



La Prensa del Béisbol Latino

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

Vol. 2 No. 4

Spring 2006

Eduardo Valero, SABR Latino chair Passes Away

by Edwin Fernández

Eduardo Valero, our Chairman for more than a decade, dies on Friday, May 26, 2006. He was 80 years old. He was the last of the baseball writers alive that attended the first Caribbean Baseball Series in Havana, 1949.

According to his youngest son Ricardo, "he was like a "living baseball encyclopedia". Also known as "El Tigre" (The Tiger), due to his aggressive writing style and because he was a true Detroit Tigers fan.

He loved journalism. At the young age of 13, he won a Jr. Reporter prize, sponsored by El Imparcial periodical. He is an old San Juan native, and a son of a veterinarian and a School Teacher. He had three sons: Eduardo, Carlos y Ricardo.

Eduardo Valero, among other things, was a Puerto Rican ambassador, an international public relations personality. He founded a fraternity, Alpha Beta Chi and presided two Sportswriters Associations in Puerto Rico. He was also member of SABR and member of the

AIPS (International Sports-writers Association) Board of Directors. He was elected to the Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame and to the Hall of Fame of Sports in Puerto Rico.

We lost a friend, a good baseball person, and we may have lost the last of the romantic baseball writers in Puerto Rico. Q.E.P.D. Eduardo Valero.



WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC PROVIDES FIRST REAL WORLD SERIES: JAPAN CHAMPIONS, CUBA WINNERS

by Peter Bjarkman

(San Diego) - Major League Baseball's first World Baseball Classic did not turn out quite as either the moguls of American professional baseball or the rest of the world expected. The much anticipated World Classic was advertised from the start as the first legitimate global championship tournament in which headline stars from the world's self-anointed best professional league (MLB) would battle for pride while wearing the uniforms of their native countries. After nearly three weeks of exciting baseball that gripped television audiences throughout Latin America, Asia and North America, we arrived at a most surprising grand finale in San Diego. Japan (without any of its recognizable big league exports except Ichiro) and Cuba (the only team in the tournament with no pro leaguers in its stable) together proved to the world that their brand of team-oriented and pitching-rich baseball

See **WBC**, page 4

INSIDE

<i>Eduardo Valero Passes Away</i>	1
<i>WBC Final Game</i>	1
<i>The WBC: A Contrast in Style</i>	2
<i>Trivia Challenge & Member Spotlight</i>	3
<i>Latino Lists</i>	5
<i>The First Dominicans</i>	6
<i>Announcements & Research Needs</i>	8
<i>Editor's Note</i>	10

World Classic Reveals Contrasts in Classic Baseball Styles

By Peter Bjarkman

(San Juan, PR) - For Bud Selig and the architects of the first WBC, a surprise final between Japanese League and Cuban League all-stars may have been the worst possible nightmare. But MLB was not entirely a loser in the final analysis—despite such an unpredictable turn of events on the field of play. MLB's announced goal of spreading the message that baseball is now truly an international sport was from all angles a resounding success. Merchandise was sold in record numbers. Stadiums were filled to near capacity for second round and championship games in Anaheim, San Juan and San Diego. Even all-important television ratings exceeded expectations, despite the underwhelming underperformance of a star-studded Team USA.

The atmosphere was especially electric for second round matches in San Juan's Hiram Bithorn Stadium—where four Latin American powers faced off



in a first true “Caribbean Series” matching a no-name Cuban juggernaut against top big leaguers from Venezuela, the Dominican and host Puerto Rico. And most importantly, a huge North American television audience has had its eyes rudely opened to the undeniable fact that top flight

baseball is not restricted to the United States and the Dominican Republic. Mexico and Canada both upended the USA Dream Team in convincing fashion. Korea, without a single household name big leaguer, ran the table undefeated until a semifinal loss to arch rival Japan. And the two international powerhouses left standing on the final night boasted only a single major leaguer between them. What could possibly have been a better scenario for growing baseball as an international sport?

