

The Background

Baseball in Cuba has been played for nearly as long as it has in North America. Shipping owners provided bat and balls for their dock workers; plantation jefes organized their sugar cutters into representative nines. Beisbol had captured the local imagination. After the Spanish-American War (1898) and the subsequent spike in trade, investment, and tourism from the USA to Cuba, baseball was firmly established as Cuba's national sport.

Within twenty years baseball had grown to where there was money to be made from playing the game. It had become aspirational; no longer a diversion mainly for the wealthy, now it was another way to support the young working class. Not just the native born, either. North American professional teams, major, minor, and mixed, found a winter tour to Havana to be a useful revenue earner. Native sons, those with light complexions who could pass in the US for "white", began to make inroads into US organized baseball. For the rest, if they were good enough, there was the adventure that awaited them in the north of Negro organized baseball.

While there remained prejudice based on race among some of the wealthy, the Cuban population was a healthy mix of ethnicity. The American Negro baseballer found a welcome and an opportunity in the developing professional game. Almost all of the great names of blackball spent considerable time playing in front of enthusiastic Cuban crowds. An important effect of this melting pot of North American and Cuban ballplayers was the way it elevated the quality of local talent, and Cuban born baseballers would come to play an outsized role in the explosion of baseball interest around the Caribbean during the twentieth century.

By the 1950s North Americans had become intimately familiar with light skinned Cuban baseball players, though the Cuban mulatos, jabaos, moros, and negros still found it hard to land jobs in the majors and minors. Come the Revolution and everything abruptly changed. Havana, which had been a hotbed for the International League in the 1950s, saw its Sugar Kings relocate to Jersey City. The new government closed the professional league. The Cuban born professional ballplayers were confronted with a life changing decision- go (continue their pro career abroad with no option to return) or stay?

Cuba needed local baseball so a new, amateur (in keeping with the ethos of its revolutionary aspirations) league was formed in 1962, the National Series (SN). Playing during the winter months- a season began in the autumn of one year and would finish in the spring of the next- this new league attracted the best of the island's sport talent. Promising players were trained from a young age thanks to a sport development program. There was a smaller Super League that played during the summer and there are feeder teams and government supported youth classifications. It wouldn't be long before Cuba reclaimed its position as the dominant player in Latin American sport. The

National team unites baseball fans and non-fans (there are some) during international tournaments when its welfare preoccupies the country.

The League

The SN has modified its setup over the years. Post-Covid the league started in January and ended in the early summer. A second top league, Liga Elite, was recently initiated to play during the autumn-winter months. This LEdB features the top six teams of the SNdB.

Recently it was a split-season 90 game league of 16 teams, with an all star game and a postseason, spanning autumn to spring over the 2 adjacent calendar years. In a unique twist during the 2010s, the playoff teams were allowed to draft in a top player from any of the teams who didn't qualify for the playoff rounds.

In the 1960s there were as few as 4 league teams playing a brief 40 game season.

Some years there was a multi-division set up; sometimes it's been a single league. Games have generally been played at 1 PM and 7 PM. The postseason tends to be played over 3 weeks.

Unique to the SN, the teams are, for the most part, constituted from their provincial catchment. In the past there was very little player movement from team to team. A boy is discovered and trained locally at his academy until he's proved to be capable of joining his provincial SN team. In the past he would see out his baseball career with the same team. The league is overseen by a government quango. This Sport Ministry has always held complete authority over the game as well as the player's career. It can decide, even against the wishes of the player and the team's fans, when it is time for a player to be retired from his team. There had been provincial resentment to what is seen as favorable consideration given to Industriales, the nation's most popular team.

Generally speaking, there have been 4 eras of the SN:

The early years (1962-1975) were similar to ML's deadball days where the emphasis was on playing small ball, as runs were extremely hard to come by and pitching seemed to be dominant. The league evolved greatly over this time frame; the number of teams expanded, the quality of play improved, the run rate increased.

The league BA was under .230 during this time. Home Runs were hit at a rate of only 1:120 at bats. The league ERA was a miserly 3.05.

The middle years (1976-1998) saw 2 major changes to the way baseball was played in Cuba. The DH was introduced across the league, and the batters switched from wood to aluminum bats. Otherwise the league stabilized and solidified, and MLB scouts were taking considerable interest.

The league BA was .268. Home Runs were hit at a rate of 1:48 at bats. The league ERA shot up to 3.87.

The disgruntled years (1999-2012) have seen much more competitive campaigns than previously, as scientific coaching principles have spread throughout the league. Surprisingly, even after the return to wood bats, offense has been at a level similar to the late 1990s MLB level.

The league BA was .288. Home Runs were hit at a rate of 1:45 at bats. The league ERA was 4.52.

The movement years (2013-2023) have seen the Cuban authorities relax some of the constraints to players changing teams, even moving to foreign leagues. Talented young players had taken drastic steps to make it to the MLB and the Sports Ministry had no choice but to lessen departure and organization rules. Selected players have been allowed to play part of a season for Mexican, CanAm, and Japanese teams, and to be paid accordingly. (Their foreign income was taxed in Cuba.) You'll notice that even with these changes the league rates were consistent with the prior period.

The league BA was .286. Home Runs were hit at a rate of 1:54 at bats. The league ERA was 4.52.

The Selection Process

These Stars are selected from the post-revolutionary years, which began in 1962. In the 2024 batch are a few players who left Cuba so young that the best years of their career were in MLB or NPB.

In addition to our research and analysis to decide who would make up the players of this set we spoke to fans who had grown up with these players, and those who had watched them in action at their ballpark, and we canvassed their opinion. We are grateful for the help of our knowledgeable friends in Cuba, Miami, and Puerto Rico, and their sage counsel.

These "teams" are in fact the names of the original six provinces of Cuba (there are now 16).

Some provinces, though equal in geographic size, are very rural and have a smaller player universe to draw from. A few times we had to supplement a province, Camaguey, Matanzas, Pinar, with loans from Habana and Oriente. The Pirates of the island of Isla de la Juventud, rostered as La Habana, played, like old Wrigley, only day games in a ballpark without stadium lighting.

How To Use

The stats for this set are our Major League Equivalents. This is how we expect the player to have performed, had the best part of his career occurred in the Major Leagues rather than the SN (or NPB or KBO). This makes the set a nice companion piece to our Hall of Fame, MLB Heroes, Negro Stars, and Japan Stars sets. Do we think most of these players would have been on the same level of achievement as these other "Heroes?" Some, yes indeed, as a batch of players in the 2024 additions performed that well during their MLB stay, but we don't hold that position on the whole of this roster. What we do think is that all of these players would have enjoyed lengthy (had they been injury free) and productive MLB careers.

