



Havana Hardball: Spring Training, Jackie Robinson, and The Cuban League

César Briosó

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“An in-depth look at a pivotal time in baseball history.”—Lou Hernández, author of *Baseball’s Great Hispanic Pitchers*

“Set against the backdrop of Old Havana, Cesar Briosó has given us an insightful, often loving ode to a memorable season when baseball’s past and future came together.”—Tim Wendel, author of *Summer of ‘68: The Season That Changed Baseball, and America, Forever*

“Long before the true Gold Age of Cuban baseball marked by the most recent quarter-century, there was also an era of pre-revolutionary professional winter league action housed in Havana. Briosó brings much of that lost ‘other’ Cuban baseball back to life.”—Peter C. Bjarkman, author of *A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864–2006*

“A must read for baseball enthusiasts. Recounts the travels of Cuban ballplayers, the particular plight of black Cubans and African Americans, and the triumphs and travails of Cuba’s professional leagues.”—Adrian Burgos Jr., author of *Cuban Star: How One Negro-League Owner Changed the Face of Baseball*

In February 1947, the most memorable season in the history of the Cuban League finished with a dramatic series win by Almendares against its rival, Habana. As the celebration spread through the streets of Havana and across Cuba, the Brooklyn Dodgers were beginning spring training on the island. One of the Dodgers’ minor league players was Jackie Robinson.

He was on the verge of making his major-league debut in the United States, an event that would fundamentally change sports—and America. To avoid harassment from the white crowds in Florida during this critical preseason, the Dodgers relocated their spring training to Cuba, where black and white teammates had played side by side since 1900.

It was also during this time that Major League Baseball was trying its hardest to bring the “outlaw” Cuban League under the control of organized baseball. As the Cubans fought to stay independent, Robinson worked to earn a roster spot on the Dodgers in the face of discrimination from his future teammates.

Havana Hardball captures the excitement of the Cuban League’s greatest pennant race and the anticipation of the looming challenge to MLB’s color barrier. Illuminating one of the sport’s most pivotal seasons, veteran journalist César Briosó brings together a rich mix of worlds as the heyday of Latino baseball converged with one of the most socially meaningful events in U.S. history.

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