Perhaps the most entertaining feature of the tournament was the stage it provided for watching contrasting styles of on-field diamond play and contrasting off-field strategies for approaching the short tournament format which has always been the hallmark of international competitions. The American, Dominican

and Venezuela squads were loaded with big league superstars and thus were the heavy favorites to slide though to San Diego on the strength of the long-ball slugging and the big inning knockout that have become hallmarks of modern-era big league action. But it didn't happen that way. Japanese, Korean and Cuban teams, with a delicate balance of pitching depth, defensive speed and aggressive “small ball” offense, ruled the day. The Koreans and Cubans, in particular, demonstrated that a deep roster of fresh arms with experience earned in the pressures of one-loss-and-out formats was far more important than a stable of heavy swingers who might wear down opposition hurlers over a long-season format.

Cuban manager Higinio Vélez perhaps best characterized his team's surprising successes when he remarked that the Cubans had fielded a team of “hombres, not nombres.” Vélez was quick to clarify that he simply meant that his team was one without recognized stars, yet also one that played with total dedication to a time-tested concept of ultimate team baseball. This was also the Japanese approach, since team and not individual achievement has always been the hallmark of Japanese league baseball based on ruthless conditioning and total commitment to the “*Wa*” concept of ball club unity. On the surface the Cubans and Japanese provided a stark contrast. Cuba's on-field performance was marked by Latin-flavored individual flair and plenty of creativity and individual aggressiveness at the plate and on the base paths. The Japanese, as always, seem almost robotic in their offensive and defensive executions. But for both teams there were no concessions to individual star power. Sluggers batting in the fourth and fifth lineup slots regularly sacrificed to move runs to scoring position; pitchers were quickly yanked without the least complaint. And new unsung heroes, like Cuba's underrated left fielder Frederick Cepeda and DH Yoandry Garlobo, Japan's pitching ace Daisuke Matsuzaka, and Korea's home run slugger Seung Yeop Lee, emerged almost daily.

The final weekend of the WBC didn't provide the advertised clashes between high-salaried superstars toting big league stamps of approval. Instead it provided something far better. WBC fans were able to feast upon the ultimate collision between two classic baseball cultures that still value and practice the game the way it was originally meant to be played.

BÉISBOL TRIVIA CHALLENGE

1. What current Latino holds the current record for career grand slams?:

- a. Alex Rodriguez c. Manny Ramirez
b. Ivan Rodriguez d. Albert Pujols

2. What Latino Hall of Famer has never appeared in a World Series?

- a. Juan Marichal c. Roberto Clemente
b. Rod Carew d. Orlando Cepeda

3. From June 1, 2000 through May 7, 2006 how many consecutive games has Miguel Tejada played in?

- a. 951 c. 853
b. 903 d. 910

4. Who became the first rookie to win a league batting championship?

- a. Sammy Sosa c. Minnie Miñoso
b. Luis Gonzalez d. Tony Oliva

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

Member Spotlight: ANTHONY SALAZAR

NAME: Anthony Salazar

SABR CHAPTER: Pacific Northwest Chapter

AREAS OF EXPERTISE: Latinos in baseball, the business of minor league baseball

FAVORITE BASEBALL MOMENT: The last playoff game in 1995 between the Seattle Mariners and the New York Yankees. It was an epic moment of a magical year that saved baseball in Seattle. Edgar Martinez hit a double to score the winning run to beat the Yankees. I had never heard anything so loud as the Kingdome that day!

FAVORITE LATINO PLAYERS: Edgar Martinez, Roberto Clemente, Orlando Cepeda. I've got a collection of retired Latin ballplayer bobbleheads. It's really hard to decide.

LATINO BASEBALL EXPERIENCE: current editor of *La Prensa del Béisbol Latino*; chair, SABR Latino baseball committee; former writer and former co-owner of (the old) LatinoBaseball.com; author of numerous articles on Latino baseball history.

JONRÓN: A Reality

By Edwin Fernández and Henry Martino

After four years of baseball statistical and historical research, it is with great satisfaction that we announced JONRÓN, a book that consolidate all the baseball development, growth and achievements of all the players from Latin America and Caribbean countries in the professional baseball and the Major Leagues from Esteban Bellán and Sandy Nava to Jorge Cantú and Robinson Cano.

The book narrates how baseball began in each of the Latin countries with at least one player in the Majors. It includes all the lifetime statistics as well as all post-season play by individual. All-Star Games and World Series performance as well as all the records and awards gained by players of this geographical area.