The 3 letter code on the mini-bio line after the player name indicates the "province team" to assign the player, as all players are now team coded as CUB. The new players for 2024 are all found in Free Agents. (Oscar Romero Albert in FA is a hold-over from the 2013 release.) **The 2024 players are highlighted in BLUE.**

CUBAN LEAGUE STARS (1962-2023) : The Batters

Rafael Orlando **Acebey** (b. 1965) **1984-2004 LVB**

Quick glove at 3B, he pulled off an unassisted triple play in 1999.

Yordanis Alarcon Tardio (b. 1982) **2000-2022 ORB**

In the tradition of good glove, acceptable bat, Cuban 3rd basemen. Strong arm plus enough range to play SS. League MVP in 2020. Brother of Yosvani Alarcon Tardio, and a 3rd brother, relief pitcher Yosbel.

Yosvani Alarcon {Tardio} (b. 1984) **2004-2023 ORB**

Heir to Pestano as national team catcher, but a helmet toss tantrum got him a year's ban from international sport. His defense was always underdeveloped, but he did "run well for a catcher." Good power from his short, thin, frame. Brother of Yordanis Alarcon Tardio, and a 3rd brother, relief pitcher Yosbel.

Fausto **Alvarez** (b. 1960) **1985-2001 ORB**

RF/DH with pop versus RHP (89 RBI). 2000 Cuba Series MVP. Finished his playing career in Japan then Holland.

Leslie Anderson (b. 1982) **2000-2022 CAB**

Frequent national team selection. Played 2 years for the Yomiuri Giants, a year in Mexico, & was 3 years in Tampa's system. Always a hard hitter, his body betrayed him in

his 30s causing him to shift from the OF to 3B. (SNdB & NPB)

Rey Vicente **Anglada** [The King] (b. 1954) 1973-1982 **LVB**

Extremely quick (Run: 17; 35 SB/47 attempts) 2B. Managed *Industriales* and the National team after retiring as a player.

Agustin **Arias** [Quick Fingered] (b. 1942) 1965-1981 **ORB**

Perennial national team selection, the SS (1) had a quick release and a very strong arm. 1979 Sportsman of the Year. Skilled bunter (A).

Oswaldo **Arias** (b. 1977) 1994-2016 **CAB**

Stumpy, home run (18) hitting C with a rifle arm (-3). With his stance on top of the plate, he's HBP once every 60 PA. T-6th in *Series Nacional* career total Runners CS.

Alexander **Ayala** (b. 1981) 1999-2022 **CAB**

Power hitting SS saw time with the national team as well as the Can-Am League. Very well respected around the league & especially by his home Camaguey fans.

Victor **Bejerano** [The Doubles King] (b. 1967) 1984-2007 **CAB**

Leading light of the lesser league team *Granma*. Lengthy career (T-2nd of batters in *SN* seasons at 24) as 1B/OF sees him among the leaders in many batting categories, including 2nd in Doubles.

Alexei **Bell** [The Canon] (b. 1983) 2001-2016 **ORB**

All-round skillful CF (2) with speed (16; 21/25), good power, and a strong and sure arm (-3). MVP in 2008 and 2007 Cuba Series MVP. 10th in *SN* career SLG.

Manuel **Benavides** (b. 1964) 1990-2007 **PRB**

Outstanding glove at 3B (1) can also fill in at SS and the OF. Good speed (15; 17/24). 10th in *SN* career Triples.

Owen **Blandino** [The Rooster] (b. 1938) 1962-1979 **MAB**

Huge favorite of the Sancti Spiritus fans for his class and dignity. The 3B fought under Che Guevara before the revolution.

Armando **Capiro** [The Uniform] (b. 1948) 1967-1980 **LHB**

Top slugging (.911 OPS) LF (1) retired due to injury, not loss of skill. MVP in 1973. Ever-present with the National team.

Eduardo **Cardenas** [The Acrobat] (b. 1967) 1985-2003 **LHB**

Slick field 3B (2) was good at moving baserunners with the hit and run (B) and sacrifice (A). 3rd in *SN* career SH.

Luis Giraldo **Casanova** [Mr. Baseball] (b. 1956) **1974-1990 PRB**
Spray hitting, Triple Crown winning, power hitter (71 BB; 97 Runs, 97 RBI; .910 OPS). MVP in 1984. 10th in *SN* career BB, 7th in OnB and 6th in HR and SLG.

Danel **Castro** (b. 1976) **1993-2022 PRB**
SS/2B (.342 OnB; 80 R) with pop (15 HR).

Juan **Castro Garcia** (b. 1954) **1974-1989 PRB**
Considered by many Cuba's greatest fielding C (1; -3).

Frederich **Cepeda** (b. 1980) **1998-2022 LVB**
National team stalwart and patient (85 BB) power hitting LF (.885 OPS). 4th in *SN* career BB, 2nd in OnB and 8th in SLG.

Yoenis **Céspedes** (b. 1985) **2003-2022 ORB**
After breaking into the Granma everyday lineup at 17, he left Cuba as their superstar. Along with Yu Darvish he was the hottest international free agent going into the 2012 season. The only real question at the time was if he could stick in CF. (SNdB & MLB)

Yorelvis **Charles** (b. 1979) **1996-2016 CAB**
SS with good power (14 HR) who can play all IF positions. Batting champ in 2000.

Loidel **Chapelli** (b. 1971) **1993-2006 CAB**
Camaguey's leading hitter for average. Slick fielding clean up hitting 1B with a propensity to smash doubles. His son, Loidel Jr., is in the White Sox system.

Pedro **Chavez** [The Strange One] (b. 1936) **1962-1969 CAB**
National star before the founding, when he was 26, of the *SN*. League champion 4 times, the corner OF (2) and 1B (2) was a consistent performer. Pitchers were careful with him as he averaged 11 IW a season. 2 time MVP (1964, 1967) and batting champ.

Miguel **Cuevas** [*Don Miguel*] (b. 1935) **1962-1974 CAB**
Steady LF (2) was an intelligent hitter and run producer (94 RBI) who holds the career record for Base Awarded due to Catcher Obstruction. Also averaged 11 IW/season. Batting champ in 1966.

Jefferson **Delgado** (b. 1982) **2004-2022 MAB**
Matanzas hero for his .403 average & league championship. Occasional national team 3B. Also played in the Can-Am League.

Jose **Delgado Diaz** (b. 1960) **1979-1998 MAB**

Versatile C (OF, 1B, 3B) with decent pop (13 HR).

Alfredo Despaigne [The Immense] (b. 1986) 2004-2023 **ORB**

4 time SNdB MVP. SNdB career HR record holder. Also played in Mexico, then NPB for 9 years as a DH. National team stalwart. (SNdB & NPB)

Enriquito Diaz [The Bullet] (b. 1968) 1986-2011 **MAB**

Premier fielding 2B (1) of recent seasons who, as his nickname implies, can race (17) the wind (89 R; 49/59), and can draw walks (68). 2004 Cuba Series MVP. Enrique had the most seasons played (26) in the SN of all batters, and is career leader in G, PA, AB, Runs, Hits, Triples and SB.

