



LATIN AMERICA COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

Eduardo Valero Chairman
670 Ponce de Leon Apt 516
Santurce, Puerto Rico 00907
Tel 809 721 8506

Buenos Dias !!!!... As time goes by interest in Latin America baseball continues and grows, which undoubtedly is a positive sign. The first election to the Caribbean Baseball Series Hall of Fame was held during the 38th Caribbean series held at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, February 3-8. Elected were Cuban pitcher Camilo Pascual, 6-0; 1.89 ERA; 52.1 IP; 1956, 1959 and 1960 Series. Also Dominican outfielder Rico Carty, HR Record holder for one serie, 7HR in 1978. Total HR-12 in 3 series (1970, 78 and 79). 338 BA. 18 RBI .552 Slugging. Willard Brown, representing Puerto Rico, RBI record holder for one serie, 13 in 1953. BA .343; 19 RBI; .627, Slugging; participated in 1950, 51 and 53 Series. Mexican 1st baseman Hector Espino, BA .297; 22 RBI; 6 HR; .445, slugging. Participated in 7 series: 1971, 74, 75, 76, 77, 80 and 82.

Next election will be made at Hermosillo, Mexico during the 39th Series, February 4-9. The Caribbean Baseball Series Hall of Fame site will be in the San Juan, Puerto Rico Metropolitan Area.

Culiacan Tomateros (Tomato growers) won with flying colors the 38th Caribbean series, losing only one game 2-1 to Puerto Rico, who finished 2nd 4-2. The Mexican club, usually the Cinderella of the Caribbean Series led by veteran catcher Paquin Estrada (NYMet) beat twice the so called 'Invencible' Aguilas Cibaeñas, the home team who was looking forward to avenge the beating they got from Puerto Rico in the 1995 Series. . . . They only won 2 of the 6 games before their own fans, who didn't back them up after their 3rd defeat.

We acknowledge requests and contributions from John Benesch Jr., Cristian Mendoza, Miguel Armada, Victor Navarro, Pete Palmer, Tito Rondon, Cuqui Cordova, William Ruiz, James Floto, Todd Bolton, Ralph Maya, Manuel Alvarez, Yochi Nagata, Agustin J. Castens, Peter J. Bjarkman, Dick Clark, Tony Menendez Steve Schott and Sandra Virgil, as well as Elfren Bernier

Baseball Cards from the 6 teams of the Puerto Rico Professional League are available. 256 cards for \$115 or you can buy separately by teams from Blanco y Negro Store, P.O. box 361901, San Juan, P.R. 00936-1901 for the 1988-89 including Roberto Alomar, Juan Gonzalez, Carlos Baerga, Ruben Sierra, Javy Lopez, Ron Dibble, Bernie Williams among others big leaguers. Also available are the cards for the 1989-90 season for 276 cards for \$100. Cards for each team are also available for the two seasons. Kindly contact the Blanco y Negro Store. Its telephone is 809 763-7218

As it is among the Latin America Committee goals, to offer SABR members when was baseball played for the first time in Latin America. How about Mexico. . . .

Will you believe that on a 4th of July, the first baseball game was played in Mexico? Every year the largest amount of the San Juan de Cadereyta population congregates around a baseball field, baptized there as "El Parque del Recuerdo" (The Remembrance Park) It was there that in morning of July 4th, 1889 baseball ever played there and in all Mexico for the first time.

In 1989, its 3,000 population held an enthusiastic centennial celebration to commemorate this historical event. Dollar size Silver coins with a railroad figure going thru a playing field were issued and validated by the Numismatic Society of Monterrey. Also miniature bats were given away with the following inscription: " Souvenir from the San Juan Station-Baseball Centenary, 1889-1989, July 4, Cadereyta Jimenez, Nuevo Leon. For the San Juan residents, that was the first time, baseball was played in Mexico

What did happen on that occasion, was that US Army Colonel Joseph Aries Robertson in charge of US railroad workers were extending 495 kilometers of rails for the Monterrey-Tampico path. Robertson decided to play baseball on such a date instead of carrying on their normal task. Days before he had located a bat and a baseball brought from the U.S. He then proceeded to explain his workers and some townsmen what was the game about. and then. Play Ball

However, the above is one of seven versions on where was baseball played. Other areas with likewise histories are: Guaymas, Sonora; Mazatlan, Sinaloa; Veracruz, Veracruz; Merida and Progreso, Yucatan and Mexico City or the Federal District, according to Juan Vene, a well known sportswriter who has done excellent historical work on the subject.