The authors designed a unique formula to determine the 100 most productive Latin players of all time. (This will be a presentation in our meeting

in Seattle 2006.)

This book has it all, with 388 pages and more than 100 photos, is like having an encyclopedia of the Latin player.

The late Eduardo Valero, wrote a chapter on thirteen of the most notable Afro-Latinos that did not make it due to the color of their skin.

And as a great finale, it contains the Dream Teams, the result of a survey made among experts and baseball personalities from the major latin countries.

JONRON...Crecimiento y Logros del Pelotero Latinoamericano y Caribeño en las Grandes Ligas is available in more than 30 bookstores in Puerto Rico, including Borders Books. The book will be distributed in mainland USA soon.



WBC, from page 1

Big league superstars filling the showcase lineups of teams representing pre-tournament favorites Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Team USA had already rejoined their pro clubs at spring training camps scattered throughout Florida and Arizona by the time Japan jumped on Cuba's spent pitching for a 10-6 championship victory in San Diego's sold-out Petco Park. Qualifying for the finale only because Mexico rudely upset an underachieving Team USA in the final game of Round Two play, Japanese bats came alive on the final two night to run roughshod over the WBC's two Cinderella clubs, previously unbeaten Korea and Cuba's talented crew of unknown amateurs. Korea, with six straight wins in pool play had opened the world's eyes to the fact that big league baseball no longer has a strict monopoly on quality pitching. And Cuba's shocking trio of victories over big league all-stars from three rival Caribbean nations put a final end to the reigning notion that the long-time champions of international amateur baseball could not play on the same field with top big-leaguers.

The headline story of the inaugural WBC had to be the remarkable fact that when all-stars representing baseball's two other top leagues—the Cuban Amateur League and the Japanese Professional League—took the field for the final nine innings in Petco Park there was no Derek Jeter, Alex Rodríguez, Albert Pujols, Pudge Rodríguez, Johann Santana, Bartolo Colon or Carlos Beltrán anywhere on the scene. With the single exception of Japan's Ichiro Suzuki, the only star still standing in San Diego's Petco Park was the white five-pointer that adorns the Cuban flag. And contrary to all expectations, the absence of star-studded teams from the USA and Dominican in the primetime finals did little to diminish interest among a worldwide television audience enthralled by the tournaments highly unexpected storyline.

If Sadaharu Oh's forces emerged as ultimate champions, it was the Cubans who proved the biggest winners in MLB's showcase two-week event. Cuba's emergence in the finals stole the thunder from even the surprise performance of the pitching-rich Koreans. Cuba has long reigned as the king of international baseball, winning 25 of 28 IBAF World Cups, three of four Olympic titles and nine of twelve Intercontinental Cups. But the rap was always that the Cubans had always feasted on lesser competition

and would never be able to play toe-to-toe with the major leaguers. That myth was quickly put to rest in San Juan and San Diego, first with a 6-1 drilling of Venezuela, then a tension-packed upset of Puerto Rico on the final night in San Juan, and finally with the dramatic upset of the slugging Dominicans in San Diego. The trio of unexpected Cuban wins came on the strength of remarkable clutch pitching from starters Yadil Martí and Ormari Romero and the big league quality reliving of Pedro Luis Lazo and Vicyohandri Odellín. Cuba's storied run also featured victories over two recent big league Cy Young hurlers—Johan Santana and Bartolo Colon. The remarkable charge to the finals at long last elevated tradition-rich



Cuban baseball to the top echelons of the sport.

The first World Baseball Classic was a resounding success by any possible measure. A final weekend without the American Dream Team

was perhaps the ideal scenario for spreading the popularity of baseball as a true international sport. The finale featured teams from the two best leagues outside of the majors. And the packed houses on the final two days in Petco Park reveled in quality baseball played in a true world series atmosphere. If the WBC proved anything it was that the Asians and Latins have caught up with the Americans in what has always somewhat presumptuously been viewed as an American national pastime. Dominican manager Manny Acta delivered some perceptive observations during the press conference following his team's semifinal ouster by the Cubans. "What we have all learned here," Acta noted, "was just how much great pitching there is around the world. Major leaguers no longer have a corner on great pitching."