Orlis Luis Diaz (b. 1969) 1991-2008 **ORB**

Smooth fielding LF (2) and reliable bat was overlooked for national selection due to his weak throwing arm (3).

Donal Duarte [Big Wolf] (b.1982) 2001-2020 **PRB**

National team regular at 3B. Also played in the Can-Am League. Never got along with his Pinar teammate Pedro Lazo. Duarte was sanctioned by the Sport Ministry towards the end of his career, losing a season.

Giorvis Duvergel [Pinky] (b.1979) 1999-2017 **ORB**

Superb CF glove meant he frequently was named to the national team roster. Usually hit 1st for the nats but 3rd for Guantanamo. Moved to the US in 2022 thanks to a Cuba over-40 dispensation.

Michel Enriquez [Super "12"] (b. 1979) 1998-2019 **LHB**

Wearing #12, the 3B is a batter supreme (38 Doubles; .309/.384/.469) who could star in the ML. Twice batting champ. MVP in 1999. 3rd in SN career BA and OnB, 4th in Doubles, and 1st in Triple Plays Made.

Jose Antonio Estrada [Pepito] (b. 1967) 1986-2003 **MAB**

Balletic CF (1, -1), smart baserunner (15; 24/31) with a knack for scoring runs (86). Batting champ in 1997. 6th in SN career SB.

Julio German Fernandez (b. 1962) 1981-1999 **MAB**

Slow (8) yet very nimble around the 1B bag (1). #5 hitter (89 RBI) who hit some of the SN's longest HR (22). 8th in SN career HR and 9th in RBI.

Dayan Garcia [Magic] (b.1987) 2005-2022 **LHB**

On and off the national team at 2B. Known for a clutch bat, he lacks highlight plays in the field. Captain of Artemisa.

Evenecer **Godinez** (b. 1960) **1979-1995 CAB**
SS with good wheels (16; 10 Triples). Rookie of the Year co-winner (with Rene Arocha). Post retirement has been an international sports ambassador for Cuba. 2nd in SN career Triples.

Yoandy **Garlobo** (b.1976) **1995-2013 MAB**
Corner IF, known for his bat not glove, and frequent national team selection. He struggled his career trying to keep his weight below 200 lbs. on his 5'9" frame. Passed away in 2023 due to complications from diabetes.

Luis Ignacio **Gonzalez** [*Nacho*] (b. 1966) **1985-2002 LHB**
Thick legged, big bodied leadoff hitter (14/19) with real power (14 HR).

Toni **Gonzalez** (b. 1942) **1962-1970 LHB**
SS (2) anchor of his 4 straight winning *Industriales* team.

Urbano **Gonzalez** [Country Boy] (b. 1939) **1962-1974 LHB**
Near impossible to strike out (14) 2B. MVP and batting champ in 1965.

Lourdes **Gourriel** [Man for the Big Moment] (b. 1957) **1977-1996 LVB**
Multiple batting title winner and MVP of international tournaments. SN MVP in 1994. Rookie of the Year in 1977. Batting champ in 1994. Respected manager post-playing career. Older brother of Luis, father of Yulieski and Lourdes Gurriel.

Luis **Gourriel Diaz** [*Kiki*] (b. 1966) **1985-2005 MAB**
Strong armed (-3) CF (2) who played anywhere in the OF and 3B. Co-batting champ in 1990. Younger brother of Lourdes, uncle of Yulieski and Lourdes Gurriel.

Yulieski **Gurriel** [*Yuly*] (b. 1984) **2002-> LVB**
Proved his worth in MLB after a less impressive injury affected stay in NPB. He lost a bit of foot speed in his mid-thirties, hence his move across the diamond, so this card showcases him at his SNdB peak. Age adjusted, his MLB seasons have been close to our expectation. Son of Lourdes Gourriel, nephew of Luis, and brother of Lourdes Gurriel. Older brother Yunieski was a fine CF for many years in SNdB.

Yurisbel **Gracial** (b. 1985) **2009-2022 MAB**
The next Linares struggled under the weight of expectation. He could mash from the middle order, but not with consistency. His range at 3B had quickness but lacked anticipation. A player who desperately wanted to play in MLB. Played in the Can-Am League, then in NPB with Softbank for 5 years. He's just finished a good, but not great, career. (SNdB & NPB)

Ramon **Hechavarria** [The Kid] (b. 1938) 1962-1978 **ORB**

The best all around C of Cuba's "deadball" years was also tough. He finished a game after part of a cracked helmet imbedded in his cranium.

Reutilio Hurtado [The Plane] (b.1975) 1995-2015 **ORB**

Long time national team pick. Played 21 seasons, from age 20 to 40, and won 6 titles. Splashy CF, who lost range as his bat developed while moving up in the lineup to clean up, that the better baserunner stopped challenging. Racked up big career numbers in Runs, HR, and RBI.

Rey **Isaac** (b. 1973) 1992-2012 **ORB**

Corner OF with a reputation as a smart hitter.

Felix **Isasi** (b. 1945) 1965-1982 **MAB**

Outstanding SS (1) at turning the DP. A very tough out (.288; 43 K in 534 PA). Marvelous at hitting behind a runner (B) and swift on the bases (15; 18/24). Master of the hidden ball trick. With Rigoberto Rosique and Wilfredo Sanchez formed the Three Musketeers of the *Henequeneros* team.

Pedro **Jova** (b. 1953) 1972-1988 **LVB**

1972 Rookie of the Year. Contact hitting (.300; B; 29 K) smooth and stylish SS (2) is the SN career leader in BA from his position. Managed *Villa Clara* to 3 straight titles post-retirement.

Lazaro Marino **Junco** (b. 1958) 1979-1996 **MAB**

RF was a multiple HR (31) and RBI (102) titleist. MVP in 1983. 2nd in SN career HR, 9th in TB and 6th in RBI.

Orestes **Kindelan** [The Drum Major] (b. 1964) 1982-2002 **ORB**

Broke in as a C, then tried in the OF, before settling in at 1B and DH. Oh but what a bat. Ever-present with the National team where he destroyed international pitching. Triple Crown and MVP winner (1989) and classic clean up hitter (34 HR; 114 RBI). SN career leader in HR and TB.

Alexis Laborde (b. 1974) 1991-2007 **ORB**

Overlooked as 3B for the national team too often, he was the slickest fielder of his peers, with a snap release. Hit enough to keep his place, but retired at 33, which Matanzas fans considered to be too early.

Fermin **Laffita** [The Greyhound] (b. 1946) 1965-1984 **ORB**

The “Eastern Satellite” was a quick and graceful CF (2) and a constant presence in the National team. Batting champ in 1975.

Daniel Lazo (b. 1973) 1991-2005 PRB

Corner OF was known as an RBI man (90) with good power (24 HR).

Agustin Lescaille [The Rubber Man] (b. 1954) 1977-1998 ORB

Cuba’s greatest defensive 1B (1) is among the top 10 in many career offense and defense stat categories.

