league players). Look for more details in the next issue...

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When you have a chance, check out Adrian Burgos' new blog and let him know what you think:
<http://playingamericasgame.blogspot.com/>

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Jon Daly sent a notice that a friend of his recalled shagging flys and batboying for the Cuban All-Star teams at Miller Stadium around the years, 1963-66. He remembers Tony Taylor and Cookie Rojas playing but he would like to know if a complete, or even partial, roster exists. They also played at Roosevelt Stadium in Union City around the same time. Contact him at jon31768@gmail.com.

* * * * *

More from the good Dr. Adrian Burgos: Adrian recently joined veteran Latino announcer Clemson Smith Muniz as a color analyst this past August 9th for a special Spanish-

language broadcast of the Detroit Tigers-Oakland Athletics game on Fox Sports Net Detroit. The special telecast is part of *¡Fiesta Tigres!*. From Latino great Ozzie Virgil joined the broadcast team as special guest. The Spanish-language presentation is the first ever for a Tigers local television production.

According to the team, ¡Fiesta Tigres! is the Tigers annual salute to the contributions of Hispanics and Latinos to the game of baseball. Latino Tigres on the 2008 roster include Magglio Ordoñez, Carlos Guillen, Miguel Cabrera and Armando Galarraga (Venezuela); Placido Polanco, Fernando Rodney, Ramon Santiago, Freddy Dolsi, Aquilino Lopez and infield coach Rafael Belliard (Dominican Republic); Edgar Renteria (Colombia); and Joel Zumaya (Mexico).

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Los Gigantes de San Francisco celebrated Latino Heritage Night on Wednesday, August 27th in a game against the Colorado Rockies. The club will also host a special pre-game party with proceeds heading to a local Latino charity.

* * * * *

Kit Krieger recently released dates for the 2009 CUBABALL TOURS: January 24-February 3; February 9-17; and February 17-25. Each tour is limited to 25 participants, with departures from the Canadian cities of Vancouver and Toronto. Check out www.cubaballtours.com for more information.

LATINOS AGAIN UP FOR HOF'S FORD C. FRICK AWARD

The National Baseball Hall of Fame has recently announced the nominees for the 2009 Ford C. Frick Award, honoring baseball's broadcasters.

Numerous Latino broadcasters are once again among the list of nominees:



Juan Alicea, Joe Angel, Juan Angel Avila, Bill Berroa, Rene Cardenas, Ulpiano Cos Villa, Orlando Sanchez-Diago, Tito Fuentes, Jose Garcia, Erwin Hiqueros, Mario Impemba, Buck Martinez, Hector Molina, Gustavo Lopez-Moreno, Jose Mota, Eduardo Or-

tiga, Amaury Pi-Gonzalez, Francisco Ruiz, Mario Thomas, Alex Trevino, Beto Villa and Pepe Yniquez.

Visitors to the Hall of Fame's website will have the opportunity to vote for at least three candidates during the month of September. The list then will be pared down to ten finalists, with a finalist emerging sometime in the Winter.

To vote for your favorite Latino broadcast, visit:
http://web.baseballhalloffame.org/awards/frick_2008/vote.jsp

COMMITTEE, from page 3

The award honors its recipients as having the best written piece submitted to the committee's publication, "La Prensa del Béisbol Latino," for the previous year.



Committee members enjoy coming together. Pictured here, Claudia Perry (left), David Harlen (right), with Jose Ramirez (back left) and Bill Nowlin (back right).

Bjarkman's story on

the demise of the Puerto Rican baseball league (*Prensa*, Vol. 4, No. 1) claimed top honors.

Bjarkman, who is also a past Latino committee chair, was a great friend of Sr. Valero, was very touched to receive the honor.



Vice chair Edwin Fernandez delivers his presentation on Latino Cleveland Indians.

All submissions from the past year were considered with pieces judged by Salazar, Fernandez and Jorge Colon Delgado. Their submissions were ineligible.

Latino Little League Championships

Team	Championships
 Mexico	3
 Venezuela	2
 Curaçao	1

Mexicans come up short in Little League World Series

Little Leaguers from Hawaii pulled out a 12-3 victory to take the 2008 Little League World Series from Matamoros, Mexico.

