



DRSEA INFORMER

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El Béisbol Anota Una Carrer, Pero El Juego Es Suspendido (Baseball Scores, But Game Suspended) - Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association got a split decision recently when a U.S. federal court of appeals ruled that federal agents went too far in seizing urine samples, drug testing-records and other evidence in a raid in connection with baseball's 2003 survey on drug testing. But a federal appeals judge said that the potential steroid evidence cannot be destroyed by the Major League Baseball Players Association pending an appeal, meaning that the 104 players who tested positive in the survey still risk potential exposure. Several players' names have already been leaked from the survey that was intended to remain anonymous, including Alex Rodriguez, Sammy Sosa, David Ortiz and Manny Ramirez, all Dominicans.

Federal prosecutors asked for the stay until they decide whether to appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, saying the evidence is crucial to the potential appeal.

Federal agents were armed with a search warrant in 2004 that allowed them to seize the urine samples involved in the so-called BALCO case; agents also took computers that included the records of the 104 players and other information. Prosecutors had argued that they were entitled to the records because the information was in "plain view" during the search, but the appeals court decision established new guidelines for the in-plain-sight argument, barring the practice in computer searches. The decision could set new precedent in such cases, which makes the prospect of Supreme Court review even more intriguing. The appeals court basically said that the government does not have a right to records of people not the target of a search warrant just because those records are on a computer taken during a criminal investigation. Since most business records are currently kept on computer, the ruling could apply to just about every American.

For baseball, if the decision is upheld, it could spell the end to a nightmare. Baseball has been slowly twisting at the end of a rope as players' names have been leaked from the list of those who tested positive in the survey. The MLBPA has asked for an investigation of the leak, but, to date, none has been launched.

Is it just me, or is it a scary thought that the U.S. Supreme Court may actually take ultimate jurisdiction of this case? When I was growing up, I had considered a career in law, inspired by

Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and the High Court's impact on social change in America. This is the same court that decided Plessy v. Ferguson, that legalized segregation. The same court the decided Brown v. BOE, that ended segregation. The same court that decided Rowe v. Wade, legalizing abortion. The Court of Justice Marshall, for God sake!

And now that Court could ultimately decide the fate of vials of urine.



Meanwhile, the reason for drug testing in the first place continues to be born out, particularly in the Dominican Republic.

As of this week, there were 68 drug suspensions at the minor league level for the 2009 season. Last year there were a total of 66 suspensions, so baseball has broken a dubious record. The suspensions are effective at the start of next season.

Of those 68 players, 31 are in the Dominican Summer League. Forty-five DSL players were suspended for drug use a year ago, leaving some to surmise that steroid use is going down, but those who are familiar with drug testing will tell you not to be fooled.

As laboratories work to perfect drug testing, there are chemists feverishly at work developing ways to avoid detection, and they are also working on the next generation of performance-enhancing drugs, many of which are probably being used by players even as we speak. I think the only way to end the use of PEDs is to develop harsher penalties for those who do get caught, to the point others will have to ask themselves: "Is it worth it?" Obviously we haven't reached that point yet, and the fact that 45 percent of those caught doping this year are Dominican says volumes about the risks these players will take to have a career in baseball.

And then there is Damian Arredondo. Back in July, the young Dominican prospect who claimed to be a 16-year-old had his contract voided by the Yankees after it was discovered he had misrepresented his age and identity. He forfeited an \$850,000 signing bonus. More recently, he was suspended for 50 games after testing positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

Principios Cardinales (Cardinal Principles) – Over the years, I have been fortunate to meet a wealth of people in the sports industry who have left their impact on their game and beyond. People in baseball like Luis Tiant, Juan Marichal, Joe Morgan, Hank Aaron, Cesar Geronimo, Cal Ripken, and Frank Robinson. People in football like Deion Sanders, Bruce Smith, Steve McNair, Steve Young, and Doug Williams. Boxers like Tommy Hearns, Riddick Bowe, and Evander Holyfield. And basketball players like Bill Russell, Norm Van Lier, Satch Sanders,

Cheryl Miller, Julius Erving, David Robinson, Dikembe Mutombo, and even the iconic Michael Jordan.

I have also met many coaches I have found to be incredibly inspirational including Joe Paterno, Vivian Stringer, Bill Curry, Ty Willingham, Paul Hewitt and John Thompson.

