



DRSEA INFORMER

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Objetivos Y Desafíos Del Béisbol En La República Dominicana (Baseball's Goals And Challenges In The Dominican Republic) – Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic, the country where baseball spends \$125 million a year to develop future stars, recently worked on forging a stronger relationship with a two-day symposium on the myriad of issues that affect the game.

The symposium, entitled "Goals and Challenges of MLB in the Dominican Republic," was co-hosted by FUNGLODE (*Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo*), and focused on several problems that have plagued baseball's operations on the island, including age and identity fraud, use of steroids, the actions of *buscones*, and the lack of education for players.

The forum lineup was impressive, with many of baseball's top executives attending, including Robert Manfred, MLB's executive vice president for Labor Relations and Human Resources, who said in a statement, "I am very pleased that representatives from many different facets of baseball in the Dominican Republic took part in this great event and produced a thorough, thoughtful dialogue. Major League Baseball is proud of the many contributions that the Dominican Republic has made to our game, and we are aiming to protect and enhance the vitality of baseball in the Dominican Republic in the years to come."



Robert Manfred

All of the topics discussed at the powwow were issues I am very familiar with and have discussed at length in the **INFORMER** over the past two years and at a public forum the DRSEA held last summer, so, while there were few surprises for me, I do think MLB should be applauded for expanding the debate among those it says are "important stakeholders related to the baseball industry in the DR." When the reform movement started more than a year ago, Sandy Alderson, Commissioner Bud Selig's emissary to oversee the movement, was criticized for limiting initial discussions to only a few insiders.

Alderson, who is now general manager of the New York Mets, was in attendance at the symposium and made it clear that the Dominican Republic is vital to the interests of MLB, and with that in mind it was important “that we come up with a sustainable model for having baseball in the DR. I am sincerely concerned about professional baseball and respect for baseball in the Dominican Republic and I want to see that continue.” Alderson still serves as a member of MLB's Latin American Oversight Committee.



Sandy Alderson addresses symposium.

The symposium also included Jorge E. Perez-Diaz, the league's head of Latin American Oversight, and several government officials and club employees. Former Major League players were also involved in the panel discussions, along with members of the Major League Baseball Players Association, independent trainers and scouts affiliated with MLB teams.

“Major League Baseball is working together with the appropriate parties to find solutions to many long-term issues,” Perez-Diaz said in a statement outlining the symposium's goals. “The symposium is a strong example of communication and collaboration, which are the keys to maintaining our progress going forward.”

I personally took a keen interest in Major League Baseball’s plans to educate prospects at its academies. No timetable is in place yet for implementing what is a mandatory directive to all 30 MLB teams, but Alderson said each team will be allowed to approach education “30 different ways and see what they come up with.” He added that the league will then evaluate each team’s program and, “if they are not effective, the commissioner can come in and dictate how they will be operated.”

I was also impressed by John Seibel, a consultant to Major League Baseball in the Dominican Republic and founder and president of Entrena, a company that specializes in education, training and social enterprise. I have great respect and admiration for Seibel, who has lived in the Dominican Republic since 1971, because of his sincere commitment and dedication to bettering the lives of Dominicans.



John Seibel (right), and Jorge E. Perez-Diaz (second right) join other panelists

Seibel outlined many of the challenges that education programs will need to address, including motivation of prospects who have to this point focused entirely on baseball; cooperation of parents; developing relevant curriculums; and a methodology for addressing special needs. He added that in order for programs to succeed, prospects must also understand the true value of education.

He summed it up quite succinctly by saying, *“Es la industria de MLB en la República Dominicana sostenible a largo plazo con jugadores de bajos niveles educativos.....tomando en cuenta el mercado mundial para peloteros y la competencia de otros países?”*

Translation: “Is the industry of Major League Baseball in the Dominican Republic sustainable in the long term with players of low educational levels.....taking into account the global market for players and competition from other countries?”

The answer is no.

En Español

Objetivos y desafíos del béisbol en la República Dominicana – La República Dominicana, país en el que las Grandes Ligas de Béisbol gastan 125 millones de dólares por año para desarrollar estrellas futuras, se juntó con la entidad recientemente con el fin de forjar una relación más fuerte a través de un simposio de dos días que trataba el sinnúmero de problemas que afectan el deporte.

FUNGLODE (Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo) fue la sede para el simposio titulado “Objetivos y desafíos del béisbol en la República Dominicana,” el cual se centró en los problemas que se han visto plagar las operaciones peloteras en la isla, incluso el fraude de la edad y de la identidad, la utilización de esteroides, las acciones tomadas por *buscones*, y la falta de educación para los jugadores.