Omar Linares [The Boy] (b. 1968) 1983-2002 PRB

Greatest of the Cubans, he would rank in the top 10 3B in baseball history. Starred in international play and admired by everyone he competed against. An unstoppable offense machine (86 BB; 114 Runs; 28 HR; 96 RBI; .981 OPS; 17/22). Nearly as dominant in the field (2) where he could even step in at SS when needed. Five time batting champ. His computer On Base % is 49 v L/51 v R, and his computer XBH % is 15.6/15.5. In other words, a “must-have” card for a baseball collection.

Oscar Machado (b. 1967) 1987-2005 PRB

Free swinging (140 K) CF (2; -2) good for chipping in 15 HR a season. Hitting coach after retirement.

Roger Machado [Bazooka Arm] (b. 1974) 1993-2006 CAB

C who it was a big risk to run on (-4). Post-retirement managed *Ciego de Avila* to the SN 51 title; now has taken charge of the National team after Victor Mesa.

Oscar Macias (b. 1969) 1985-2002 MAB

Power hitting (83 Runs; 19 HR; 84 RBI) 2B.

Lazaro Madera (b. 1962) 1985-1996 PRB

Short and chubby, the Pinar fans forgave his defense (which kept him off the national team) because with his strong wrists he could hit everything everywhere. A real life caricature of the Cuban bad ball hitter. Plenty of speed, but took bad routes in LF and bad risks on the bases.

Elpidio Mancebo [The Imp] (b. 1944) 1963-1979 PRB

Patient contact hitting, small ball style, 1B. Batting champ in 1972.

Yordan Manduley (b. 1986) 1905-2022 ORB

One of Holguin's better players, he combined very good range at SS with enough bat merit to be one of the early group approved to play in the Can-Am League. Called to the

national team but mostly as a reserve, which, unlike some contemporaries, he took in his stride.

Juan Manrique [The Cat] (b. 1967) 1986-2003 **MAB**

Excellent C (2; -2) with power (15 HR) and patience (80 BB). 3rd in SN career in Runners CS.

Agustin Marquetti [The Slugger] (b. 1944) 1966-1987 **LHB**

Little farm boy becomes one of the great names of Cuba baseball. MVP in 1972. 3rd in SN career IW. Clutch hitting 1B now runs a baseball school in Miami.

Albertico Martinez (b. 1952) 1973-1988 **LVB**

Alberto was a sure handed C (2, e3) with a strong arm (-2). Held in very high esteem by the pitchers he worked with. 8th in SN career Runners CS.

Isaac Martinez [Sparky] (b. 1975) 1994-2013 **CAB**

Steady corner OF and frequent pick for the Cuba B team.

Romelio Martinez [Fatty] (b. 1965) 1984-1998 **PRB**

LF/DH who, when he swung (76 BB, 145 K), swung *really* hard (25 HR, many of them were majestic; 87 RBI). 4th in SN career HR, 7th in HBP, 8th in BB, 1st in K.

Alexander Mayeta (b. 1977) 1996-2019 **LHB**

Powerful clutch hitting 1B (23 HR; 90 RBI). MVP in 2006 and 2006 Cuba Series MVP. T-8th SN career IW.

Pedro Medina [The Doctor] (b. 1952) 1972-1988 **LHB**

Some call him the best C (1; -2) over Cuba's rich history of producing C. He could really hit too (22 HR; .847 OPS). Managed *Industriales* to a title after retiring.

Javier Mendez (b. 1964) 1982-2003 **LHB**

CF won the batting title in 1987. Smart, patient (.380 OnB) hitter. Batting champ in 1987. 10th in SN career AB, 8th in R, 10th in H, 3rd in Doubles, 5th in BB, 9th in OnB, 9th in SF.

Rolando Merino (b. 1971) 1990-2011 **ORB**

Decent C who was never going to play ahead of Pestano for the National team, but what a strong batter (.779 OPS). 2008 Cuba Series MVP. 8th in SN career R, 1st in Doubles, 10th in RBI, 3rd in K.

German Mesa [The Magician; Magnet] (b. 1967) 1985-2000 **LHB**

There's an argument to be made that he'd rank alongside Ozzie Smith as a glove

man. Certainly he was as athletic, though more prone to mistakes (E-27) as he performed the SS (1, as there is no 0 rating) position like a premier ballet dancer. Lost 2 years when he was banned, along with *El Duque* Hernandez, for, allegedly, negotiating to jump to the ML. This embargo infuriated baseball fans across Cuba as no hard proof of his “crime” was ever presented. Very useful batter too (15; 30/40; .330 OnB). 7th in SN career SB.

Victor Mesa [Crazy Man; The Show] (b. 1960) 1975-1993 **LVB**

One of the most popular, and controversial, baseball players from Cuba. CF (1, -1) with an amazing skill set. Capable of outlandish behavior, he entertained and delighted the fans just as he tried the patience of teammates, opposition, umpires, and administrators. Yet post retirement he proved remarkably successful as a team manager, though his recent experience piloting Cuba in WBC 2013 exposed his volcanic and petulant side. The soul of a leadoff hitter (95 R, 16 r rating; 41/53) packed inside the body of a run producer (94 RBI; .447 SLG), Mesa had all the elements required of a baseball superstar. 8th in SN career AB, 5th in R, 7th in H, Doubles and RBI, 6th in TB and SF, 2nd in SB.

Silvio Montejo [The Bullet] (b. 1946) 1964-1975 **CAB**

Track star, then converted from a P, he used his speed (15) and arm to patrol CF and LF (2, -1). Crashed into a lot of unpadded outfield walls, willingly, as he played like no ball was uncatchable. Brother of Detroit’s Manny.

Juan Carlos Moreno [The Walrus] (b. 1975) 1992-2006 **PRB**

SS (2) with pop (10 HR) was a National team reserve.

Antonio Munoz [The Giant] (b. 1949) 1968-1991 **LVB**

Long time star 1B (2) of the league and National team. Quick bat (25 HR; 98 RBI; .886 OPS) for a huge man. MVP in 1974. T-3rd in SN career seasons and PA, 6th in R, T-4th in HR, 4th in TB, 2nd in RBI, 1st in BB and IW.

Alejo O’Reilly [The Viking] (b. 1961) 1979-1994 **LVB**

Preceded Kindelan at 1B (1) with the National team. 1979 Rookie of the Year. Cleanup hitter whose heavy frame wore out his knees, forcing him to retire while still in his prime.

Eulogio Osorio (b. 1948) 1968-1983 **LHB**

Starred in international softball as well, the corner OF won 6 league titles, including in his rookie season. Batting champ in 1977. Passed away in 2006.

Antonio Pacheco [The Great Captain] (b. 1965) 1981-2002 **LHB**

Leader of the classic National team IF of Kindelan-Pacheco-Mesa-Linares. Won that 2B

position on the strength of his bat (18 HR; 94 RBI; .809 OPS). Held down 3B and SS when needed. 9th in *SN* career PA, 6th in AB, 7th in R, 2nd in H, 3rd in RBI, TB and SF. Retired after losing vision in his right eye. Twice managed a title winner after retirement. Managed Cuba in the Beijing Olympics.

