



DRSEA INFORMER

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Día Inaugural De La DRSEA (DRSEA Opening Day) – The Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy welcomed its inaugural students in January in the city that has produced many of the Dominican Republic’s most famous baseball stars.



“The dream has become reality,” said Harold Mendez, co-founder of the DRSEA, whose mission is to provide options and alternatives to just playing baseball by preparing young Dominican boys to position themselves to qualify for baseball scholarships at U.S. colleges and universities. “We want to improve lives through the DRSEA experience, and what those lives can ultimately do to improve their country,” Mendez added.

The DRSEA has 15 young men in its initial class of student athletes. Classes are being taught at The Palms School in San Pedro, and initially offer a concentration in English; baseball instruction is also provided. Allison Hale, director of the school and an Advisory Board member of the DRSEA, said the opportunity offered the first class of students will prove beneficial to them, regardless of success in baseball. “Education is something that will help them the rest of their lives,” she said.

Those educational benefits were underscored by Cesar Geronimo, a former Major League Baseball player with the Cincinnati Reds and a Dominican legend who serves on the Board of Trustees of the DRSEA. “Baseball is a great game,” he said, “and you should pursue it because it can be rewarding. But you should pursue education in the same way, because its rewards will continue to give.”



Dominican baseball legend and DRSEA Board Member Cesar Geronimo at DRSEA Opening Day

Baseball players who hail from San Pedro include Sammy Sosa, Alfonso Soriano, George Bell, Robinson Canó, Rico Carty, Joaquín Andújar, Mariano Duncan, Pedro Guerrero, and Rafael Ramírez, to name just a few.



Harold Mendez, Allison Hale, and me at DRSEA Opening Day.

Opening day of the DRSEA was a day I had been looking forward to for a long time, since 2005 when Harold and I first discussed the need for establishing the academy. And while we are starting on a small scale, it is a scale from which we hope to expand rapidly over the next few years.

I was, of course, excited about the opening, but my emotions caught up to me later as I sat at home, reflecting on the journey from dream to reality. I could not hold back the tears remembering the countless hours Harold and I spent planning the project. The need has been evident much longer, dating back to 2000 when I led a delegation at Major League Baseball's behest to take a look at its teams' academies in the Dominican Republic and finding so many of them lacking, particularly in educational opportunities. Some of the academies were fantastic and reminded me of some of the camps where I spent summers when I was young, but many – most – were decrepit beyond belief, including one that had a dormitory that looked more like a jail. After my report was filed, MLB opened an office in the Dominican Republic to oversee team operations in the country.

In 2004, I was part of a group that held a conference in the Dominican Republic on Latino participation in the sports industry. We invited prospects from MLB teams to sessions on financial planning, on picking a sports agent, on acculturation. I will never forget that the first question asked by one of these prospects was, "How do I open a bank account?"

I think it was that moment that convinced Harold and me that things needed to change. Here was an industry in one of the poorest countries in the world that puts over \$125 million annually into the economy of the Dominican Republic to mine the country for baseball talent. Here is an industry where only two in 100 prospects succeeds. Here is an industry dependent on the talents of 16-year-olds, many who cannot point out on map where they live.

My emotions overwhelmed me as I thought of how far the DRSEA has come and how much further we have to go. I thought of those like Cesar Geronimo and baseball executive Lou Melendez who have supported the project from the beginning, as well as DRSEA Board members like Cecilia Mota, Joseph Brown, Laura Acosta, Sam Brooks, Keith Lee, Steve Lindemann, Peter Cohen, and Juan Matiz who joined the effort at early stages of the journey and have been unwavering, and the many who have joined the Board since, helping advance the cause.

I thought also of the naysayers, those who didn't believe, who never thought the dream would become reality and declined to support our efforts either in deed or spirit. I am not mad at them; they only forced me to dig deeper into my reserve to succeed.

I also thought of those friends, family and associates who did support the DRSEA, either because they believed in the project or they believed in me, and I am eternally grateful for that support. I will be introducing the inaugural class in an upcoming issue of the **DRSEA INFORMER**.

