



DRSEA INFORMER

Volume VI, Issue 4: A Publication For Your Reading Enjoyment

DRSEA Finaliza Segundo Semestre (DRSEA Ends Second Semester) – As the DRSEA closes out its second semester of classes, we are looking forward to expanding in 2014.

We welcomed our inaugural 15 students last January, took a summer break, and resumed in September, continuing with a heavy concentration in English, as well as a new teacher, Christine Kitts, an East Tennessee native who holds a degree in education from Middle Tennessee State University. She has been teaching in the Dominican Republic since the fall of 2008, and her teaching experience includes both classroom and individual settings. This year, she is one of the 4th grade teachers at The Palms Christian School in San Pedro de Macoris, where the DRSEA classes are taught.

“I understand how important it is for these kids to get a good education,” Kitts said. “Most will not become the baseball players they imagine they will, so it is important for them to have other opportunities to succeed in life. And even if they do succeed in baseball, they need that education in order to appreciate that life as well.”



Christine Kitts instructs the DRSEA class

The next step in the evolution of the DRSEA is to expand English classes, include more students, and next summer open to international students as well as Dominicans with a two-month orientation program, then immersing them in a full academic curriculum.

We have had inquiries from potential students all over the world, including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Israel, Ghana, and Venezuela. We are now taking applications for new Dominican students as well as international students and a preliminary data form is available on our website, www.drsea.org.

MLB Desarrolla Programa Educativo (MLB Creates Education Program) –

Major League Baseball has moved towards providing quality education for prospects in the Dominican Republic, recently unveiling a program designed to improve reading, writing, critical thinking and English skills, many of the same skills being advocated by the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy for years.

Seven teams have signed up for the 20-week pilot program that starts next month, with prospects receiving at least nine hours of instruction each week, according to Rafael Perez, director of MLB operations in the Dominican Republic, who explained that if successful, the program could become league-wide in Latin America.

"We at Major League Baseball care about the prospects going to school; it is just the right thing to do," Perez told MLB.com. "We are also helping released players and giving them a chance to finish school, get a technical career and learn English. There are opportunities.

"Our research identified that, unfortunately, the Dominican Republic has a very strong deficiency in their public schools because of the infrastructure, methodology and the deficiency among the teachers and hours in school, and as a result the players, as well as the general population among a certain age, have a deficiency in reading comprehension and deficiencies in math. In the end, that's one of the main reasons our players have a problem learning a second language. The program is about facing those challenges.

"Every club wants to have their own program, and we cannot tell a club how to develop its players because ultimately it's their decision on what they feel is best for them, but we do want to provide a framework of a program. Being a good baseball player is no different than being a good executive in terms of understanding what you are supposed to do and executing. It's ultimately about giving the prospects the foundation to help them make good decisions in order to learn and succeed at the game."



Rafael Perez

The DRSEA has been encouraging the adoption and implementation of such a program for years. Back in 2000, when I led a delegation to the Dominican Republic at the behest of Major League Baseball to take a look at academy conditions, I concluded in a report to MLB that education needed to be fundamental, so I applaud baseball for taking steps now to introduce education into its academies. Here are some of the education aspects the DRSEA has been advocating:

- Communication Skills: Many of the young players in the academies not only don't speak English, they also have poor Spanish language skills. I think a goal needs to be to improve the language competency of those athletes who lack adequate proficiency and to improve interpersonal communications skills. And while developing English language skills is desirable, I think it needs to be "Baseball English" that goes beyond language of the diamond, but also language they can use in everyday life – like how to order in a restaurant, purchase clothes or groceries, ask directions, and the like.
- Critical Thinking: These are young teenagers who suddenly are in positions of tremendous responsibility, often with the hopes and dreams of their families resting on their shoulders. They need to develop skills in conceptualizing, analyzing, evaluating and applying information that they are exposed to, to make them better able to handle a multitude of decisions that will be coming their way as they mature. People who think critically tend to use their intellectual tools to approach life decisions rationally and reasonably. Also, given that baseball is such a cognitive sport, it will improve their chances of success in the game.
- Financial Planning: In a very short period, these young athletes often find themselves with lucrative signing bonuses and professional contracts, totally unprepared to manage their new riches. Lack of guidance, misuse of funds, and poor investment decisions have led many players literally to the poorhouse. They need to learn money management, savings and investment options.
- Computer Skills: If you don't know your way on the information highway you are going to find yourself on an off ramp to nowhere. Computer skills are essential today. Computers can also supplement other factors in any education initiative since many language and other helpful programs are available by computer. Internet familiarity is also important.
- Life Skills: Many young athletes are quickly introduced to the fast-paced lifestyle of professional sports without the proper life skills to deal with the pace and pressures. They may also be unfamiliar with the rules of social comportment. They need to learn to cope with their new standard of living and how to avoid potential pitfalls. They need to learn survival skills such as time management, anger management, health and nutrition, the evils of drugs, alcohol and gambling, anti-exploitation, and maybe even things like basic cooking and how to do laundry.
- Options After Baseball: The vast majority of prospects in Dominican academies will never play in the major leagues. And even those who do will inevitably be faced with a time when they must hang up their cleats. Players need to learn about options after baseball, both in the sports industry and outside. They also need to be taught about understanding the Major League system, about contracts, legal terms and obligations. They need to learn long-term financial planning, budgeting and personal organization.

The majority of these suggestions were included in the report I made to Major League Baseball 13 years ago. Now, a quality educational initiative finally appears to be on its way.

Delante Del Juego (Ahead Of The Game) – Though the DRSEA has yet to have a graduate, we succeeded recently with placing a Dominican prospect in a U.S. college.

