

# *Sports News Roundup April 24*

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## **Cuba Opens US Basketball Camp**

The U.S. National Basketball Association, the NBA, has opened a sports camp here in Havana, aimed at supporting the development of basketball in Cuba.

Also protected by FIBA America and the local Federation, the event -- which is part of the Basketball without Borders program -- will end on Sunday, April 26, and provides a program of clinics and lectures for children, young basketball players and referees.

The NBA move is led by Canadian Steve Nash, an eight-time All-Star's Most Valuable Player, and Congolese Dikembe Mutombo, NBA global ambassador and member of the Hall of Fame.

Also on the list is Portuguese Ticha Penicheiro, all-time leader in career assists (a 2,599 record), and was one of the best players in seven seasons.

During the Camp's opening ceremony held late Thursday at the "Manuel Fajardo" University of Science of Physical Education and Sports in Havana, sports authorities delivered recognition plaques to former outstanding basketball players, coaches, and FIBA Americas regional director Alberto Andres Garcia.

This trip to Cuba will open a bridge to develop basketball in the country. This will be a unique opportunity to teach the values of our sports, stated former pivot Mutombo, who stand 2.18 meters tall.

The Americas' Basketball Academy director Victor Ojeda, the director of High Performance of the Cuban Institute of Sports (INDER) Jose Antonio Miranda, the University of Sports rector Amarilis Torres, other leaders and officials of the sports institution, and Cuban great sporting figures, also attended the ceremony.

## Boxing

After winning the **World Series of Boxing (WSB)** title in their debut season, [Cuba Domadores](#) team have remained undefeated in the competition, and seek their 14th consecutive victory of the 5th Season against [Ukraine Otamans](#).

The Ukrainians are in excellent form, too, having won four of their last five matches, including an excellent win against the Russian Boxing Team last week.

Cuba has already won Group A which means they will qualify directly to the semi-finals, while Ukraine currently sit third in the group, two points behind Russia, and two ahead of Mexico Guerreros.

The team that finishes second in the group will enjoy home advantage in the quarter-finals, so Ukraine will be eager to secure the victory in this match against the undefeated Cubans.

Havana's *Ciudad Deportiva*, is the venue for this Group A clash on Friday April 24th, fans across the world can watch the action free, live and on demand at [AIBABoxingTV.com](#).

Undefeated Cuban Flyweight (52 kg) star **Yosbany Veitia** opens the evening facing **Azat Usenaliev**. **Veitia** is number one ranked in his division and has already earned a Rio 2016 Olympic Games qualification through WSB.

Cuban Lightweight (60 kg) **Lazaro Alvarez** is also guaranteed to finish in the top two of his weight class, however the number two ranked fighter will want to make it 7-0 in the Regular Season against Ukraine's **Viktor Slavinskyi**.

2012 Olympic gold medalist Welterweights (69 kg) **Roniel Iglesias Sotolongo** is searching for a second win in a row against **Oleg Zubenko**.

One fighter who needs a more dominant victory is Cuba's 5-1 **Julio Cesar La Cruz** who surprisingly lost two weeks ago to Ecuador's **Carlos Mina**. The result pushed the Cuban down into third in the Light heavyweight (81 kg) rankings, and out of the Rio 2016 Olympic quota places. La Cruz is expected to perform better in this event against Ukraine's **Oleksandr Khyzhniak**.

Cuba's **Lenier Eunice Pero** is ranked second at Super heavyweight (91+ kg) but only one Rio 2016 quota is available from the heaviest weight class in WSB.

Four points behind Croatia's dominant **Filip Hrgovic** heading into the last week of action, Pero needs a stoppage or a unanimous decision victory against Ukraine's **Ihor Shevadzutskyi** to maintain any hopes of overtaking Hrgovic.

## Baseball

Don't expect to see big league baseball players at the 2020 Olympics, even if the IOC reinstates the sport for the Tokyo Games.

And new Major League Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred says the sport's international governing body should demand a long-term pledge from the International Olympic Committee before agreeing to return.

Baseball was an Olympic medal sport from 1992-2008, then was dropped after the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The World Baseball Softball Confederation hopes both events will be reinstated in the Tokyo Olympics in five years, and the inclusion of new sports for 2020 will be voted on at the IOC session in Rio de Janeiro on the eve of the 2016 Games.

Manfred is maintaining the stance of his predecessor, Bud Selig, who repeatedly said that the U.S. MLB, Major League Baseball, will not interrupt its schedule for the Olympics.

"The Olympics are a challenge because of the calendar," Manfred said Thursday during a meeting with the Associated Press Sports Editors. "They are particularly a challenge when the site is halfway around the world and the date falls in the middle of our regular season."

In 2008, only players not on 25-man big league rosters as of late June were allowed to compete in the Olympics.

"I think it would be good for our game, for baseball generically defined, to be an Olympic sport. I know there is some interest in having a baseball event in the Tokyo Olympics because it's so popular in that particular country," Manfred said. "I think it would be a mistake for our sport to make an arrangement with the Olympics whereby we go in for Tokyo and not have some commitment that the Olympics were going to commit to baseball over the longer haul."

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