



DRSEA INFORMER

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El Arreglo Llego (The Fix Is In) – Major League Baseball knocked one out of the park with its recent selection of Sandy Alderson to head a reform movement in baseball in the Dominican Republic. Alderson headed a task force appointed by Commissioner Bud Selig to study problems affecting baseball here, including widespread allegations of age and identity fraud, skimming of bonus money paid to players, and the use of steroids among prospects.

Alderson delivered a report on his findings and will serve as a special consultant to Major League Baseball to implement those findings. “Major League Baseball faces significant issues [in the Dominican Republic],” Alderson said when his appointment was announced. “But all of them can be resolved favorably through the cooperative efforts of the Office of the Commissioner, the major league clubs, and the government and the people of the Dominican Republic.”

Among some of the proposals Alderson reportedly is considering is the use of fingerprinting to help prevent age and identity fraud. In an August **DRSEA INFORMER**, I made the suggestion that Major League Baseball start a fingerprinting program for boys in an effort to combat age and identity fraud among young prospects in the Dominican Republic. As part of the Alderson reform proposal, Major League Baseball is also said to be considering starting its own youth baseball league in the Dominican Republic as an alternative to the current system that is corrupted by *buscónes*, the “agents” who find young prospects and sign them to teams, often taking hefty portions of the prospects’ signing bonuses in return.



Sandy Alderson

Signing Alderson as a consultant is a great move by baseball. Alderson has a solid record as a baseball executive, having worked for Major League Baseball and several of its teams; he has a reputation as a “fixer,” able to come in and swiftly identify problems and create solutions.

He still has a difficult task ahead of him. Baseball people here tell me that while there is great respect for Alderson in the Dominican Republic, he would be making a huge mistake to think reform will work without the cooperation and consent of the Dominican government and baseball officials; something he apparently understands.

“Baseball depends on the Dominican Republic and the Dominican Republic depends on baseball,” one government official told me. “There must be joint agreement on reform or it won’t work here.”

In an apparently related development, Major League Baseball fired Ronaldo Peralta, head of its Latin American operations, just days after announcing Alderson’s hiring. Peralta had worked in the Santo Domingo office since it opened in 2000.



Ronaldo Peralta

I had met Peralta several times; a nice guy, but rumors of his demise have been circulating for months after his leadership and judgement were called into question. A year ago, Peralta hired his brother-in-law, Jose Antonion Frias, to investigate age and identity fraud among Dominican baseball prospects. Frias was fired after accusations he took bribes to falsify information in his investigations.

Insiders say Alderson exacted Peralta’s firing as a clear message that he means to change the way things have been operating in the Dominican Republic.

La Estupidez Mejor Se Mantiene Un Secreto Que Exhibida (Stupidity Is Better Kept A Secret Than Displayed) – Torii Hunter apparently never read Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus’ caution on stupidity. The Anaheim Angels center fielder gave new meaning to the phrase “dumb jock” when he claimed that dark-skinned baseball players from the Dominican Republic are not black but “imposters.”

"People see dark faces out there, and the perception is that they're African American," Hunter said, according to an article in USA Today that examined the lack of African American baseball players. "They're not us. They're impostors. Even people I know come up and say, 'Hey, what color is Vladimir Guerrero? Is he a black player?' I say, 'Come on, he's Dominican. He's not black.' "

African Americans made up only 9 percent of Major League Baseball rosters last season, compared to 29 percent foreign players, with the Dominican Republic contributing the largest share of that percentage.

The article also quoted Hunter as saying teams chase Latino players "because you can get them cheaper. It's like, 'Why should I get this kid from the South Side of Chicago and have Scott Boras represent him and pay him \$5 million when you can get a Dominican guy for a bag of chips?' "

While Hunter is right in his assessment that it is cheaper to develop Dominican talent, his marginalizing the ethnicity of Dominican players is absurd. I happen to know of one Major League Baseball team that is developing a couple of Ghanaian baseball players who I predict will one day be in Major League Baseball uniforms. By Hunter’s standard, those African players should not be considered black.



Torri Hunter

Hunter exacerbates his ignorance by excluding Guerrero from “blackness” by creating a new ethnicity – Dominican. The official ethnic breakdown in the Dominican Republic is 16 percent white, 11 percent black and 73 percent mixed, with that mix being undeniably of African Diaspora ancestry. Just as there is a melting pot of Americans who consider themselves black, so it is in the Dominican Republic. President Barack Obama is called our first black president even though his mother is white. Remember the one drop rule? The fact Hunter needs to face is that more and more great baseball players are black, regardless of their nationality.

Hunter is correct that Major League Baseball pursues Latino talent because of the cost factor; it is less expensive to develop players in the Dominican Republic than in the United States. Baseball spends \$100 million annually on development factories here; it is a business decision to do so.