La alineación del foro fue impresionante como contaba con una asistencia destacada de ejecutivos principales del béisbol. Entre ellos figuraba Robert Manfred, el Vicepresidente Ejecutivo de MLB para las Relaciones Laborales y Recursos Humanos. Según Manfred, “Me alegra mucho que los representantes de tantas facetas distintos de béisbol en la República Dominicana hayan participado en este gran evento y hayan producido un diálogo serio y riguroso. Las Ligas Mayores se enorgullecen de las muchas contribuciones que la República Dominicana nos haya proporcionado el juego, y tenemos como objetivo proteger y enriquecer la vitalidad del béisbol en la República Dominicana en los próximos años.”



Robert Manfred

Todos los temas discutidos en la reunión de jefes los conozco muy bien. Son temas que he discutido extensamente en el **INFORMER** a lo largo de los últimos dos años, incluso en foro público celebrado por la DRSEA el verano pasado. Por tanto, mientras había pocas sorpresas para mí, sí creo que las Ligas Mayores se merecen aplauso por haber ampliado el debate entre aquéllos que según la entidad representan “contrapartes importantes relacionadas con la industria pelotera en la República Dominicana.” Cuando el movimiento de reforma empezó hace más de un año, Sandy Alderson, el emisario nombrado por Bud Selig para supervisarlos, fue criticado por haber limitado las discusiones iniciales a unos cuantos privilegiados.

Alderson, ahora el ejecutivo general de los Mets de Nueva York, estuvo presente en el simposio. Aclaró que la República Dominicana es de vital importancia a los intereses de MLB, y teniendo esto en cuenta, era importante “que nos inventáramos un modelo sostenible para tener el béisbol en la República Dominicana. Me preocupan de veras el béisbol profesional y el respeto que hay para él en la República Dominicana y por consiguiente quiero verlo proseguir.” Aún sirve Alderson de miembro del Comité de Supervisión Latinoamericana de MLB.



Sandy Alderson habla en el simposio.

También presente en el simposio estaba Jorge E. Pérez-Díaz, quien encabeza la Supervisión Latinoamericana para las Ligas Mayores, y unos oficiales gubernamentales y empleados de los clubes. Participaron también jugadores profesionales anteriores en las discusiones de panel junto a los miembros de la Asociación de Jugadores de las Grandes Ligas de Béisbol, entrenadores independientes y cazatalentos afiliados con los equipos de MLB.

“Las Grandes Ligas de Béisbol están trabajando con las partes adecuadas para encontrar soluciones a las varias cuestiones a largo plazo,” dijo Pérez-Díaz en una declaración en la cual trataba las metas del simposio. “El simposio es un ejemplo fuerte de comunicación y colaboración, las cuales son claves para mantener nuestro desarrollo a medida que vamos hacia

adelante.”

Yo personalmente me interesé mucho en los planes de MLB para educar a los prospectos en sus academias. No se ha fijado todavía ningún horario para implementar lo que será una directiva obligatoria a todos los 30 equipos, pero Alderson ha dicho que a cada equipo se le permitirá aproximarse a los estudios “en 30 maneras distintas y a ver lo que les sale.” Agregó que las Ligas Mayores luego evaluarán el programa de cada equipo y si “no son efectivos entonces el Comisionado podrá entrar y mandarles sobre cómo operar.”

También me impresionó John Seibel, consultor a las Grandes Ligas de Béisbol en la República Dominicana y tanto fundador como presidente de Entrena, una empresa que se especializa en la educación, el entrenamiento y la empresa con fin social. Le tengo mucho respeto y admiración a Seibel, quien ha vivido en la República Dominicana desde 1971, debido a su entrega y dedicación sinceras para mejorar las vidas de los dominicanos.



John Seibel (derecha), y Jorge E. Pérez-Díaz (segunda a la derecha) se unen a otros panelistas

Seibel explicó a grandes rasgos muchos desafíos que los programas educativos tendrán que tratar, incluso la motivación de los prospectos que hasta ahora se han concentrado por completo en el béisbol, la cooperación familiar por parte de los padres, el desarrollo de planes de estudio pertinentes, y una metodología que trata las necesidades especiales. Añadió que los prospectos deberían comprender el valor verdadero de la educación para asegurar el éxito de los programas.

Resumió todo concisamente de esta manera, “Es la industria de MLB en la República Dominicana sostenible a largo plazo con jugadores de bajos niveles educativos...tomando en cuenta el mercado mundial para peloteros y la competencia de otros países?”

La respuesta es que no.

Traducción de Arthur Calvano

Beneficiándose Del Engaño (Profiting From Deception) – Sometimes lying does pay off, and in the peculiar case of Juan Paniagua, he stands to collect a fortune.

Two years ago Paniagua called himself Juan Collado and the 17-year-old pitcher impressed the Arizona Diamondbacks enough with his fastball, clocked in the upper 80s, that the team signed him for a \$17,000 bonus.

Paniagua pitched parts of two seasons for the Diamondbacks' Dominican Summer League team, but last summer an investigation by Major League Baseball uncovered the identity fraud and Paniagua's contract was voided, he was forced to serve a one-year suspension, and the Diamondbacks lost the rights to their prospect. He then trained at an independent academy in the Dominican Republic where his velocity improved into the 90s. Recently, when his suspension ended, the New York Yankees signed the budding star for \$1.1 million.