Hawaiian teammates Tanner Tokunaga, Iolana Akau and Caleb Duhay accounted for the majority of the team's runs, while Mexico was limited to only three runs on six hits with three RBIs. Mexico struck out 13 times and committed three errors.

It was the fourth consecutive win for the United States, while Mexico last trip to Williamsport, PA, came in 1997.

In the history of the Little League World Series history dating back to 1947, 12 Latin American countries have played in Little League's highest game.

Latino entries into the Little League World Series		
1957	 Monterrey, NL, Mex.	 La Mesa, CA
1958	 Monterrey, NL, Mex.	 Kankakee, IL
1964	 Staten Island, NY	 Monterrey, NL, Mex.
1983	 Marietta, GA	 Barahona, Dom. Rep.
1985	 Seoul, S. Korea	 Mexicali, Mex. *
1993	 Long Beach, CA	 David Chiriqui, Pan.
1994	 Maracaibo, Venezuela	 Northridge, CA
1997	 Guadalupe, NL, Mex.	 South Mission Viejo, CA
2000	 Maracaibo, Venezuela	 Bellaire, TX
2004	 Willemstad, Curaçao	 Thousand Oaks, CA
2005	 Ewa Beach, HI	 Willemstad, Curaçao
2008	 Waipi'o, HI	 Matamoros, Mexico

*due to it's proximity to the border, Mexicali represented Southern California region.

ALFREDO EDMEAD – Dominican Diamond Death

By Malcolm Allen

Alfredo Edmead came to the United States from the Dominican Republic as a 17-year-old in 1974 to play his first -and only- season of professional baseball. He left behind ten brothers and sisters to become almost an overnight success, then -even more quickly- the victim of a shocking tragedy.

Edmead turned pro when Pittsburgh Pirates scout Pablo Cruz signed him to a contract in 1973. Cruz, 27, also played second base for the class-A Salem Pirates, where Edmead debuted the following year. Cruz looked after Edmead and the club's other young Dominicans, who spoke little or no English.

"I was afraid I'd be withdrawn," Edmead admitted to a reporter early in the year. "But I started hitting, playing ball and having a good time."

Edmead's English improved so quickly that Salem manager John Lipon described him as "so very smart", but it was Edmead's bat that spoke louder than anything. "I knew then that he had God-given talent," said Lipon, recalling Edmead's first swing in spring training. "He just hit the ball hard all spring, line drive after line drive."

Edmead played right-field and batted second, right behind centerfielder, leadoff man and future big leaguer Miguel Dilone. They shared a house, lockered side-by-side, and teamed up to wreak havoc on the Carolina League. They didn't compete with each other, but helped and pushed each other to be the best players they could be. That was just fine with Lipon. "They're definitely pushing our club," he said.

Edmead and Dilone helped Salem get off to a great start, leading to a writeup in the June 8 issue of *The Sporting News* headlined "Salem Swings With Its .400 Dominican Duo".

Thirty-four games into the season, Dilone was hitting .408 with 36 runs scored, while Edmead was right behind him at .396 with 30 runs and 26 RBI. Each man already had 24 stolen bases, while Edmead surprised even himself by hitting four home runs. "I never expected anything like this," he admitted.

"Edmead is a natural hitter," Lipon observed. "I've seen some guys come up and improve as the year goes on, but I haven't helped him a bit."

The batting averages of Edmead and Dilone dropped as the season wore on, but Salem continued to dominate, finishing first in both halves of league play en route to a franchise-best 87-50 record.

Edmead, a .318 hitter with 7 home runs, learned on August 20 that he'd been selected as a Carolina League All-Star. Though he was still only 18, many in the Pirates organization believed he could move all the way up the triple-A in 1975.

Three of his teammates also made the team, including Dilone who copped player-of-the-year honors. Lipon was recognized as the circuit's top manager, while Cruz was voted

most popular Pirate by the fans. "The only bad thing that happened the whole year was the Edmead incident," said Lipon a few weeks later. "I guess I'll never forget it, and neither will the players."

