

Baseball / Fukuoka Dome: Japan Beats Puerto Rico 8-3



Baseball

Samurai Japan starting pitcher Kenta Maeda (NPB - Hiroshima Toyo Carp) registered eight strikeouts in three innings to secure an 8-3 victory over Puerto Rico at the Fukuoka Dome Thursday night.

Japan National Team Manager Hiroki Kokubo worked out six pitchers against world No.9 Puerto Rico.

Six Samurai pitchers combined for 18 strikeouts in the game.

At the plate, Shogo Akiyama (NPB - Seibu Lions) hit a 2-run home run in the third inning for the game's first runs.

Japan's Yoshitomo Tsutsugo (NPB - DeNA BayStars) added solo home run in the eighth.

Puerto Rico produced two of its runs against highly rated pitcher, Shohei Ohtani.

The two nations will conclude their two-game exhibition series in Fukuoka tomorrow night before the official WBSC Premier12 global tournament opens.

Volleyball

The three FIVB Volleyball World Grand Prix Group Finals in 2016 will take place in Thailand, Bulgaria and Kazakhstan. The competition will reach its climax when six teams play the Group 1 Finals in Bangkok, Thailand from July 6-10. The Group 2 Finals will take place in Bulgaria from June 17-19 at a venue to be confirmed. Kazakhstan will host the Group 3 Finals on the same weekend, also at a venue to be confirmed.

The Group 1 Finals in Bangkok will see hosts Thailand take on the five best ranked teams from the Group 1 Intercontinental Round. The Finals will feature two pools of three teams - pool play will be followed by semifinals and finals.

In the Group 2 and 3 Finals, hosts Bulgaria and Kazakhstan will take on the top 3 teams from the Group 2 and 3 Intercontinental Rounds respectively. In each case, the four teams participating will play semifinals and finals.

Next year's edition of the premier annual competition for women's national teams will feature 28 teams. The competition will run over a period of six weeks from June 3rd to July 10th.

Group 1 includes: USA (2015 winners), Russia, Brazil, China, Italy, Japan, Germany, Serbia, Thailand, Belgium, Turkey, the Netherlands.

Group 2 includes: the Dominican Republic (relegated from Group 1), Poland, the Czech Republic, Puerto Rico, Bulgaria, Canada, Argentina, Kenya (promoted from Group 3).

Group 3 covers: Croatia (relegated from Group 2), Peru, Colombia, Australia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Mexico.

In 2015, the United States became the first team to win the World Grand Prix on home soil after a sweep of their matches in the Finals in Omaha, Nebraska. USA's Karsta Lowe, who finished the tournament with 77 points, received the Most Valuable Player award.

UK and Cuba Strengthen Sports Links

Sports relations will be reinforced between the United Kingdom and Cuba even more, according to Catherine Sweet, British advisor for international development for British entity UK Sport, which leads the entire British sports movement.

Sweet expressed exclusive statements for local Prensa Latina news agency, and stated that the main target of their visit to Cuba is to exchange experiences and to encourage a work program, especially with children and young people, so that they are motivated to practice athletics and promote this way the bases of the talents of both countries.

Along with Sweet there were Stuart Atwell, organizer of Big Events of the UK Athletics (Federation of Athletics), who showed satisfaction for the working meeting with managers of the Cuban Federation of this discipline, in particular with its president, Alberto Juantorena.

After emphasizing the transcendence that the sport covers for two countries, Atwell trusted that a major cooperation will impel in a special way the development of the field and track, both in Cuba and in the United Kingdom.

The British authorities fulfill from the last 2nd an extensive engagement book in this capital.

In its program they emphasized the visit to the Higher Institute of High Performance, and the trip for the Pan-American stadium, where they met the youngest talents of the Cuban athletics.

The United Kingdom is one of the countries that more influence has in the world sports ambiance, if it is born in mind that there they arose disciplines like soccer, rugby, tennis, golf, hockey on lawn and tennis of table.

Favio Giustino Football Cup

The *Fabio Di Celmo Football Cup*, junior category, which annually takes place in the eastern Las Tunas city, began its 7th edition today, now with the name of *Fabio Giustino*.

The *Association of Italy-Cuba Friendship* in the Lombardy region, the *Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP)* and the *Sports Directorate* in the province of Las Tunas, sponsors of the event, agreed the new name of the event to pay tribute to Giustino, father of Fabio, who died last September 1st in Havana, at the age of 94 years.

Nai Caballero, CEO of ICAP in the territory, reminded that Mr. Giustino attended the Cup on 3 occasions, chatted with the children and organizers, and showed interest in the development of the sports in Las Tunas.

Caballero meant Giustino always condemned the terrorist attack in Havana on September 4th, 1997, directed by Luis Posada Carriles, who took the life of his son, in addition to constantly decide on the release of the 5 Cuban anti-terrorist heroes formerly condemned to long unfair sentences in US prisons.

At the meeting, which will end on Sunday, teams from the municipalities of Las Tunas, Amancio, Colombia, Puerto Padre and Manati Jobabo, in the 9-10 years category, participate.

It was reported at the opening, that a similar meeting will take place in Las Tunas' Local Radio Broadcast next March and in 2017, during the IX Cup, it will be managed for a youth Italian team will participate as a guest.

Gildo Caimi, coordinator of the Cuba Friendship Association in Lombardy, Italy, was also present at the opening of the cup.

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