"It's like a soap opera," said Jerry Dipoto, the Diamondbacks senior vice president of scouting and player development. "We lost out on a player we liked because the system allows it." Many are now questioning how a player can actually benefit from a fib. The odd thing is that it remains unclear why Paniagua lied about his name, but not his age; his birthday – April 4 – never changed, and hiding age is the main reason Dominican prospects change their identity.

Hopefully, baseball will take steps to close this loophole and prevent a player – and a team – from benefitting from deceit. With age and identity fraud already a major issue in the Dominican Republic, I can see someone pulling a Paniagua and deliberately lying about their age and/or identity, hoping to be discovered (or revealing the truth) later in order to sign a more lucrative contract.

Think it won't happen? When I was on a trip to the Dominican Republic in 2000 to inspect several academies, I was approached by a man whose son had been signed by a team and was a rapidly developing prospect. The man said his son had lied about his age and was only 15 when signed, and now he wanted the deal voided so a better deal could be cut with another team.

Paniagua's deal still needs to be rubber stamped by the commissioner's office; under new rules he cannot play in any games until the deal is approved.

El Día De Los Delfines (The Day Of The Dolphins) – I recently got to spend the day here with Laura Acosta, one of the DRSEA advisory board members who has provided support and inspiration from the beginning. Laura, a Dominican who has lived in New York City for 40 years, is executive director of the Juan Pablo Duarte Foundation, which focuses on the educational needs of the Dominican community in New York City.

Laura also sponsors a community center in Santiago, the main purpose for her visit to the Dominican Republic. But on the day we got together, she was heading my way to take a look at another project she is involved in.

We drove to Los Alcarrizos, a municipality on the outskirts of Santo Domingo. Though I have lived in the Dominican Republic for two years, I do not think I will ever get used to the level of poverty that infests this nation, but Los Alcarrizos is even more desolate than I am accustomed. But there in the midst of so much destitution was a baseball field, the Dominican lifeline to a better future.

The field is operated by *Liga Delfines* (Dolphins League), a recreational league that encompasses about 240 young boys from all over the Dominican Republic, I am told by league president Domingo Almanzar. Children practice only after school, Almanzar says, and those who come from afar do so only when school is not in session. There is a small dormitory to house those who travel.

Laura had collected donations of food and school supplies for the community last December, but had never visited before and wanted to get a first-hand look. She brought tote bags and T-shirts donated by the New York Knicks, as well as an ample amount of school supplies to distribute.

The children's faces light up with delight at the small gifts that bring such great joy to those who have so little.



That's me on the left in the back and Laura Acosta dead center

Almanzar says the league gets by on small donations and the occasional food sale, and even manages to send a team every year to play in the United States, as he proudly displays the trophies won and photos of Dominicans boys in Philadelphia, Tampa Bay and other cities across America, a world away from Los Alcarrizos in more than just miles. The field and dormitory have no bathroom facilities; the children have to relieve themselves in the nearby bushes.



Laura Acosta and Domingo Almanzar distribute gifts to eager kids

On the drive back to the capital, Laura and I discuss many things, including how to get a bathroom installed and getting some baseball equipment donated, but also developing an educational program for *Liga Delfines* that already does so much with so little. The DRSEA continues to look for feeder programs and this one seems ideal. I have been invited back to watch a game and look forward to the experience.

I always try to visit with Laura when I am in New York City, but it was nice to meet with her on my turf. I am sometimes anxious about the future of the DRSEA, but she always brings such enthusiasm and commitment and understanding to the table that serves to renew my commitment and dedication because I know I am not alone in making the dream come true.

UN PASO MAS Y LLEGAMOS.

El Secreto De La Cocina Dominicana (The Secret To Dominican Cooking) - My mother was a great cook and one of her many secrets was tossing a bullion cube into rice, soups, stews and gravy, among other things. The addition made food snap, crackle and pop with flavor. I would later learn that the main reason for the added zing was that the cube contained a healthy dose of monosodium glutamate, a flavor enhancer often used in Chinese food.

Here in the Dominican Republic, that magic touch to food is achieved with *sopita*, which is actually the name of the soup base created by this Latin American bullion cube. The literal translation is “little soup.” It comes in a variety of flavors, but most people stick with chicken.



Packets of sopita

Sopita is put into just about everything here; it is a basic for just about any recipe. I have learned to cook a lot of Dominican food and *sopita* has become a staple in my cupboard. I have taken to adding it to spaghetti sauce, and make a broth of it to baste roast chicken. I even stir a crushed cube into mashed potatoes, turning them from bland to a flavorful side that can stand on its own.

My mom would have been proud.

There is no chance, no destiny, no fate, than can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul. - Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Charles S. Farrell

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