We shall continue providing other versions on baseball arrival to Mexico. On the other hand "The Bambino visits Cuba-1920" is a bilingual publication with photos and stats written by SABR member Julio Ruiz at \$12 postpaid. It can be ordered from him. Address: Asomante 1674, Summit Hills, Rio Piedras, P.R. 00972

As indicated in the previous LAC Newsletter, we are including more information on the Nicaraguan baseball, a valuable contribution of Tito Rondon, LAC member and well known Nicaraguan Sportswriter and historian

"The Nicaraguan Professional League started without any particular planning in February 1956. It was an independent circuit. Very weak, it improved a little as the quality of the "imported" players became better, it probably approached the "D" level of the time."

"The greatest "names" were those of Cuban players, because of their age the fans started calling the league the "Elephant Cemetery". The players apparently just gave their personal data to the league register, and most "shaved" their true age (Claro Duany 1918 vs 1917; Carlos Colas and Pedro Ballester (1927 vs 1925) Alejandro Crespo (1916 vs 1915)

"The official stats were lost; a few remains from newspapers. of those times and a "Who's Who" type booklet published in December 1956, which are the source for most of this information."

In February of 1957, night baseball finally arrived in Nicaragua and a second season of pro-ball was played. The "Leon" team had a working agreement with the Havana Sugar Kings (AAA); at the end of the season Connie Marrero and Roberto Fernandez Tapanes were called to the International League. In September of 1957, Nicaragua was admitted to Organized Baseball and the first Winter League tournament was played from October 1957 to February 1958"

According also to Tito, since 1949 professional players from Panama, and Cuba did participate in series held in several Nicaragua towns, as a matter of fact it brought out the thoughts of professional baseball in Nicaragua. But the participation in the World Amateur Series was deeply fixed in the Nicaraguans and thou Jose A. "Chino" Melendez the primera pitcher tried to convince his countrymen, it is was in vain.

As an addendum to Rondon's contribution it's feasible to add that Nicaragua did participate in the III Interamerican Series held in Panama during February 8-14, 1963. Upon the withdrawal of Cuba in 1960 from the Caribbean Baseball Series due to the prohibition of professional Sports by Fidel Castro goverment, the Venezuela, Panama and Puerto Rico Leagues created Interamerican Series. In these version the champion and runner-up teams from the host country will play against the champions of the other two leagues.

Valencia (5-2) and Rapiños (4-3) both from Venezuela finished 1st and 2nd in the 1961 Series held at Caracas, while Balboa (Panama) and San Juan (Puerto Rico) finished tied in 3rd place, with 2-4 record.

Santurce (Puerto Rico) won the II Interamerican Series (8-1) Caracas (Venezuela-5-4), Mayaguez (Puerto Rico-5-4), Marlboro (Panama-Nicaragua-1-5) finished 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively in the Sixto Escobar Stadium, San Juan, Puerto Rico, February 6-14. Three additional games were added to the series on an experimental basis..

Also for the first time there was a participant team representing two countries, Panama and Nicaragua. Failing to find sponsors for the Comercio and Azucareros clubs, the Panama league decided to celebrate their tournament with the addition of the Boer and 5 Estrellas teams from Nicaragua along with Marlboro and Cerveza Balboa, traditional Panamenian nines.

Finally, Nicaragua was admitted to the Caribbean Baseball Confederation replacing Cuba, participating in the III Interamerican Series, hosted by Panama, whose Chiri-Bocas club won (5-2 Nicaragua's Boer finished 2nd (4-3), Mayaguez (Puerto Rico (3-3) third and Valencia (Venezuela (1-5) in the cellar. Jose Lisondro (Panama) shut-out Boer 5-0 in the 7th and decisive game after Chiri-Bocas and Boer finished tied (4-2) in the round robin.

After the III Interamerican Series, Venezuela withdraw from the event and decided to celebrate during its regular season, interleague games with the Dominican Republic teams. Therefore, Nicaragua hosted an invitational series with the participation of San Juan and Marlboro, Puerto Rico and Panama champs to face 5 Estrellas and Oriental, winner and runner-up of their tournament.

As in the previous Interamerican Series, a host team won with flying colos, that was the case of 5 Estrellas who had a 5-1 record, followed by San Juan and Marlboro (3-3) and Oriental (1-5) in the cellar, even thou Ferguson Jenkins was in their pitching staff. So far, Fergy has been the only Hall of Famer (Cooperstown) to have participated in Nicaragua.

See you all in Kansas City.. SABR '96...