Pedro Gomez Jr. is attending LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis, TN, where the baseball coach, James McNeal, says he very happy to have Pedro in his program and is excited for the

potential impact he will have. "Pedro has good qualities as a person," McNeal said. "He picks up things very quick. Additionally, Pedro loves the game of baseball and his passion will drive him to be an impact player."

The DRSEA first connected with young Gomez through his father, a top official in the Dominican government, who wanted to find a good educational experience as well as a good baseball experience for his son, who had the advantage of graduating from a U.S. high school as well as having attended college in the United States for a year.



Pedro Gomez Jr.

Initially, the timing was bad but we persevered, particularly through the efforts of Tim Halloran, a member of the DRSEA Board of Trustees and our Director of International Student Athlete Development, who tirelessly contacted numerous colleges on behalf of the young man, who eventually grabbed the opportunity presented by LeMoyne Owen.

While our main goal remains to place our own graduates on baseball scholarships at U.S. colleges and universities, we were delighted to have been able to assist young Pedro in attending college, and we hope to be able to assist many other Dominicans with such opportunities.

Racismo Es Universal (Racism Is Universal) – I finally got a chance to see “42” recently at a special screening of the movie at the Festival de Cine Global Dominicano and was even more honored to moderate a panel discussion on racism and Latino athletes prior to the screening.

Jackie Robinson knocked down the door of segregation, breaking the color line and opening the game of baseball to all. And through that door stepped the Dominican pioneers of baseball – Ozzie Virgil, Juan Marichal, The Rojas Alou brothers, Cesar Geronimo, Rudy Hernandez, Julian Javier, Manuel Jimenez, and Manny Mota – players who paved the way for the Dominicans who now dominate the game of baseball, but whose contributions are often unsung. Robinson broke the color line, but the Dominicans who followed helped to further break down racial and cultural barriers and establish the Dominican Republic as a hotbed for baseball.

On hand for the panel discussion was Marichal, a true legend and the only Dominican in the baseball Hall of Fame. He was joined by Felix Sanchez, a two time Olympic gold medalist in the 400 meter hurdles, and Pedro Leandro Rodriguez, one of the major forces in the development of basketball in the Dominican Republic as a member of the National Team in the 1970s and president of the LIDOPA, the Dominican professional basketball league during its first three years, 2005-2007.



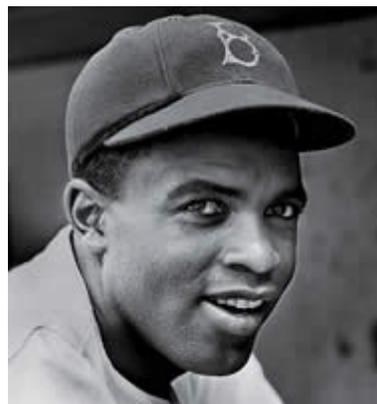
Rodriguez, Marichal, me and Sanchez

All gave very poignant accounts of the racism they encountered in the U.S., none more insightful than Marichal who described both the racial and cultural discrimination he encountered in the career that began in the 1960s and spanned 16 years.

I grew up in the U.S. with racism. It was very simple; white people discriminated against black people. But understanding race in the Dominican Republic can be difficult. The composition of Dominican society is influenced by a mixture of race, culture, history, and politics which has created an interesting mosaic of people. That mosaic makes it more difficult for Latino athletes to understand American racism and discrimination, because it is not simple, it is not just black and white.

That is why I found the recounting of experiences by Marichal, Sanchez (who was actually born in the U.S. to Dominican parents) and Rodriguez so interesting, and their pain so genuine. Racism hurts, no matter the recipient.

The movie “42” put the punctuation point on the evening. The story of Jackie Robinson is both disturbing and uplifting. Disturbing that we are not that far removed from his struggles; uplifting that one man stood so tall for all of us.



Jackie Robinson

Apelacion Para El Fin Del Ano (End Of The Year Appeal) – As we approach the end of the year, I wanted to tell you how much the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy appreciates all the support we have received in 2013 to make the Academy a reality. The DRSEA is a project that will provide academic and athletic opportunities to underprivileged youths in hopes that they can receive scholarships to play baseball at U.S. colleges and universities. It could be the only opportunity some of these Dominican kids will have for success in life.

In addition to the school, we are planning on launching a project in 2014 that will bring college students to the Dominican Republic for internships at baseball academies and other venues, giving them a valuable experience abroad.

I am making an end-of-the-year appeal, asking your support in the form of a donation to the effort, hoping that you will reach into your hearts and pockets to help in any way you can in assisting the DRSEA to grow even more in 2014. Even the smallest contribution of \$5, \$10, \$25 or \$50 (more if you are able) can make a difference, which is why I am asking you to make a contribution to the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy (DRSEA), a 501C3 organization. We need people like you to embrace the DRSEA as their own. We all have a responsibility to help those less fortunate; I hope that you share that obligation.

Please make your tax deductible contribution today by sending your donation to 600 Anita Street, #16, Chula Vista, CA 91911, or you can contribute on our website, www.drsea.org.

Charles S. Farrell

DRSEA Contact Information in the Dominican Republic

Address: Calle 19 de Marzo, #103, Suite 305, Zona Colonial, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Phone: 829-505-2991

Website: www.drsea.org

Twitter: [Twitter.com/drseaorg](https://twitter.com/drseaorg)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/drseaorg

Please feel free to pass the **DRSEA INFORMER** on to others you feel might be interested in being updated on what we are doing or send us their e-mail to include them on the mailing list. The **INFORMER** is published on a regular basis; back issues are available on our website. **Reprint by permission only.**