In all my years, I have been in awe of only two sports people: Muhammad Ali and Eddie Robinson. Robinson, the legendary coach at Grambling State University, in particular was memorable. I twice got to spend some time with him and he was always gracious and accommodating, never quite accepting what the fuss over him was all about. "I am just an old football coach," he would tell me, but he was, of course, much more than that.

Robinson personally built Grambling football into an international monument, sent dozens of players to the National Football League, and had an impact on thousands of others. He was known for walking through the dorms at the crack of dawn, waking his players for breakfast, knowing that if they were up for breakfast they were up for class.



Coach Eddie Robinson

During one conversation, Coach Rob told me how he felt it was a privilege to recruit football players to Grambling, to be a guest in the home of a prospect, to meet his parents, to convince them Grambling was the right choice for their son. He told me he made a promise to each that he would take care of their child, that they would get an education, that they would leave Grambling as men who could stand on their own in the world. "I always tried to keep that promise," he said.

Bill McCartney, the former football coach at Colorado and now president of Promise Keepers, once said of great coaches that they take a player where he can't take himself. That was Eddie Robinson.

And then there is Rick Pitino.

I never did like Pitino. I always felt he operated with a degree of arrogance that set him above the game he coached. When he departed teams like the Knicks and the Celtics, he played out his frustrations by pointing the finger at others, once calling himself "a wounded tiger." When a reader poll called for his resignation in Boston, he said, "Why would someone do that?" He even said, after his resignation from the Celtics, that Larry Bird and Kevin McHale were not going to come walking through the door to his rescue, as if that had something to do with his failures.

And now Pitino, the basketball coach of the storied Louisville Cardinals, is in a mess of his own creation and he continues to point the finger of blame away from himself. Pitino, if you don't know, has admitted to consensual, unprotected sex with a woman on a table top at an upscale restaurant in Louisville, while an assistant stood guard at the door. The married, Catholic, father of five then admitted he gave the woman money that was used to pay for an abortion. She later alleged that Pitino raped her and is now facing charges of trying to extort money from the coach.



Rick Pitino

Pitino, true to his arrogance, called a press conference to chastise the media for its ongoing coverage of the soap opera, saying, "Everything that's been printed, everything that's been reported, everything that's been breaking in the news *on the day Ted Kennedy died* is 100 percent a lie, a lie..... All of this has been a lie and a total fabrication of the truth – except for what I told you – the mistake that I made," Pitino said.

It was a pointed, and failed attempt to excuse his behavior. It was as if he were the victim, lured into a sexual tryst, unable to resist. What conceit! What pretentiousness!

Many are calling for Louisville to fire Pitino or demand his resignation; whatever happens, Louisville will have to live with it. As for his indiscretions, however moronic I might see them, they are ultimately between Pitino, his wife, his family and his God.

But I can't help but think of the current and future basketball players at Louisville, and, for that matter, the thousands of athletes, male and female, recruited each year to play their sport at U.S. colleges and universities. The homes that coaches will visit, the parents they will try to impress, and I think of the promise Eddie Robinson made to so many parents over so many years. And then I think about Rick Pitino; would I want him in my house, talking to my child, promising to look out for them, to care for them, take them where they can't take themselves?

Cyrano de Bergerac once wrote, "The insufferable arrogance of human beings to think that nature was made solely for their benefit, as if it was conceivable that the sun had been set afire merely to ripen men's apples and head their cabbages." I think he was talking about Pitino.

Sentido Y Sensibilidad (Sense and Sensibility) – I had an interesting conversation with a Dominican woman recently who was explaining to me why some things in the Dominican Republic, like education, don't receive the attention they do in other places in the world. "Unfortunately, we don't give some things the respect they deserve. We think differently, we act different, we are Dominican."

It wasn't a putdown. This woman, an educator herself, has traveled the world and has choices, and chooses to be in the Dominican Republic, to work to improve the status of and commitment to education, and says proudly, "I will be a Dominican until the day I die." She wears her national pride on her chest, as do all Dominicans I meet.

Reflecting on what the woman said has helped me to try to put some things into clearer perspective. While I love living here, I find myself frustrated at times by the differences between

the U.S. and the Dominican Republic, frustrated in part because I naturally filter much of what I see through the gauze of the Stars and Stripes and my American perspective is often a contradiction to the realities of the Dominican Republic.

