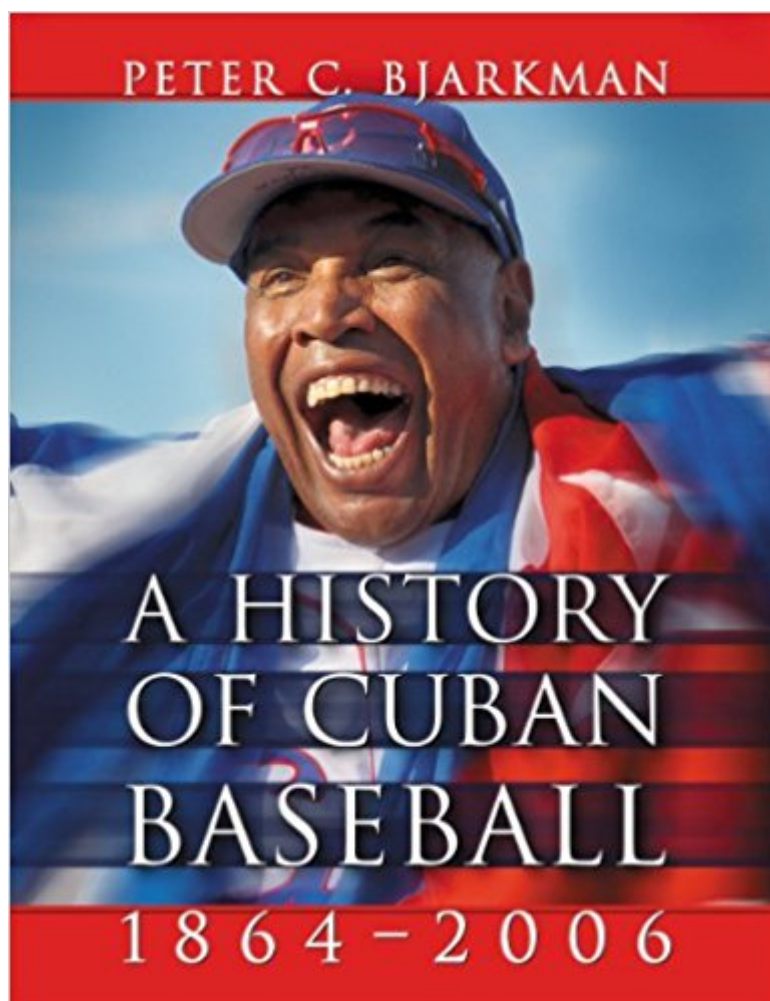


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# A History Of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006



## Synopsis

Winner, SABR's Robert Peterson Award for increasing public awareness of Negro League baseball

When Cuba met Japan in the finals of Major League Baseball's 2006 World Baseball Classic (WBC), many among the international audience were shocked that a purported "amateur" team could challenge for the sport's first true world championship. But those who had paid attention to international tournaments were hardly surprised by Cuba's strong showing against all-star teams of Puerto Rican, Dominican, Venezuelan, and U.S. major leaguers. The undisputed champions of global baseball, Cuba had reigned supreme for better than a half-century at the avowed American national game. In this groundbreaking volume, Peter Bjarkman traces the full arc of island baseball history, from the pioneering era of integrated play in the winter leagues, across the many triumphs of the post-revolution decades, and up through Cuba's initial WBC triumphs.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Is the most complete book on the subject to date...recommended"Choice"the definitive work on Cuban baseball"- Library Journal"through this and other publications, Peter Bjarkman is doing for Cuban baseball what Ry Cooder has done for Cuban music, helping us appreciate the complexity, creativity, and emotions of a people whose culture and politics have long been intertwined with those of the United States but who have often been made invisible by social attitudes or political barriers." --Sport Literature Association"The best of a recent spate of books on Cuban baseball, in part because it is so comprehensive and thoroughly researched, but also because it avoids the pre-Revolution bias which has sullied other accounts. Elegantly written, with infectious enthusiasm, and well-illustrated too." --The Rough Guide to Cuba"Bjarkman's passion for Cuban baseball is