When asked if the Cubans might have had an edge because the big leaguers were still in spring training Acta countered that everyone knew at the All-Star break last summer that this tournament would be played, and everyone had the same opportunities to prepare. We can be quite sure that when the next WBC rolls around sometime in 2009 no one in the camps of MLB or Team USA will again be taking the Cubans, Koreans or Japanese quite so lightly. American big leaguers now have only four years to catch up with the baseball world's new proven centers of gravity, now found in Asia and Latin America.

Debuts: Latin Americans in the Major Leagues (2006)

Compiled by Tony Menéndez

As of May 26, 2006

COLOMBIA

P-Emiliano Fruto, Seattle

CUBA

1B-Kendry Morales, Los Angeles Angels

P-Alay Soler-New York Mets

CURACAO

3B- Yurendell DeCaster, Pittsburgh

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

P-Ruddy Lugo, Tampa Bay

P-Sendy Rleal, Baltimore

P-Fabio Castro, Texas

SS-Tony Peña Jr., Atlanta

P-Ramon Ramirez, Colorado

P-Fausto Carmona, Cleveland

P-Rafael Perez, Cleveland

P-Francisco Rosario, Toronto

P-Agustin Montero, Chicago White Sox

P-Erick Aybar, Los Angeles Angels

P-Carlos Villanueva, Milwaukee

P-Santiago Ramirez, Washington

PANAMA

C-Carlos Ruiz, Philadelphia

PUERTO RICO

OF-Angel Pagan, Chicago Cubs

P-Saul Rivera, Washington

VENEZUELA

P-Carlos Martinez, Florida

2B-Josh Barfield, San Diego

P-Fernando Nieve, Houston

2B-Martin Prado, Atlanta

P-Angel Guzman, Chicago Cubs

P-Yusmeiro Petit, Florida

P-Renyel Pinto, Florida

For Updates Visit: www.BaseballLatino.net

First Half of the 2006 Season

By Tony Menéndez

Once again, Latinos in general are enjoying a great first half of season in the Major Leagues.

In the National League Albert Pujols is cementing with an offensive dream season that he deserves for the second year in a row the Most Valuable Player Award. Watch out for Hanley Ramirez from the Florida Marlins for Rookie of the Year.

In the American League the known names of Vladimir Guerrero, Manny Ramirez, Alex Rodriguez, David Ortiz and Miguel Tejada are enjoying an MVP season. Watch for the White Sox's duo of Jose Contreras and Freddy Garcia to compete for the Cy Young Award.

As Latinos are doing so well at mid-season it looks a big bunch should have a plane ticket for the 77th Midsummer Classic, which will be played in Pittsburgh's PNC Park on July 11.

Latinos that deserve your vote and should be present in the Steel City for the All Star Game are:

AMERICAN LEAGUE

C-Ramón Hernandez, Baltimore

C-Ivan Rodriguez, Detroit

2B-Jose Lopez, Seattle

SS-Miguel Tejada, Baltimore

3B-Carlos Guillen, Detroit

3B-Alex Rodriguez, New York Yankees

3B-Mike Lowell, Boston

OF-Vladimir Guerrero, Los Angeles Angels

OF-Maglio Ordoñez, Detroit

OF-Manny Ramirez, Boston

OF-Alexis Rios, Toronto

DH-David Ortiz, Boston

P-Jose Contreras, Chicago White Sox

P-Freddy Garcia, Chicago White Sox

P-Mariano Rivera, New York Yankees

NATIONAL LEAGUE

1B-Albert Pujols, St. Louis

1B-Carlos Delgado, New York Mets

2B-Jose Vidro, Washington'

SS-Hanley Ramirez, Florida

SS-Edgar Renteria, Atlanta

3B-Miguel Cabrera, Florida

OF-Carlos Beltran, New York Mets

OF-Carlos Lee, Milwaukee

OF-Alfonso Soriano, Washington

P-Pedro Martinez, New York Mets

P-Wandy Rodriguez, Houston

P-Jose Valverde, Arizona

Go today to www.mlb.com and vote for your favorite Latino players.

