

RHC's Sport News Report

February 12 2014



Baseball

In a brief dialogue before traveling to Artemisa province to witness a match between the local team and the Industriales, the most popular team in the country, former US MLB star Ken Griffey Jr. said he was deeply impressed by the "passion" Cubans feel for baseball and described as "very special" to see and enjoy the children playing in the streets, something that is not common in other places, especially when you see them playing very well.

Griffey, member by the Baseball Hall of Fame, along with Barry Larkin and two other star athletes, began a visit to Cuba on Saturday which will end tomorrow, Thursday.

The visiting stars are part of a cultural and sports exchange promoted by the Boston Educational Travel Alliance agency.

U.S. laws prohibit their citizens from traveling to Cuba unless it responds to cultural or professional reasons.

And in the local national sport, Matanzas established itself as the undisputed leader of the *53rd Cuban Baseball Championship* by knocking on seven entries to the decreased team of Isla de la Juventud by 12-

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3rd baseman Yurisbel Gracial led the winning offensive with 1 homer, 1 double and 5 trailers, seconded by outfielder Yadiel Hernandez and 1st baseman Yasiel Santoya, who connected 2 separate homers. Yoelkis Cruz won with 1 clean allowed in 6 innings, while lefty Yudiel Rodriguez took the failure.

Meanwhile, Villa Clara left Pinar del Rio on the field by 5-4 to remain alone in the 2nd seat. The catcher Yulexis Rose excelled when connecting 5-5, with 1 double and William Luis homered, while the catcher Lorenzo Quintana homered for the defeated ones; reliever Yasmany Hernandez excelled for the winners to tolerate only 1 hit in 4 episodes, but the victory went to the closer Alain Casanova and Erlis Tamayo took the loss.

In other results, Industriales exceeded 7-5 to Artemisa and placed 1 game from the 3rd place, while Holguín threw more salt on the wound of battered Santiago de Cuba to liquidate it by 4-1.

Now Matanzas commands the Table with 35 and 20, followed by Villa Clara (34-21), Pinar del Río (33-22), Industriales (32-23), Holguín (31-24), Artemisa (30-25), Isla de la Juventud (29-26) and Santiago de Cuba (25-30).

Cycling

The *Cuban Cycling Federation*, athletes, scholars and fans are celebrating 50 years of its Cycling Tour.

"It is a very special day for everyone who has cycling in their blood and that is why we want to celebrate its *Golden Jubilee* with the running of the *1st Camagüey to Havana Classic*, starting February 15th," said Hector Ruiz, national commissioner told Prensa Latina news agency.

According to Ruiz, this will be also a series of activities developed to commemorate such important data within the Cuban sports movement, such as the races *The Return to Artemisa* and *The Sancti Spiritus Cycling Cup* to support the freedom of the Cuban Five and fight against terrorism, among others, to honor all those who carried out this spectacular event.

The first competition of the Cuban route was celebrated on February 11th, 1964, thanks to a group of cyclists led by the then commissioner Reinaldo Paseiro, that completed the *La Vuelta* course.

Boxing

The team tournament will become from this year in the *National Series of Boxing (NSB)*, adequacy of the attractive event, which current version is successfully attended by the Cuba's *Los Domadores*.

According to reports from JIT digital site, authorities of this discipline explained that this will allow expanding the number of athletes facing certain competitive peculiarities while the team matches and the essence of the classification scheme are kept.

In this regard they confirmed that the preliminary stages will remain distributed in the western, central and eastern areas, though the fights shall be to 4 rounds and will grant only 1 ticket per capita to the final.

The first stage will be held in Matanzas, Camaguey and Holguin from April 4th to 9th, at 49, 56, 64, 75 and 91 kilos (C-1), while the other segment will host fights at 52, 60, 69, 81 and more than 91 kilos (C-2) in Pinar del Rio, Villa Clara and Las Tunas, from April 30th to May 5th, according to the organizers.

In both rounds the teams may have up to 16 contestants, at least 2 per weight, because each presentation will require rest the following day.

The final phase, with 5-round bouts, will be from June 24th to 29th at *Havana's Sports City Coliseum*, which will receive the 3 regional leaders reinforced with their members of the national pre-selection who could not perform before.

The squads involved in this phase can also call up boxers from already eliminated teams, mostly from their same area, but there can be some exceptions.

The need to rest for 10 dates after such combats will limit to one the presentation of each athlete and will give greater importance to strategy by technical staffs, which will have 24 men.

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