Please understand that I made it a point when I decided to live here to observe and not criticize; I am first and foremost a guest in this country, a foreign country. I remember that my ex-girlfriend, a Dominican who lives in New York City, and I used to fight all the time about her perpetual tardiness. She would always try to tell me, “Well, in my country, people are not as concerned about time.” And I would always tell her, “Well, we are not in your country.”

Well, now I am in her country, and you know what? People are not as concerned about time. The pace is slower, people don't rush to get places and therefore often don't get to their appointed rounds at the appointed time. You adjust by making only one appointment in an afternoon instead of two or three, and taking a book to read while you wait. You can't let lateness stress you or you will always be stressed, I can assure you.

Yet my American penchant for punctuality tugs at me innards. I hate being late; it was something that was drilled into me growing up and I also have always resisted falling into the stereotype of CPT – colored people time. So I often operate in a contradiction here in the Dominican Republic; I am on time though I know I will have to wait.

In an effort to better understand all of this, I have been reading a lot about ethnocentrism, including how it relates to baseball in the Dominican Republic. As defined by Alan Klein, a professor at Northeastern University, in his study *Progressive Ethnocentrism: Ideology and Understanding in Dominican Baseball*, ethnocentrism is “The effort to examine the problems associated with interpreting events and practices emanating in one cultural context [the Dominican Republic] by those of another [the United States].” He adds, “Ethnocentrism has been considered to be a problem linked to close-minded individuals and agencies, but this study attempts to show that progressive thinkers can also fall prey to it.”

I consider myself a progressive thinker and truly work on not being closed minded, but I have seen it up close and personal. A guy I know, who is back in the U.S. now, spent several months here, complaining daily about Dominicans being late, about the electricity going off, about the lack of hot water, that he thought Dominicans should speak English, even in a Spanish-speaking country. How close minded is that? Or maybe a better question is: How American is that?

Americans tend to embrace the belief that all things American are better and indeed, we have been spoiled into accepting that belief. Most of us take electricity for granted, can turn on a faucet and get hot water, and converse in English, but the truth is that that is not a global reality. The world extends beyond the 50 United States; more people speak Spanish in the world than English.

Baseball is played with the same rules in both the Dominican Republic and the United States. The distance between the pitching rubber and home plate is 60 feet, 6 inches in both countries. Still three strikes and you are out whether you are in New York or Santo Domingo. Nine innings are a game in Chicago and Santiago.

But the passions ignited by baseball are different: Northeastern's Professor Klein states in his study that in the Dominican Republic the dream of baseball shines radiantly in the individual, but blinds the society around it. And it soaks up the energies and hopes of young boys whose time and dreams might be better invested, he says, suggesting that this actually plays into U.S. interests, allowing baseball teams to develop the best players for their own benefits.

And, just as the perception and/or reality of U.S. dominance generates resentment, real or imagined, Dominican dependence on American baseball creates the same resentment, whether either country admits it or not. In the Dominican case, Klein insinuates that baseball is the main tool to resisting American cultural domination; that Dominican players resent the ethnocentric attitude American baseball brings to their country and to the game of baseball. It is reflected in the Dominican press that treats Dominican players as heroes of the game, saving baseball from American sensibilities that undermine the national identity of Dominican baseball and its contributions.

It is a dichotomy that the two sides are going to have to address, as each has become interdependent. Major League Baseball is in the Dominican Republic to develop players as inexpensively as possible, while Dominicans see Major League Baseball – and playing in America – as the path to success. That reality has generated a myriad of problems, but resolving the problems, in part, necessitates resolving the underlying cultural conflicts that exist.

Then again, baseball is only a game, right?

Impulsión De Suscripción (Subscription Drive) – This issue marks the 26th edition of the **DRSEA INFORMER**. We hope that we have both entertained and enlightened our readers as we continue our mission of creating the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy. Part of that mission is letting people know what we do, which has made the **INFORMER** a valuable tool with which to spread the word. We are hoping to expand our voice, so please make an effort to forward this issue to others who might enjoy reading the publication and ask them to go to our web page and fill out the inquiry form so we can add them to the subscriber list. **UN PASO MAS Y LLEGAMOS.**

"Life is not waiting for the storm to pass, it's learning to dance in the rain."
- Unknown-

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

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