First in a Long Line

by Malcolm Allen

Over 400 men from the Dominican Republic have played in the major leagues since Ozzie Virgil became the first fifty years ago, and about six-dozen of them come from the same little sugar mill town on the nation's southeastern coast. Rico Carty, Joaquin Andujar, Pedro Guerrero, George Bell and Sammy Sosa are among the biggest stars born in San Pedro de Macoris, but Amado Samuel is the only man who can claim to be first.

Samuel signed with the Milwaukee Braves in 1958, and a flashy glove, good speed and some timely hitting earned him a spot in the big leagues in 1962. "Sammy" made history for the people of San Pedro when he made a seventh inning appearance at shortstop on opening day.

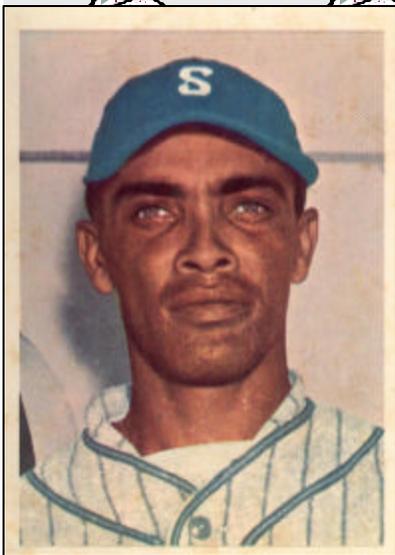
He batted just .206 with 3 home runs and 20 RBI in 209 at bats, but started 55 games as the Braves top reserve infielder. Things went backwards the following year when he got just sev-

enteen at bats before heading back to the minors, but opportunity knocked again when he was sold to the fledgling New York Mets after the season. Samuel got two hits as the opening day second baseman in 1964, and another as the starting shortstop in the home opener, but a slumping bat got him sent back down to triple-A in mid-July. Samuel tore up his knee on a head-first slide gone wrong and was never the same after that.

He forgot about baseball and went to work for General Electric, remaining there until he retired. Now 67, he insisted being the first major leaguer from San Pedro had never crossed his mind. He doubted it was true, but as his old Mets skipper Casey Stengel would say, "You could look it up".

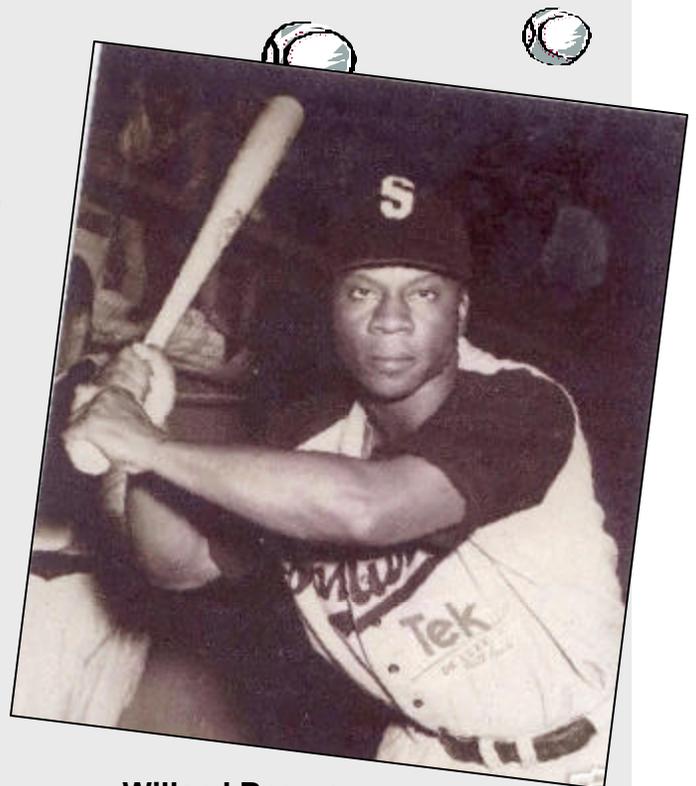
So think of Amado Samuel the next time you see Alfonso Soriano, Robinson Cano or another Macorisano at the ballpark.