UN PASO MAS Y LLEGAMOS



DRSEA students on Opening Day



DRSEA Board Member Frank Willingham and Harold Mendez

To support the DRSEA, go to www.drsea.org, or send donations to **DRSEA, 600 Anita Street #16, Chula Vista, CA, 91911**. To donate school supplies: **Charles S. Farrell/DRSEA, EPS X-25801, 8260 NW 14th Street, Doral, FL 33126**.

Exhibición De Talento (Baseball Talent On Display) – My co-founder Harold Mendez was not only able to make the trip to the Dominican Republic for the DRSEA opening, he was able to extend his stay, enabling us to meet with many people and attend a few events, including the second Major League Baseball International Showcase, featuring some of the best teenage baseball players from the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Nicaragua and Curacao who are eligible to sign with MLB teams on July 2.

The showcase in San Cristobal, not far from Santo Domingo, attracted more than 300 scouts as well as MLB legends Pedro Martinez and Joe Torre, and a number of relatives and friends of the young players.



Major League Baseball scouts descended on international showcase

"This showcase is a great opportunity for the boys, even if they do not sign with a team because everyone will be observed," Martinez told MLB.com. "It was completely different for players like me. You had to go to the academies and pass tests. You had to be discovered or someone had to take you, as happened with me and my brother Ramon. Now there are better ways to evaluate talent, best stadiums, best of everything. "

Close to 150 top prospects participated in the three showcases. "The amateur international world is descending upon the island for the week, and all of the activity means there is a lot going on in the

Dominican," said Joel Araujo, manager of Latin American game development for MLB. "Baseball is flourishing and it's continuing to grow, which is to everyone's benefit. There are huge investments being made in these players, and we believe the more games, the better. The evolution of baseball games, in addition to traditional scouting, in the Dominican Republic has allowed clubs to view these types of events as tools to their scouting." Araujo also oversees the player acquisition procedure of all foreign-born players including the contract approval process.



Joel Araujo

Major League baseball continues to excavate Latin America for players. At its first international showcase in February 2012, 25 prospects from the Dominican Republic and Venezuela and more than 200 big league scouts attended the event that included a 60-yard dash, infield and outfield drills and batting practice. The prospects also played two games.

In November, MLB held a showcase in Venezuela in front of 175 scouts to find prospects for the Dominican showcase. Two months earlier, MLB put on a showcase that featured some of the top amateur Dominican players at Tetelo Vargas Stadium in San Pedro de Macoris. MLB also hosted a four-day tournament that featured amateur teams from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and USA Baseball in Santo Domingo in August.

Last spring, the league created the MLB Prospect League for players eligible to sign professional contracts on July 2, and for older players. The league made special scouting trips to Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia and Curacao to find players for its event this year.

"The expectations for this week are very high, and I think if we allow ourselves to think about where we were two years ago, it was definitely different and we've made progress," Araujo said. "We didn't know what type of reception we would get from the critical parties here in the Dominican, but the reception was not bad. At this point, we are at the point where all we do is field calls from trainers that want to be invited to participate. We hope it continues to evolve."

Mota-vation – Harold and I also got a chance to check out Manny Mota's new digs, his recently completed baseball facility in Santo Domingo that was 12 years in the making. Mota was an outfielder for the San Francisco Giants, Pittsburgh Pirates, and Montreal Expos, as well as a pinch hitting specialist with the Los Angeles Dodgers. He has been a coach for the Dodgers since 1980, making last year the 33rd consecutive year in which he has coached for the team.



Manny Mota and Harold Mendez

His daughter, Cecilia Mota, is a Board member of the DRSEA and executive director of the Manny Mota International Foundation. The foundation provides humanitarian support in both Los Angeles and the Dominican Republic. With donations from corporations and friends, and the devotion of an all volunteer staff, the foundation's assistance programs include medical care, food, and education as well as hope, inspiration and incentives to contribute to a brighter future for themselves and their communities.

The day Harold and I were at the Mota facility, Harold helped distribute lunch to about 100 local kids. Mota told us that for some it is their only meal of the day.



Children line up for meal at Manny Mota facility.



Harold Mendez hands bowl to child.