Juan Padilla A [The Vacuum Cleaner] (b. 1965) 1984-2000 **LHB**

Padilla Alfonso followed Pacheco as National team 2B (1) and was acknowledged as the superior defender. Would manage to chip in 10 HR a season while better renowned for his wonderful bunting (A). 7th in *SN* career Triples.

Eduardo Paret (b. 1972) 1990-2011 **LVB**

His career overlapped with German Mesa, and every fan had an opinion on who was the better *torpedero* (SS). Not the fielder (2) Mesa was, of course, but had plenty to offer (17; 41/50; 9 HR; .340 OnB). 3 times a league champ. 2005 IBAF's Player of the Year. Homered off Dice K in the 2006 WBC Gold medal game. 3rd in *SN* career R and SB, T-8th in Triples, 9th in BB and SH, 10th in HBP.

Joan Carlos Pedroso (b. 1979) 1998-2016 **MAB**

Immensely strong cleanup hitter (31 HR; .876 OPS) and nimble around 1B (1). 9th in *SN* career HR, 5th in OnB, 7th in SLG and K, and 1st in HBP.

Yosvani Peraza [Fatty] (b. 1979) 1998-2020 **PRB**

6', 280 pound C generates a lot of power (22 HR). 69 RBI in just 399 AB confirms his reputation as a run producer. 4th in *SN* career IW.

Ariel Osvaldo Pestano (b. 1974) 1991-2013 **LVB**

Fiery C (1; -4) and the acknowledged leader of recent National teams. Though known primarily for his outstanding defense (1; -4) and firm handling of the pitching staff he supplies enough power (12 HR) to be pitched cautiously. 1st in *SN* career in Runners CS.

Gabriel Pierre (b. 1966) 1986-2003 **ORB**

Overshadowed as a 3B by contemporary Linares, Pierre packed plenty of power (23 HR; .812 OPS) to not be overlooked by the National team. 7th in *SN* career HR, 3rd in HBP.

Rodolfo Puente [Buddy] (b. 1948) 1968-1983 **ORB**

1968 Rookie of the Year. Just 5'8", 150 lbs., he compensated for his scrawny physique with a sharp baseball mind. Batting champ in 1980.

Yasiel Puig (b. 1990) 2008-> **LVB**

Began his career with *Cienfuegos* at 18. After a year with the youth team he returned as a 20 year old and put the league on notice that he was a rare talent. (SNdB, MLB, & KBO)

Sergio Quesada (b. ?, d. 2022) 1976-1995 CAB

His glove at 2B (2) kept him in the lineup for 20 seasons. His speed (16; 17/22) and instincts helped too. 1st in SN career Innings Played, Assists (and Errors). Passed away in 2022.

Alexei Ramirez [Missile] (b. 1981) 2001-2018 PRB

Played for 7 seasons in Cuba before jumping at age 25. Expectations for him were not that high. He was considered too tall to play SS in Cuba. He met his Dominican wife Mildred, who was training as a doctor, in Cuba. His mother had hoped that Alexei would become a doctor instead of a *pelotero*. (SNdB & MLB)

Alexander Ramos [The Man of Steel] (b. 1969) 1988-2005 LVB

Cuba's Iron Man was the 1988 Rookie of the Year. The 2B (.293), Mr. Consistent, played in 1112 consecutive games. 6th in SN career BA.

Cheito Rodriguez (b. 1955) 1974-1998 CAB

Pedro Jose- we use his nickname (Joey) to distinguish him from Pedro Luis R- was a masher (34 HR; 113 RBI; .886 OPS) at 3B. MVP in 1980. Rookie of the Year in 1974. (His son was RotY in 2001.) T-10th in SN career HR.

Pedro Luis Rodriguez (b. 1960) 1982-1995 LHB

As a C he was a heck of a hitter (14 HR; 83 RBI; .791 OPS). MVP and co-batting champ in 1988. Always arguments over his defense (1st in SN career Steals Against, but also 4th in Runners CS); nobody questioned his bat.

Eddy Rojas [The Professor] (b. 1966) 1985-2004 PRB

Excellent OFer (2; -1) would provide cover anywhere in the IF (but 1B) when needed. 1985 Rookie of the Year. Won 3 league titles. Rumors of a handshake deal with an ML team were just that.

Rigoberto Rosique (b. 1944) 1964-1976 MAB

Among the greatest of the SN era. CF (1; -1) who played very shallow yet, as the rating attests, went back for a ball as well as Andruw Jones in his prime. His offense (.298; .377 OnB) didn't take a backseat to his defensive prowess. Twice batting champ. A Three Musketeer of the *Henequeneros* title winning team with Felix Isaasi and Wilfredo Sanchez.

William Saavedra (b. 1981) 2005-2022 PRB

Took a while for his bat to come around to develop enough power to hold down 1B. Only

started to play baseball seriously in his late teens. Good defender at 1B from the start (he began as a 3B but Pinar had Duarte there, and Saavedra's twitch was slow) so Pinar was patient with him. Kept his place with the national team for 6 years.

Yordanis Samon [The Bomber] (b. 1981) 2003-2022 **ORB**

Power hitting 1B/DH with a good eye. Regular with the national team. Played in Mexico with Despaigne and Michel Enriquez. 2003 Rookie of the Year.

Fernando Sanchez (b. 1951) 1972-1994 **MAB**

Jardinero (OF) who played forever. 2 time MVP (1978, also batting champ, and 1982). 1st RHB to 2000 H. 7th in SN career Seasons Played, 5th in PA, AB and TB, 3rd in H, 8th in Triples, 4th in RBI. Brother of Wilfredo.

Wilfredo Sanchez [The Deer; Hit Man] (b. 1949) 1969-1987 **MAB**

OF/1B won 3 MVPs (1969, 1970 and 1979) and 5 batting crowns (1969, 1970, 1976, 1979, and 1984). 1st batter to 2,000 H. 6th in SN career H and Triples, 4th in RBI, 6th in SB. A Three Musketeer of the *Henequeneros* title winning team with Felix Isaasi and Rigoberto Rosique. Brother of Fernando.

Eriel Sanchez (b. 1975) 1993-2018 **LVB**

Reserve C/1B/DH with the National team. Not a skillful receiver, though helps to make up for that with a ridiculous arm (-3). Good for 14 HR and a reliable RBI man (77). 2nd in SN career Runners Caught Stealing, 1st in GDP.

Felipe Sarduy (b. 1944) 1964-1984 **CAB**

1B was Rookie of the Year in 1964. At his peak he was a safe pair of hands, and though that period wasn't long (his career certainly was), he did handle 642 consecutive chances without an error. 3rd in SN career in Putouts and Chances.

