

Sports News Roundup Jan. 08



Chess

Cuban Grand Master (GM) Lázaro Bruzón rose from the 81st position to 54th place in the world ranking of chess, as announced by the *International Federation (FIDE)* in its first list of 2015.

Bruzón, improved 27 places compared to December 2014 and won 17 points to add to his Elo 2,668; now appearing with 2,685 units.

In December last year, Bruzón won the *Carlos Torre Repetto International Chess Tournament*, in Mexico, and finished 2nd in the *Millionaire Fair Christmas*, Bogotá, Colombia, and in those two events recorded 11 wins and 7 draws, 14.5 points from a possible 18.

The 2nd player of Cuba and Latin America in world rankings by winning the 2014 closed on December 31st the *Latin American Cup* played in Guayaquil, Ecuador, with 8 points from 9, thanks to 7 wins and 2 draws; however, the 6.7 units to win in this tournament will be reflected in the ranking next month.

Moreover, GM Leinier Dominguez, the best Latin American located in the FIDE list, did not play classic games in recent months and remains with 2,726 Elo points located in 28th place in the world standings.

Cuban Baseball Faces Intense Competition Year

Cuban baseball will have an intense competitive schedule in the international arena during 2015, with special emphasis on the *Caribbean Series*, the *Pan-American Games* and the *Premier 12* tournament.

Heriberto Suárez, national commissioner of the discipline, recently confirmed during the *Mesa Redonda* TV program that Cuba's goal is to win the title in the Caribbean baseball classic, scheduled from next February 2nd-8th in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where Cuba will be represented by the squad of Pinar del Río --current Cuban monarch-- widely reinforced by other stars of national teams.

Then the executive added that the *ALBA Games* to be held in April, in Ecuador and the traditional friendly matches against the U.S. university team, scheduled for early July in the United States, are other international commitments of Cuban baseball during 2015.

Those events will serve as preparation for the Pan-American Games, agreed for July 10th-26th in the Canadian city of Toronto, where Cubans will try to regain the continental title lost 4 years ago in Guadalajara, Mexico.

After several international competitions such as the *Rotterdam Baseball Tournament*, in Holland, the Caribbean nation will face another demanding challenge when intervening in November at the novel *Premier 12* contest which will gather in Chinese Taipei the first 12 sides in the world ranking of the discipline.

On the policy of recruiting Cuban players in foreign leagues, the national baseball commissioner indicated that this process will continue to expand gradually over 2015 and in the coming years.

Heriberto Suárez said that next Season, the *Yokohama DeNA Baystars*, *Yomiuri Giants* and *Chiba Lotte Marines* Japanese teams will again have on their payrolls Cuban players such as Granma's slugger Alfredo Despaigne, signed by the latter for 2 years.

He asserted that other squads belonging to the Japanese baseball circuit as the *Chunichi Dragons*, *Rakuten Golden Eagles* and *Hanshin Tigers* begin the approach to enter into negotiations with the *Cuban Baseball Federation*, guarantor of the rights of its athletes.

The Cuban players Alfredo Despaigne, Yulieski Gourriel, Frederich Cepeda and young pitcher Hector Manuel Mendoza were involved during 2014 in the so-called *Japanese Major Leagues*.

The Most Expensive Athlete In The World Is Valued At \$260 Million

With the transfer window now open in many of the world's top soccer leagues, the CIES Football Observatory has released their semi-annual list of the most valuable football players in the world.

Lionel Messi of Barcelona in Spain's *La Liga* tops the list with a staggering transfer value of \$262 million (?220 million) and nobody else is even close.

And that would just be the estimated cost of acquiring the rights to the Argentinean footballer. If a team were able to convince Barcelona to sell Messi, the new club would then have to negotiate a new contract with the player.

Messi reportedly makes slightly more than \$50 million per year with his current contract at *Barça* team.

There are a lot of valuable athletes in North America, and while this side of the Atlantic uses a different means of transferring players between teams, it is hard to imagine any team would pay \$262 million for their rights and then give them a \$50 million annual salary.

Messi's transfer value is calculated by examining transfer fees since 2009 and variables such as recent performance, age, position, current contract, and team performance.

For many of the world's top association football leagues, January marks the mid-season transfer window where clubs are given approximately one month to add players from international leagues; the rest of the

top 10 list is as follows:

1. Lionel Messi, Barcelona (Spain) — \$262 million (?220 million)
2. Cristiano Ronaldo, Real Madrid (Spain) — \$158 million (?133 million)
3. Eden Hazard, Chelsea (England) — \$118 million (?99 million)
4. Diego Costa, Chelsea (England) — \$100 million (?84 million)
5. Paul Pogba, Juventus (Italy) — \$86 million (?72 million)
6. Sergio Agüero, Manchester City (England) — \$77 million (?65 million)
7. Raheem Sterling, Liverpool (England) — \$75 million (?63 million)
8. Francesc Fàbregas, Chelsea (England) — \$74 million (?62 million)
9. Alexis Sánchez, Arsenal (England) — \$73 million (?61 million)
10. Gareth Bale, Real Madrid (Spain) — \$71 million (?60 million)

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