Random Portraits



Raymond Brown

From the collection of Jorge Colon Delgado



Willard Brown

Which Hall of Fame Is It?

by Tito Rondon

There is evidence that Cristóbal Torriente was a slightly better hitter than Alejandro "El Caballero (The Gentleman)" Oms.

For one thing, Torriente hit .352 lifetime in Cuba compared to .351 for Oms, and had better (but not by much) power figures. For another, when the Cuban Hall of Fame was created in 1939, Torriente was among the first inductees, while Oms had to wait five years, until 1944.

Still, for many Cubans, Oms was the better hitter. So says baseball historian Manolo Alvarez, for example, in a recent interview for XM Radio channel 147. But apparently Torriente's statistics in the American Negro Leagues were so much better that he was inducted into Cooperstown while Oms was not. How did that happen?

David Lawrence, writing with Dom Denaro in their booklet, "The Eastern Colored League", tries to understand the apparently below-par results obtained by the "Cuban Stars" of that circuit, fifth among (more or less) eight clubs.

He states that "they no doubt under-performed their actual potential by a fairly wide margin in terms of their ECL won/lost record. If you look at their lineup, it's pretty daunting. Of the two Cuban teams, the ECL entry seemed to have the vast majority of the great players (with a few exceptions on the Negro National League team like Esteban "Mayarí" Montalvo and Valentín Dreke).

First of all, there is the outfield of (Bernardo) Baró, (Pablo "Champion") Mesa and Oms. Many observers believe that this is one of the great

outfields of all time. And it certainly had to be one of the greatest up to that point in baseball history. The obvious competition would have been the Red Sox outfield of Duffy Lewis, Tris Speaker and Harry Hooper, with which the Cubans had a lot in common: all three could hit, and all three were marvels on defense."

Why would this under-performing happen? Obviously, experiencing racism would be a depressing experience to a foreigner not used to it, affecting his play.

Furthermore, Lawrence speculates that for Cubans, playing in the Negro Leagues was akin to an American playing Winter League baseball today: they were "honing their skills for the 'real season'!" "If you had asked Alejandro Oms in 1923 what team he played for, he would have answered 'Santa Clara', the hometown team with whom he starred in the Cuban League that winter," writes Lawrence.

Of course, Torriente played in a different atmosphere, starring for Rube Foster's Chicago American Giants. I have no doubt his "real season" was in the United States.

So, which merits are we to count in measuring a player's greatness? Only those achieved in the United States, home after all of the Hall of Fame? Or his real, total value, wherever in the world he might have played besides the U. S.? In other words, is the Hall of Fame solely an American institution? Or is it universal, like baseball itself?

You can contact Tito Rondon at: titorondon2002@yahoo.com



Did You Know?

To help newly arrived rookies stave off homesickness, and create a sense of belonging, the New York Mets have sent the cooks from their spring training facilities in Florida to local Dominican restaurants to learn how to make plantains and yucca.

Research Needs & Announcements

SABR Board of Directors announced last April, the formation of the organization's newest chapter in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The chapter will be known as the Orlando Cepeda Chapter, after the noted Hall of Famer.

The first meeting will be in San Juan, Puerto Rico on June 3, 2006. Edwin Fernandez takes the reins as the Chair of the chapter, with Henry Martínó and Jorge Colón-Delgado serving as Directors.

During the first meeting three upcoming baseball books will be presented, including one on the 1954 Santurce Crabbers team, considered by many the best team ever in the Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League.

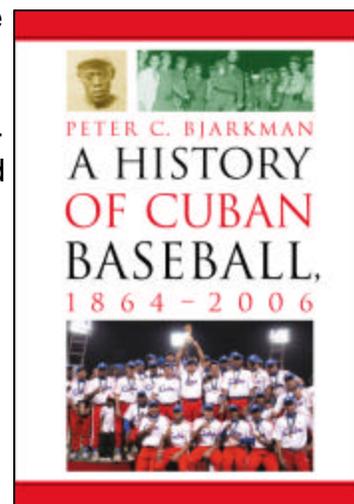
This first meeting will be in Angel Colon's residence, where he will exhibit part of his extensive collection of baseball memorabilia and photos.