Antonio Scull [Liquid] (b. 1965) 1988-2007 **PRB**

Smooth 1B (2) with some power (14 HR) and RBI ability (83). 2003 Cuba Series MVP. 8th in SN career in Doubles, 2nd in SF.

Edilse Silva [Salsa] (b. 1981) 2000-2022 **ORB**

Power hitter whose quick bat led to many HR but also many Ks. Initially a pitcher, he lost 4 years in his early twenties to a very slow recovery from a rotator cuff injury. 5th place hitter of a poor *Holguin* team, and usually overlooked by the national selectors.

Carlos Alberto Tabares [The Linx] (b. 1974) 1992-2017 **CAB**

Little Tabares is a quick (15; 19/27) CF (2; -1) who likes bunting (A) for hits and hitting behind runners (B). 1st in SN career SH.

Andres **Telemaco** (b. 1942) 1962-1974 **ORB**

Primarily 2B, but equally at home at SS and 3B. Surprising power (14 HR) especially for the small ball times he played.

Luis **Ulacia** (b. 1963) 1984-2004 **PRB**

He played a lot of shortstop, befitting his size (5'8"; 160) and the #1 on his shirt, but he had too many miscues there. He blossomed into a star when shifted to LF (1; -3). 3 time batting champ. 7th in SN career AB, 10th in R, 5th in H, 4th in SB.

Yoandry **Urgelles** [*Takata*] (b. 1981) 2000-2021 **LHB**

1999 Rookie of the Year. Was a heavy hitter in his early years, but hand and wrist injuries sapped some power. Nevertheless his reputation as a fine contact hitter remained, he continued to bang out doubles, and he was often picked for the national team.

Alfonso **Urquiola** [*Lightning*] (b. 1953) 1971-1989 **PRB**

2B (2) with a very smooth pivot on the double play. For that position he had a nice combo of speed (15; 18/26) and pop (10 HR). Post-retirement he was a title winning manager and helmed the National team.

Ermidelio **Urrutia** (b. 1963) 1981-1996 **ORB**

Dynamic RF (1; -3) good for 15 HR and 82 RBI. Would be overshadowed by his generously talented cousin Osmani, but was a better ballplayer than his son, Baltimore's Henry. Post-retirement he managed both men.

Osmani **Urrutia** [*Mr. 400*] (b. 1976) 1994-2009 **CAB**

Corner OF twice MVP (2004 and 2007) and 6 times a batting champ- 5 years consecutive- his 2004 season was the highest BA ever achieved in the league. 2nd in SN career BA (.02 behind Linares), 8th in OnB. Cousin of Ermidelio.

Lazaro **Vargas** [*The Black Beast*] (b. 1964) 1981-2002 **CAB**

Good 3B (2) and a good hitter (.355 OnB). MVP in 1986. 8th in SN career PA and H, 9th in AB, 4th in SF (but 2nd in GDP).

Mario Jorge **Vega** [*Mayito*] (b. 1975) 1992-2013 **CAB**

Outstanding defensive 2B (1). Played for what had been a poor league team, until as a part-timer in 2012 he helped *Ciego* lift the title. 6th in SN career SH, 9th in DP Turned.

Rolando **Verde** [*The Green "Blue"*] (b. 1962) 1981-1996 **MAB**

Industriales (who play in blue, and *verde* means green) 3B (2) was the 1981 Rookie of the Year. Could capably handle SS.

Robelquis Videaux (b. 1976) 1994-2008 **ORB**

A superb corner OF, primarily played in RF to take advantage of his strong and accurate arm. Frequent national team participant his first 10 years. Retired, early at 32, to coach.

Amadito Zamora (b. 1953) 1976-1994 **LVB**

Corner OF was MVP in 1995. Twice batting champ, 1981 and then a wait til 1995. Amado's great speed (16) gained him many infield hits. 5th in SN career Triples. His son. Andy, also a good average hitter, currently plays for his dad's old team *Villa Clara*.

CUBAN LEAGUE STARS (1962-2023) : The Pitchers

Pablo Miguel Abreu (b. 1967) 1984-1996 **CAB**

72-48. Seven times selected SN Best LHP. 4 times a league champ. Unfortunately, often injured. Good enough hitter to have played some OF. Pitched in Europe (Holland, Italy) after "retirement", and now works there for a Miami based sports agency.

Omar Ajete (b. 1965) 1985-2004 **PRB**

179-96. 5 time a league champ. 9th in SN career W, 10th in W % and K. Kept a close bond after retirement with his *Pinar* teammates Casanova, Linares, Castro Garcia, and Rogelio Garcia.

Manuel Alarcon [The Coppersmith] (b. 1941) 1962-1968 **ORB**

41-24. Exaggerated rotation to the plate, like a Tiant. Feasted off his sharp breaking curveball. Suspended for the 1966 season (Bo Belinsky disease). Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1968. A ruptured disc forced him to retire. Passed away in 1998 (56).

Jose Luis Aleman [Pepe] (b. 1959) 1977-1995 **LHB**

174-125. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1989. 6th in SN career CG, 10th in Shutouts and HR.

Yovani Aragon [The Hurricane] (b. 1974) 1993-2008 **LVB**

156-124. Fastball, forkball, slider Pitcher. 7th in SN career K. Currently the manager of *Sancti Spiritus*.

Rene Arocha (b. 1964) 1979-1997 **LHB**

Pitched for *Industriales* with El Duque, Lazaro de la Torre, and Lazaro Valle. Known as the thinking man's pitcher in Cuba. Threw a variety of pitches from different arm angles. At 27 years he was a big name in Cuba before jumping into Manuel Hurtado's car in Miami in 1991, the first current national team player to defect. Left his wife and daughter in Cuba. The *Cardinals* won an 8 team lottery for his MLB rights. (SNdB & MLB)

Rolando Arrojo [The Typhoon] (b. 1965) 1986-2003 **LVB**

Rookie of the Year in 1983. Top 5 pitcher in the SNdB before he jumped to MLB at 32, one year before *Tampa* fielded its very first MLB team. (SNdB & MLB)

Alberto Bicet (b. 1983) 2004-2022 ORB

A relief pitcher for a few years until *Santiago* made room in its rotation. Then quickly established himself as a staff ace and workhorse, racking up Wins. Stoic, stocky, and very strong; nothing seemed to faze him when on the bump.

Omar Carrero [The Peasant] (b. 1949) 1972-1988 CAB

149-105. Sinker-slider-forkballer, not especially fast, who threw from multiple angles with outstanding control. Pitched for weak hitting *Pinar* and *Ciego* teams. Pitching Triple Crown, Cy Young (equivalent) and MVP in 1976. 2nd lowest single season ERA (1976). A no hitter in 1981. 10th in SN career CG, 3rd in Shutouts. Passed away in 2012.