But that should not negate a responsibility by Major League Baseball to improve the number of African Americans playing baseball; in 1975, 27 percent of the players were black Americans.

Without a doubt, Major League Baseball’s decision to mine talent offshore has played a role in the decline of African American participation in the game, but it is only one factor.

Even six decades after Jackie Robinson broke the color line, baseball continues to have a public relations problem in the African American community because many believe America’s pastime is inherently racist. The fact that there was a color line for Jackie Robinson to break remains fixed in the minds’ of many, most of whom couldn’t tell you who broke the color line in professional football, basketball or hockey.

Add to that the fact that most high school athletes today are not triple threats, playing three sports a year. Summer, the primary baseball season in the United States, is also the evaluation period for college basketball. If you are a gifted basketball player looking for a college scholarship, you concentrate on that sport in the summer, not baseball.

One result is that blacks are poorly represented in college baseball. Only about 6 percent of college players are black; about 5 percent are Latino. With only 11.5 scholarships allotted for NCAA Division I baseball teams, the competition is fierce.

On top of that is my belief that baseball is not marketed well to the African American community. Go into any black community and you will see an abundance of basketball courts; rarely do you see baseball diamonds, and the ones that do exist are generally poorly maintained. Listen to black radio and rarely do you hear an ad for “*Take Me Out To The Ball Game.*”

On the positive side, baseball is acutely aware of the problem it has attracting African American players and fans to the game. Several years ago it created the RBI program (Reviving Baseball in the Inner Cities), which is now nationwide and even in the Dominican Republic. The program has established baseball academies in Compton, CA, and Houston, with sites approved for Miami and

New Orleans. Hunter, to his credit, gives generously to charitable efforts for the development of baseball in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Major League Baseball also created the Civil Rights Game in 2007 to honor the civil rights movement in the United States, and to mark the end of the league's spring training. Last year, the game became a regular season game.

Can baseball do more to improve African American participation? Sure, but it also needs to work on blunting the beliefs of those like Torii Hunter that pit black Americans against black Dominicans.



Keith Lee

Keith Lee, chief operating officer of the National Consortium for Academics and Sports, and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy, said, "I have been very saddened by the lack of black American players in Major League Baseball. I am aware of the various reasons for that, but I don't want to see it turn into a war between the foreign players and the black American players."

Lee, a former professional football player and an expert on diversity in sports, added, "I think there is room for all players from the global community to enjoy this game."

Meanwhile, the Dominican media is having a field day with Hunter's comments. Said one radio talk show host, "Hey, what color is (NBA star) Dirk Nowitzki? Is he a white player? I say, 'Come on, he's German. He's not white.' "

Las Bendiciones De La Amistad Y De La Fraternidad (The Blessings Of Friendship And Fraternity) – One of the things that living in the Dominican Republic provides me with is the tranquility to reflect on my many blessings in life, including good friends and the fellowship of my fraternity. My close friends and frat brothers have been with me all of my adult life, and I often reflect on how fortunate I am to have them.

I recently found myself in a financial pinch I hadn't anticipated, one that jeopardized remaining in the Dominican Republic and pursuing my dream of creating the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy. I won't bore you with the details of how I found myself in a hole, but suffice it to say it was a blow.

With nowhere else to turn, I looked to my friends and the brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, many of whom are one in the same. Their response overwhelmed me; their donations assured that I can survive my money crunch and continue my quest, at least for now. The donations were large and small, but even the smallest amount helped. People have to understand that \$10, \$25, \$50 or \$100 can do so much more here in the Dominican Republic, can make a huge difference in assisting the DRSEA.

From the beginning, I have wanted to share my dream with others, to have them understand my motivation, my passion and compassion for the Dominican Republic and its people. I have always

believed that it will take more than one person to make the dream come true; that is the reason I started the **DRSEA INFORMER** as a vehicle to share my vision, my thoughts, my life in the Dominican Republic, this rich and exciting adventure I find myself on. I have described it as a roller coaster ride; exhilarating and frustrating, exciting and boring, satisfying and disappointing, joyful and sad, tranquil and scary, befriended and lonely.

I have always known that I cannot make this journey alone, that I need others to embrace the dream. The fact that so many have lets me know that I just need to steer the course. There have been times when I have felt like giving up, when I feel tired down to my soul, but then comes inspiration and support from friends to have courage, to trust in God and to see the light.

The mission of the DRSEA is to provide young, gifted student athletes in the Dominican Republic a better opportunity to become well-rounded individuals, to excel in life, outside the lines and off the playing fields. Through a rigorous educational and athletic component, students at the DRSEA will be able to qualify for sports scholarships at U.S. colleges and universities. If they can have a career in professional sports, great, but playing sports is a short career even in the best of circumstances. Education is something that will last them a lifetime and help them make an impact on the world around them.

This is the dream I hope more will share.

The main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth. - Erasmus

Charles S. Farrell

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