Mota also runs a baseball league and the new facility has a completed mini-stadium and plans for three more fields. The main field is named after Peter O'Malley, the former owner of the Dodgers and current owner of the San Diego Padres. Streets in the facility are named after famous Dominican players and nine lights shaped like baseballs are dedicated to famous Dominicans who played the nine positions of the game. A school is also planned for the property.



I returned to the Mota facility for its official opening, and it was a day complete with pomp and circumstance that included a fleet of parajumpers floating though the sky and some of baseball's Dominican nobility, including many of the players the streets at Mota's facilities are named after.

I was in awe to see Ozzie Virgil, the first Dominican to play in the majors; Juan Marichal, the only Dominican in baseball's Hall of Fame; Rudy Hernandez, the first Dominican to pitch in the majors; and Jesus Alou, who with his brothers, Felipe and Matty, formed the only brothers outfield in MLB baseball history.



Rudy Hernandez, Juan Marichal, Ozzie Virgil and Jesus Alou



Manny Mota and wife, Margarita



Hundreds gathered at new Mota facility

Mota's devotion to his country and its children is both amazing and inspirational; he is truly making a difference in the Dominican Republic.

Apreciación De Recuerdos (Cherished Memories) – I had not heard from my friend Karen Domino in awhile when I got an e-mail from her informing me that former Congresswoman Cardiss Collins had passed away. Were it not for Mrs. Collins I would not have met Karen nor had the privilege of becoming friends and working with her for a number of years.

Mrs. Collins served in Congress from 1973 to 1997; by the end of her long and distinguished career, she was the longest-serving black woman in the history of Congress. Succeeding her husband after his death in an airplane crash, she served 12 consecutive terms, a decade of which she was the only African American woman in the House of Representatives.



Cardiss Collins

During her first term in Congress, Mrs. Collins served on the Committee on Government Operations (later Government Reform and Oversight). As a member of the panel throughout her tenure in Congress, she chaired two Government Operations subcommittees: Manpower and Housing and Government Activities and Transportation.

She eventually rose to the position of Ranking Democrat of the full committee during the 104th Congress (1995– 1997). She also served on the Committee on International Relations (later Foreign Affairs) from 1975 to 1980, the District of Columbia Committee during the 95th Congress (1977– 1979), and the influential Committee on Energy and Commerce (later Commerce) from the 97th through the 104th Congresses (1981–1997). Mrs. Collins also earned distinction as the first African American and woman selected as a Democratic Whip At-Large.

Mrs. Collins increased both her presence and notoriety in the House when she assumed the role of chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) during the 96th Congress (1979–1981). As the second woman to hold the leadership position in the CBC and as the fourth black woman ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives, Mrs. Collins constantly found herself in the spotlight. The high visibility encouraged her to become more outspoken; throughout her 24 years in Congress, she dedicated herself to the advancement of African Americans and other minorities.

I first met Mrs. Collins in her role as a pioneer in promoting racial and gender equity in college sports. In an effort to secure equal opportunities for women in sports at colleges and universities, Mrs. Collins introduced the Equality in Athletic Disclosure Act in 1993 as an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1965, directing colleges and universities to publicize the rate of program participation by gender. In recognition of her commitment to gender equity in athletics, Mrs. Collins was inducted into the Women’s Sports Hall of Fame in 1994.

She gained additional prominence in the sports arena in 1993 as the chairwoman of a congressional committee investigating college sports and as a critic of the National Collegiate Athletic Association. I had been a staunch advocate for equity in college sports and she invited me to testify before that committee, an opportunity that gave me a stage to further my career. Karen Domino was interning with Mrs. Collins at the time.

During a second hearing, I was not only invited to testify, but also help her select the people who would testify, which was an honor in itself. About 30 minutes into the hearing, Mrs. Collins was called to another committee hearing, and as she left, she said, “Charles, take over.” After getting over being flabbergasted by the directive, I conducted a U.S. Congressional hearing, something I will never forget.

And I will never forget Mrs. Collins for her devotion to social needs, for her fairness, for her principles. She made a difference, not only in the sports industry, but to me personally, and for that I am most thankful.

Charles S. Farrell

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