Jose Contreras (b. 1971) 1992-2016 PRB

With Pedro Lazo formed the dominant duo of *Pinar*. Cuban superstar pitcher who threw faster fastballs and flukier forkballs than the rest. Best Pitcher of 1996. The *Yankees* bested *Boston* for his signature with the highest ever (to that point) international free agent deal. Pitched as a professional until age 44. (SNdB & MLB)

Faustino Corrales (b. 1965) 1983-2005 ORB

172-135. Pascual type big breaking curve baller. A no hitter in 1991. K'ed 22 in a 9 inning game. Led league in K 4 times. 3rd in SN career Seasons and K, 6th in GS, 10th in IP, 7th in Shutouts, 2nd in BB, 1st in WP.

Reinaldo Costa (b. 1959) 1977-1987 PRB

110-67. Fastball and control pitcher who threw from a 3/4 angle. Pitching Triple Crown and Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1985, but in his peak, that season ruined his arm.

Jose Modesto Darcourt [Little Fellow] (b. 1958) 1977-1990 CAB

129-107. Curve baller who came under suspicion for mixing with gamblers and was blackballed from the national team. His laconic and carefree nature didn't endear him to the more demanding fans. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1982.

Lazaro de la Torre [Iron Arm] (b. 1957) 1979-1995; 2000-2002 LHB

208-139. Fastball pitcher and workout freak. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1986. Made a comeback when 45; attempted another at 49. 6th in SN G and IP, 10th in GS, 5th in W, 9th in CG, H and BB.

Jose Angel Garcia [The Barber] (b. 1981) 1999-2022 CAB

56-65/142. Intimidating closer with not the best control. 10th in SN career in G, 1st in GR and Saves, 2nd in IW.

Rogelio **Garcia** [Cyclone] (b. 1955) **1975-1988 PRB**
202-100. Fastball/forkball pitcher. Almost identical in his (smaller) stature to Tom Gordon, and similar in wracking up big K numbers. 1981 Cy Young (equivalent) and MVP, the year he pitched a no hitter. Cy Young (equivalent) winner again in 1988. 3rd in SN career CG, 6th in W and W %, 1st in K, 3rd in BB, 2nd in Shutouts, 8th in IP.

Vladimir **Garcia** [The Blockade] (b. 1972) **1991-2011 CAB**
Ciego started him out as a reliever and he did that well enough to make the national team. He then transitioned to starter for his club team, which pleased Garcia who styled himself after Pedro Laza. Called again to the national team as a starter. Fractured his hand during a showcase for NPB teams. Speedball and slider, then added a split as a starter. Big man.

Norberto **Gonzalez** (b. 1979) **1998-2017 LVB**
Projected to be a starter based on his excellent juvenile results, the lefty was held back by control issues. Once he corrected his issues, his funky delivery, launching curves, slurves, and junk, gained him great success as a swingman. Pitched in Italy before retiring.

Livan **Hernandez** (b. 1975) **1993-2012 LHB**
"In Cuba you go to the baseball park on a bicycle in your uniform." By 20 he was a star with the national team, until he jumped ship when the team played in Mexico to hold MLB tryouts with Osvaldo Fernandez. Half-brother of Orlando. Father Arnaldo (the original Duque) played and managed in SNdB. "When he was little, he was fat, fat, fat. People told me I would have a great cook on my hands. I told them he was a great ballplayer." (MLB)

Orlando **Hernandez** [*El Duque*] (b. 1965) **1988-2010 LHB**
A non-prospect until turning 20, he became a Cuban idol. Pitched for *Industriales* with Arocha, Lazaro de la Torre, and Lazaro Valle. Suspended for life by the Sports Ministry, along with German Mesa, after half-brother Livan defected. Father Arnaldo (the original Duque) played and managed in SNdB. (SNdB & MLB)

Jose Antonio **Huelga** [The Hero of Cartagena] (b. 1948) **1968-1974 LVB**
73-32/14. In a 1970 international tournament in Columbia, vs the US, he beat Burt Hooton in 11 innings, then came back in the 5th inning the next day to help defeat the US again. Hence earning the appellation. Won 17 games for the national team. No hitter in 1968. Beat the great Braudilio Vinent in the 1972 league tie-breaker on 96 pitches/71 strikes. 1st in SN career ERA. Died in a 1974 car accident. Since his pitching career was brief, we card him in this set as a closer.

Manuel Hurtado (b. 1942) 1963-1974 **LHB**

90-47. Offered a contract with the *Senators* as a 17 year old. In the Cuban tradition of great curveball artists. Known for his calm and gentlemanly demeanor. Remembered for his classic matchups against Manuel Alarcon. Used a double windup motion. Idolized by *El Duque* Hernandez. 3rd in SN career ERA, 7th in W %.

Jose Ibar [*Cheo*] (b. 1969) 1987-2004 **MAB**

173-100. Slider was his big pitch, but also threw a knuckleball. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1995, 1998 and 1999. Had an amazing run of consecutive W. 1st in single season W. Was the series opener against the *Orioles*.

Ismel Jimenez (b. 1986) 2005-2019 **LVB**

An IF in juvenile ball, the *Espirituanos* converted him to pitcher. In and out of the national team. Pitched every 5th day and threw at least 120 pitches per start; hated being relieved. MVP in 2013. Retired 2nd in SNdB career W/L. Played in the Can-Am League where his arm finally gave out, ending his career.

Pedro Luis Lazo [The Skyscraper; Junkyard Dog] (b. 1973) 1991-2010 **PRB**

257-136. The best SN pitcher of his time. Hotly pursued by ML agents. Pitched 72 G in the post-season. Pitched in 4 Olympics. 4th in SN career in G and HR, 2nd in IP, GS and K, 5th in CG, 1st in W, 8th in W %, 3rd in H, 6th in BB. Pitching coach in Mexico after retirement, and also devotes time to work with at-risk children.

Gaspar Legon (b. 1945) 1965-1979 **CAB**

141-101. Pitched for *Camaguey* when the team was known as The Unbeatables, before it fell into years of decline. His main weapons were control, intelligence, and changing his arm angle.

Ciro Silvino Licea [The Indian] (b. 1975) 1994-2016 **ORB**

196-140. Switched from IF to P at the start of his SN career. Dealing with a spinal injury, he retired only to return. 9th in SN career G and K, 3rd in GS, 7th in W and HR, 10th in L, 5th in IP and Shutouts, 2nd in H, 9th in K

Jonder Martinez (b. 1978) 1997-2022 **LHB**

121-117. Breaking ball pitcher, usually with good control, who tops out at 91. Moved from starter to closer recently when he joined pitching rich *Villa Clara*. Pitched a no hitter in 2008. 7th in SN career in HB (which he uses for a purpose).

Santiago Mederos [Joker] (b. 1945) 1965-1979 **LHB**

123-67. Southpaw curve ball artist and K king. Overcame early control problems. OF as a youth and remained a good hitter. Rumored to have been offered a few hundred

thousand dollars to jump to the ML. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1969. Won nine international tournaments; K'ed 21 Mexicans in 1970. 6th in *SN* career ERA and Shutouts. Died in a 1979 car crash- the *Metropolitanos'* baseball stadium in Havana was renamed in his honor.