The "Edmead incident" took place on August 22, in a home game at Municipal Field against Rocky Mount. Edmead scored the Pirates first run after swiping both second and third base to give him 61 steals for the season. Everything seemed fine, but an otherwise routine pop fly to short right in the top of the sixth changed everything.

Edmead raced in for the ball from right, while Cruz ran out from his second base position. Edmead dove in an effort to make the catch, but his head collided with Cruz' knee, and both men went down in a heap. Edmead had been knocked unconscious, and some of the first players on the scene reported that he wasn't breathing. The team trainer was able to revive him, but Edmead was rushed to Lewis-Gale hospital.

The game resumed, minus Cruz, who'd hurt his knee badly, but was too upset about Edmead to accept treatment. "My God. My brother, my little brother," Cruz lamented later that day. "He always tried so hard. I didn't see him." Though the players on both teams weren't told until the game was finished, Salem's general manager called from the hospital just an hour after the impact with three sad words: "Alfredo is dead".

Edmead died from massive brain injuries, shocking his teammates, and nearly everyone who heard the news. "I never heard of anything like this before," said Pirates farm director Harding Peterson. "We lost not only one of the best young prospects in our organization. We lost a fine young gentleman. It's truly hard to believe."

Dilone was so stunned that he initially packed his fallen friend's gear for the next road trip, before setting it aside to be sent back to the Dominican with Edmead's body.

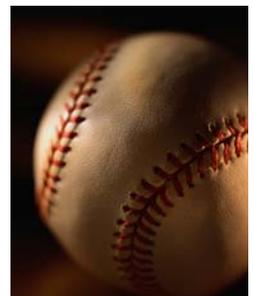
Alfredo Edmead (1956 - 1974) was honored with a plaque at Municipal Field, and a scholarship in his name presented to an outstanding Roanoke, Virginia area athlete.

SOURCES:

"Salem Outfielder Dies After On-Field Collision," *The Sporting News*, 9/7/74, p.43.

"Salem Swings With Its'.400 Dominican Duo," by Bob Teitlebaum. *The Sporting News*, 6/8/74, p.41.

"Voice On Phone – Alfredo's Dead," by Bob Teitlebaum. *The Sporting News*, 9/7/74, p.43.



The Future of Olympic Baseball May Regrettably Be Determined by Manipulators and Not Champions of the Sport

By Peter Bjarkman

Baseball has now regrettably taken its last noble bow in the Olympics, at least for the foreseeable future. We are now left with the World Baseball Classic, where top big leaguer stars have yet to prove they are willing to take the event seriously by entering competition in mid-season form. And there is also the IBAF World Cup every two years, but that is an event few fans outside Cuba, Japan and The Netherlands pay much attention to, or even know anything about. Baseball's truest "World Series" for much of the past two decades has been the Olympic venue dominated by Cuba, but also a scene of proud triumphs for the Americans (2000 Sydney) and now the emerging Koreans. And yet Olympic baseball has apparently marched into oblivion and is as dead as the big league Sunday afternoon double header or the sub-three-hour ballgame. For fans of the "national pastime"—the American, Cuba, or Asian versions—this seems at first hearing to be a disastrous piece of news. The high quality of the Beijing tournament should have stimulated an appetite for the international version of the game from all who witnessed matches in person or followed the video feeds on-line via NBC. The Olympic version of our sport certainly went out with a most appropriate flare.

But there were also plenty of storm signals to be witnessed on the horizon in Beijing. The biggest fear going into this year's fifth renewal was that the game might never return. But now there seem to be even larger preoccupations to trouble devotees of international baseball. And these all have to do with the disturbing fact that if the game is salvaged it may well return in 2016 dressed in a form largely unacceptable to all genuine fans of the pastime. A bargain with the Devil known as the IOC now seems to be on the agenda of IBAF officials. We will perhaps give you your baseball back, promises the IBAF and the IOC, but we will make sure that you will hardly recognize it once it fits our convenient reshaping. The IOC has gone on record as wanting the sport only if it features "the world's greatest players" and also only if it can be played in such a way that it fits artificial requirements of television, advertising and security schedules. The inherent logic of a sport whose essence is the absence of a time clock is of little consequence here.