The chapter in San Juan will be a great motivation for baseball writers and historians documenting the rich baseball history in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. — *Edwin Fernández*

Perfectly timed to coincide with Team Cuba's remarkable triumphs in Major League Baseball's first World Baseball Classic, McFarland Publishers—the leading publisher of baseball history books—will release Peter Bjarkman's long-awaited ***A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006*** in October 2006. Ten years in the making, this landmark volume promises to be the most comprehensive, detailed and intriguing work so far available on Cuba's national pastime and is likely to remain the seminal book on Cuban baseball history for decades to come.

This volume, more than 700 pages, provides the complete story of Cuban League action—both before and after the 1959 socialist revolution that marked the demise for professional leagues on the island. This is the first book on Cuban

baseball to argue persuasively that the Cuban heyday was not at all the pro leagues of the first half of the twentieth century but rather the island-wide National Series and triumphs of Cuban national teams in international play during the forty-five years **after** the communist reformation of Cuban society. Cuban pro winter leagues are seen here as merely the prologue to the unfolding of Cuba's domination in world amateur play between 1965 and 2006 and to exciting (and to most Americans unknown) National Series seasons now providing Cubans with a remarkable alternative baseball universe. — *Peter Bjarkman*



Waiting for CHE—Chasing Illusions in the Modern-Era Cuban Ballpark

PART I—THE CUBAN LEGENDS

- 1: Martín Dihigo—Baseball's Least-Known Hall of Famer
- 2: Adolfo Luque—The Lost Pride of Havana
- 3: Orestes Miñoso—The Cuban Comet
- 4: The Baseball Half-Century of Conrado Marrero

PART II—THE CUBAN LEAGUES

- 5: Myths and Legends of the Cuban Professional League (1878-1961)
- 6: Cuban Blackball's Doubleheaders on the Dark Side of the Moon
- 7: Havana as Amateur Baseball Capital of the World
- 8: Cuba's Revolutionary Baseball (1962-2005)

PART III—THE CUBAN LEGACY

- 9: The Myth of Fidel Castro, Barbudos Ballplayer
- 10: Tarzán, Minnie, Zoro and El Duque—The Saga of Cubans in the Major Leagues
- 11: The World's Best Unknown Ballplayers
- 12: Playing with the Enemy: Defections, The Orioles Series, and Cuban Baseball Détente

APPENDICES AND STATISTICAL RECORDS

- Appendix I: The Cuban Baseball Chronology (1866-2006)
 Appendix II: Cuban Negro Leagues Register
 Cuban Teams and Players in U.S. Negro Leagues (1904-1947)
 Afro-Americans' Career Statistics in Cuban League (1903-1960)
 Appendix III: Cuban Major League Register
 Chronological Roster of Cuba's 147 Major Leaguers
 Statistical Roster of Cuba's 147 Major Leaguers
 Cuban Baseball Hall of Fame Roster
 Appendix IV: Cuban Baseball Statistical Records
 Pre-Revolution (Professional) Cuban League Statistics (1878-1961)
 Post-Revolution (Amateur) Cuban League Statistics (1962-2006)
 Statistical Roster of National Series Players (1962-2004)
 Cuban Baseball Bibliography

A LITERARY REVIEW & AUTHOR INTERVIEW

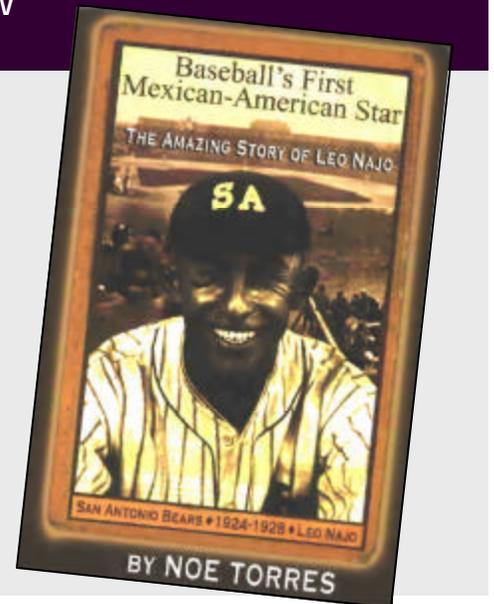
By Anthony Salazar

Baseball's First Mexican-American Star: The Amazing Story of Leo Najo

By Noe Torres

164 pages, \$14.95 softcover
 Photographs, notes, bibliography and index
 Llumina Press: Coral Springs, FL
 Published 2006
 ISBN 1-59526-579-1