Eliecer **Montes de Oca** (b. 1971) 1990-2007 **LVB**
136-91. Large repertoire of pitches. 5th in *SN* career HB.

Vicyohandri **Odelin** [*Viyó*] (b.1980) 1998-2020 **MAB**
124-94. Throws an assortment of pitches. Qualified as a phys ed teacher before starting his *SN* career.

Juan Carlos **Oliva** (b. 1954) 1974-1984 **PRB**
101-57. OF as a youth moved to P. Younger brother of Minnesota's Tony.

Adiel **Palma** (b. 1970) 1988-2008 **LVB**
139-165. Protege of Julio Romero. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 2003. Pitched a no hitter in 1999. 5th in *SN* career Seasons, 9th in GS, 6th in W, 8th in K, 5th in BB and WP.

Angel Pena [The Falcon] (b. 1979) 1996-2019 **LVB**
Strikeout pitcher and occasional national team ace. At just 16 he joined the *Roosters* main roster. Moved to the US in 2022 with an over-40 dispensation.

Angel Gaspar **Perez** [The Worker] (b. 1943) 1965-1974 **MAB**
76-63. Beat Manuel Alarcon 1-0 in his very first game. 3B as a youth, he's well remembered in Cuba as The Hero of *Quisqueya* (D.R.), site of the 1969 World Championship final vs USA. Asked to bat for himself, 2 down in the 9th with Cuba trailing 0-1, he singled home the tie run, then scored the winner on a hit by Rigoberto Rosique. Followed that by shutting down USA in the 9th to seal the Championship.

Juan **Perez Perez** (b. 1951) 1970-1978 **CAB**
89-58. Fastball (95-100)/slider pitcher. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1974. Pitched a no hitter in 3 consecutive years (1973-1975). Passed away in 2013.

Raul **Reyes** (b. ?) 1983-1996 **MAB**
44-39/63. 6th in *SN* career GR, 9th in Saves.

Jose Ramon **Riscart** [Marmalade] (b. 1961) 1979-1997 **LVB**
155-93. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1991. Pitched a 17 inning G. 3 time league champ. 9th in *SN* career Shutouts. Victor Mesa's pitching coach.

Jose **Riveira** [*Nito*] (b. 1958) 1978-1989 **LHB**

81-47. Rookie of the Year in 1978. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1983. Retired young after obtaining a teaching degree in phys ed. Highly regarded pitching coach for Victor Mesa at *Villa Clara*. Passed away in 2012.

Maels **Rodriguez** (b. 1979) 1998-2003 **ORB**

65-45/11. Power fastball (97-101)/slider thrower. MVP and Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 2001. Pitched a perfect game in 1999, and a no hitter in 2002. Single season K record (2001). His arm went bad in 2003, so when he defected that October his dream of pitching in the ML came to naught.

Euclides **Rojas** (b. 1964) 1982-1994 **LHB**

59-42/90. Closer who got by on guile and control rather than speed. Threw a tight breaker of a curveball which he kept down in the zone. 5th in *SN* career GR, 6th in Saves. Made it to the US, but his arm had gone bad. Bounced around the Minors for a bit, then transitioned to a Minor league pitching instructor for *Boston*, *Miami* and *Pittsburgh*.

Julio **Romero** (b. 1950) 1973-1987 **PRB**

148-100. 8th in *SN* career CG and Shutouts, 10th in WP. Pitched a no hitter in 1983. Pitching coach, including a stint with the national team, after retirement.

Ormari **Romero** [The Giant] (b. 1968) 1991-2008 **MAB**

194-124. 6'6". 2005 post-season MVP. 6 time league champ. 8th in *SN* career W, 7th in IP and IW, 6th in H

Oscar **Romero Albert** (b. 1947) 1967-1983 **CAB**

125-114. Change up/screwball pitcher who messed with hitters' timing. Pitched a no hitter in 1975.

Walfrido **Ruiz** (b. 1946) 1967-1979 **CAB**

102-50. MVP in 1975. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1975. Pitched a no hitter in 1971. 5th in *SN* career W %. T-1st single season GS. Passed away in 2013.

Luis **Tissert** (b. 1956) 1982-1991 **ORB**

94-55. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1987. His brother Jorge, a pretty good starter/closer, replaced him with *Santiago*.

Yolexis **Ulacia** (b. 1977) 1998-2010 **PRB**

67-43/122. Submariner relies on sinker/slider movement and good control. 2nd in *SN* career GR and Saves, 8th in IW.

Jorge Luis **Valdes** [*Tati*] (b. 1961) 1978-1997 **MAB**

234-166. Threw a very nasty knuckle curve to go with his sinker. MVP and Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1992. Pitched a no hitter in 1984. Undefeated season in 1992. 5th in *SN* career G, L and IW, 4th in IP, GS, H, BB and Shutouts, 2nd in CG and WP, 3rd in W, 6th in K, 9th in HR.

Roberto **Valdes** [The Mulatto] (b. 1944) 1967-1977 **MAB**

77-40. Pitched a no hitter in 1967. Undefeated season in 1972. T-1st most CG in a season and T-2nd most GS.

Lazaro **Valle** [Supersonic] (b. 1962) 1987-1997 **LVB**

138-73. Formed a dominant tandem for *Industriales* with *El Duque* Hernandez and Rene Arocha. Running fastball/slider/changeup. T-8th *SN* career W %.

Norge Luis **Vera** [The Star] (b. 1971) 1994-2011 **ORB**

176-68. High leg kick combined with the way that he hid the ball out of his hand deceived batters and made his fastball appear much faster than its 91. MVP and Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 2000. 6 time league champ. Threw a no hitter in 2001. Post-season MVP in 1999 and 2001. 10th in *SN* career W, 2nd in W %. T-1st in single season Shutouts. 7 innings of 3 hit relief vs *Baltimore* at Camden Yards. Suffered facial trauma from a night club fight in 2009, then was very seriously injured in a 2011 car accident.

Braudilio **Vinent** [The Meteor; *Bayiyo*] (b. 1947) 1968-1987 **ORB**

221-167. Relied on a heavy fastball; later Connie Marrero helped him to perfect a slider. Kept his focus on the mound, no nonsense, no distractions, like Bob Gibson. Cy Young (equivalent) winner in 1973 and 1980. 5th in *SN* career GS and K, 1st in CG and Shutouts, 4th in W, L, and WP, 3rd in IP, 10th in H, 6th in BB. 2nd in single season W.

Carlos **Yanes** [The Man With the Iron Arm] (b. 1965) 1985-2012 **LVB**

235-242. 5'8" bulldog. Totally relied on location, and throwing slow and slower, as his fastball topped out in the mid-80s. Pitched a no hitter in 2000. 1st in *SN* career Seasons, G, GS, IP, H, HR, BB and L, 2nd in W, 3rd in IW, 4th in CG, K and HB.