The rules and the logic of our beloved game were already tampered with in Beijing and the results were not at all pretty. Games were played under a new tie-breaker format that seemingly all fans and all on-the-field participants strongly objected to. Key games of this year's matches were decided contrary to all baseball logic, since after the tenth inning teams were permitted free base runners on first and second to start an inning, and managers were

allowed to juggle their original starting lineups. Even winning managers lodged their strenuous protests, with Team Canada's Terry Puhl voicing the most concise condemnation: "It certainly isn't what we baseball people are trained to compete in". And worst of all was the fact that the revised format didn't even accomplish what it set out to achieve. Due to excessive scoring, numerous pitching changes, and often bizarre bench strategies, games were actually lengthened and not shortened, a negative outcome even for those championing quick endings as a desirable product. That is what inevitably happens when non-baseball people hijack the sport for reasons of commercial enterprise.

Now a more insidious plan has been hinted at by IBAF president Harvey Schiller. The IOC demands "the world's best players" and that is what they must have, even if this kills the original motive for Olympic baseball, which was a desire to expand and not shrink the international game. Since MLB won't shut down its mid-summer operations to meet the IOC thirst for big leaguers, the IBAF is apparently negotiating a deal that would put star major leaguers on the field only for the trio of medal round games. It is a plan to boggle the imagination in so many different aspects.

How could the new IBAF scheme ever be enacted? Would big leaguers be flown to the Olympic venue on two-day notice, or would we have a gap of a week or more between pool play and medal games? Would this not penalize the very athletes who carry their teams to the championship round? Players who lifted their teams into medal play would sit on the sidelines, robbed of their gold medal opportunity. And would not countries like Cuba, The Netherlands and Chinese Taipei, with few or no big leaguers, be squeezed out by a tilted playing field? MLB is not the obvious culprit here, since it has resisted and not championed efforts to drag its stars into an Olympic venue. The true villains are the IOC and their partner, the IBAF. The latter has played right into the IOC's greedy hands by agreeing to change the sport drastically just to keep it on the venue card. Baseball's international managers might be better served to take a page from the world's true international game, soccer. Perhaps it would be better to ignore the Olympic venue and concentrate on the IBAF World Cup and the MLB WBC—both promising baseball-only venues. For why should we have an Olympic version of baseball, if what results has been tweaked and modified beyond reason? An Olympics without baseball is a sad prospect. But baseball with a crooked playing field and non-baseball playing rules is a far worse alternative still.

A PERSPECTIVE ON THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

By George Gedda

The names are familiar to baseball fans: Pujols, Martínez, Guerrero, Ortiz. They are just among the best known of the 90 or so Dominicans now on big league rosters. A half century ago, few could have foreseen the way in which Dominicans have changed the face of the national pastime. What started out as a trickle in the late 1950's has now become a deluge.

Upon my retirement from The Associated Press in 2007 after many years as a State Department correspondent, I decided to look into the Dominican phenomenon – how a small, obscure country could have such an impact the American game. The result of my curiosity is a soon to be published book titled “The Dominican Connection” (Eloquent Books).

I lived in the country from August 2007 to February 2008. I found the experience both exhilarating and depressing. On the positive side, one can only admire the sheer grit that so many players have shown in conquering meager circumstances en route to big league fame. If there is a Dominican who made it to the big leagues from comfortable surroundings, I was unaware of him.

The downside, of course, is that Dominican society offers so few alternatives to its majority poor population that young boys take their chances on baseball. Only a tiny percentage makes it. Almost all of the rest face a life of struggle.

There were many surprises for me along the way. Baseball is indeed the national passion but the majority of the fall-winter professional league games are played before small, even tiny, crowds. The reason is that too many Dominicans are too poor to buy a ticket to a game, or too afraid of being assaulted on their way home, or both. They prefer to watch their favorite teams at home on TV.

More fans would find a way to go the park if some of the big name Dominican stars played back home during the big league off-season. But in this era of huge contracts, the best Dominican players have little incentive to show their skills to the home folks. They may be the country's biggest heroes, but they are almost never seen in a Dominican uniform.