Cover photo: Leonardo "Leo Najo" Alaniz



Most likely outside of South Texas, no one has heard the likes of Leo Najo. The author, who grew up in Najo's hometown of Mission, Texas is a devoted fan to the hero of the story. Torres paints a vivid picture of Najo as he progresses through baseball's hierarchy during the late 1920s into the 1930s and beyond.

The journeyman's exploits take him from San Antonio to Tyler, to Okmulgee to Omaha. And yes, there's a brief stop in Chicago

with the White Sox in 1926. Like most of us experience in life, there is failure and reward, and disappointment and joy. Najo, throughout his career, experiences it all. What is constant, is the faith his hometown has in him, not just as a ballplayer, but as a noble and honest man.

Torres has assembled a wide array of fine photographs, most from the collection of Najo's family. It's hard not to be engaged with his life.

What led to your research on Najo?

One evening, while enjoying a game in Harlingen, Texas, I became intrigued by a brief one-page history of minor league baseball in South Texas that was included in the game program. Inspired by that brief article, I began doing research on the old-time leagues. The result was my first book, *Ghost Leagues: A History of Minor League Baseball in South Texas*, which was published in May of 2005.

I noticed while researching that first book that Najo's name kept popping up as someone who was very significant in pro baseball from the 1920s to the 1940s. I began remembering and putting down on paper all the stories that my dad used to tell me about seeing Leo Najo play. I made contact with a wonderful young lady named Athit Farias-Camacho, the granddaughter of Leo Najo. We met and talked many times afterward, and I had the privilege of spending time with Leo's family.

What was the most interesting or surprising thing you

discovered about him?

He was one of the first players of Mexican descent to be drafted by a major league team, the Chicago White Sox, in 1925. When he put on the White Sox uniform during the spring of 1926, Najo had made it to baseball's loftiest stage at a time when Latinos and Blacks were definitely not welcome.

What do you hope readers will take away from the Najo story?

I want readers to see that it was Leo's love for the game of baseball led him to rise from the rocky dirt playing fields of Northern Mexico and Southern Texas to the very pinnacle of the sport. Leo persevered and became one of the best minor league outfielders of his era. He was certainly a hero and a role model in many ways. Despite his outstanding pro career and the fact that he was the first player inducted into Mexico's Professional Baseball Hall of Fame, Leo has been overlooked and generally ignored by baseball historians.

A note from the Editor

by Anthony Salazar

The loss of Eduardo Valero has been profound. His peers and colleagues have shared their grief with me. He's been called a 'gentleman,' "a scholar of the sport," and "friend." He will be truly missed.

As we move forward, I have been named chair of the Latino baseball committee, and will retain the duties as newsletter editor. Edwin Fernandez will remain as vice chair, though he will have his hands full running the new Orlando Cepeda chapter in San Juan. We look forward to hearing more about the activities in Puerto Rico.

For those attending SABR36 in Seattle, Washington, you will be in for a treat. There will be a number of Latino-related presentations and discussions. As chair of SABR36, I can share with you that this will be a convention to remember. I look forward to meeting with each of you. The Latino committee meeting will be held Friday, June 30th from 4:30-5:30pm at the convention hotel.

Special thanks to our contributors, Tony Mendez, Peter Bjarkman (who also supplied the photos for his stories), Malcolm Allen, Henry Martino, Tito Rondon and Jorge Colon Delgado. Our publication could not be complete without the contributions from our valued members. Thank you for your support.



Latin American Baseball Committee

Edwin Fernandez

Vice Chair

Anthony Salazar

Chair, Newsletter 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.

Copyright © 2006 Society for American Baseball Research (SABR). All rights reserved.

La Prensa del Béisbol Latino

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

www.sabr.org
latinobaseball-subscribe@yahoogroups.com



In This Issue

The Passing of Eduardo Valero, WBC wrap-up, JONRON & more!