– George Gedda – ggedda@gmail.com

Dominicans in the All-Star Game

By Malcolm Allen

Major League Baseball's 2008 All-Star Game was a memorable affair for a variety of reasons, but the fact that a record 11 players born in the Dominican Republic were selected to represent their respective leagues largely escaped notice. All nine of the healthy honorees appeared in the contest, equaling the high-water mark established in 2005.

Since the Giants Felipe Alou and Juan Marichal first represented the DR in the first 1962 mid-summer classic, a total of 158 All-Star selections have been earned by 56 different Dominican players. Collectively, they've batted .282 and pitched to a 2.36 ERA in the showcase of baseball's best.

Marichal excelled in All-Star competition, winning twice in eight outings, working to a 0.50 ERA in 18 innings in with just seven hits allowed, and becoming the first Dominican to win All-Star Game MVP honors, in 1965. That year Marichal –a career .165 hitter-- also became the first man from his country to hit safely in All-Star play with a single off the Twins Mudcat Grant.

Other Dominican All-Star MVP's include Rangers second-basemen Julio Franco in 1990 and Alfonso Soriano in 2004, Red Sox pitcher Pedro Martinez in 1999, and shortstop Miguel Tejada of the Orioles in 2005.

The Astros Cesar Cedeno blasted a two-run homer off the Angels Frank Tanana in 1976 to become the first of six Dominicans to homer in an All-Star Game. Only Soriano has gone deep more than once (three times). Soriano was one of three players born in the DR to homer in the 2004 contest, joined by Manny Ramirez and David Ortiz of the Red Sox.

Reds pitcher Mario Soto –one of four DR pitchers to receive a starting assignment - got into the 1982 game as a reliever, but formed part of the first all-Dominican battery with Pirates catcher Tony Pena. Pena didn't get to show off his arm by throwing out any would-be base-stealers, but he did swipe one of his own, the first of five of his countrymen to achieve the feat.

As for starters, Cardinals 2B Julian Javier became the first player from the DR to start an All-Star Game in 1963, and Marlins shortstop Hanley Ramirez became the 22nd different Dominican to do so this July. With his sixth start in 2008, Red Sox left-fielder Manny Ramirez matched Vladimir Guerrero for tops among his countryman.

Blue Jays 2B Damaso Garcia fouled out versus Soto in 1984 in the first head-to-head match-up of DR natives in All-Star play. Nearly, quarter-century later, the pitchers still have the upper hand, as Manny Ramirez' RBI single off the Dodgers Odalis Perez in 2002 is the only hit by one Dominican off another in eight official at-bats. More opportunities should be on the horizon. Three Dominican pitchers appeared in an All-Star Game in 2008 for the first-time, and with 25 of 30 franchises having been represented by All-Stars from the DR already, the nation's influence is stronger than ever.

A note from the Editor

by Anthony Salazar

First, let me apologize to you, the readers and the loyal writers of this publication for an extremely late publication. It seems life got in the way of getting to the computer and getting this fine newsletter into your hands. For that, I am very sorry.

To remedy such situations from arising again, I've enlisted the help of writer Malcolm Allen, who will serve as the publication's Associate Editor. Malcolm will be the first line of contact for articles and story submissions. I will remain as Editor and continue layout and distribution.

In the meantime, we have a very interesting issue for you. What I hope jumps out at you is the ever-present issue of buscones, bird-dog scouts, in Latin America, and the problems they present. What's not included here, but is certainly an ongoing issue is the use of controlled substances by prospects in Latin America. We hope to address this issue once again in a future issue.

We have a number of great articles and features

here, that I hope you enjoy. What I keep forgetting to mention, is that if you ever have a comment or question about one of the stories, please feel free to contact me.

This is our committee, and with your continued support and help we can continue to grow the knowledge of Latinos playing this wonderful game. ¡Mil gracias!



SABR Latino Baseball Committee

Anthony Salazar	Chair, Editor
Edwin Fernandez	Vice Chair

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La Prensa del Béisbol Latino

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In This Issue

Dominicans in baseball, LLWS, Olympics & much more!