clearly evident throughout the entire work. This is a labour of love...masterful...essential...Bjarkman has compiled the most comprehensive and wide-ranging sets of Cuban Baseball stats to be found in any one publication...a valuable, comprehensive, and thoroughly enjoyable volume." --The International Journal of the History of Sport"Any casual reader or serious researcher should get a copy Bjarkman's A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006 for his or her library. I doubt, with little fear of contradiction, that any other volume on the subject offers so much information so lovingly assembled." --Ron Kaplan"An exquisite book...Peter C. Bjarkman, an American in love with our baseball, demonstrates to his readers the beauties of Cuban amateur baseball." --Raúl Arce, Juventud Rebelde

Peter C. Bjarkman is a widely recognized authority on Cuban baseball history and a frequent visitor to the island nation. A past winner of The Sporting News-SABR and Macmillan-SABR awards for baseball research, in 2011 he appeared on the Cuba episode of the Travel Channel's No Reservations. He is the senior baseball writer for BaseballdeCuba.com, the leading Cuban League website.

This book has just about anything you could ever ask for regarding the history of Cuban baseball. The standings are there for every season. There are summaries for every season as well. There is also a lot of good information on star Cuban players and Cuba's record in international competitions.

A COMPLETE REVIEW OF THE CUBAN BASEBALL PRE-WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC 2006  
ALL THE PAST EVENTS THAT CUBA WON AND LOST DURING THE PAST YEARS UP TO 2005  
THE ROAD TO WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC 2006 AND THE DOMESTIC CUBAN BASEBALL

Thank you!

Very comprehensive and informative.

Why does Mr Bjarkman write five star reviews on his own books?Some people may accuse Mr Bjarkman of being vain. I've noticed this on many of his works on .com, particularly when people write unfavourable reviews. He is then quick to tack on a five star review of his own. A professional historian or author wouldn't respond to criticism this way.However, Mr Bjarkman has put together a satisfactory history with this book. A reason why this history is competent is because of the

extensive domination Cuba has had, particularly on amateur world baseball, and this is a form of baseball that is too often overshadowed by professional domestic baseball leagues around the world. Nicholas R.W. Henning - Australian Baseball Author

The importance and quality of this book is best expressed in a recent review by noted sports journalist Pete Cava, when he writes: "Like opera aficionados, fans of international baseball are passionate, but few and far between. And for any author, writing the definitive tome about Cuban baseball from its origins to the present is like taking vows of poverty. Therefore, ¡felicitaciones! to Pete Bjarkman for his latest opus, "A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006", simply the most complete work on the game as it's played just ninety miles away across the Florida Straits. Bjarkman's book is a dizzying, four-part compilation of hard-to-find material on Cuban baseball- both pre- and post-revolution. Frequently detonating myths along the way, Bjarkman explains how the game took root in Cuba; how the island became a winter hotbed during the 20th Century's first decades for Negro League stars from the U.S. like Oscar Charleston; and how it was Cuba's amateur ballclubs (and not the winter league teams) that enthralled local fans prior to the ascent of Fidel Castro. Paying homage to Cuba's legends, Bjarkman devotes time to Adolfo Luque ("the Original 'Pride of Havana'), Orestes Minoso ("the Cuban Comet"), Conrado Marrero and Martin Dihigo ("Baseball's Least-Known Hall of Famer"). He also writes about Cuban players of the Castro era ("The World's Best Unknown Players"): Omar Linares, Orestes Kindelan, Antonio Pacheco, Norge Luis Vera, Victor "El Loco" Mesa- men who would have commanded fabulous big league contracts on the open market, but remain unfamiliar to most North American fans. A number of tomes on Cuban baseball have appeared over the past decade, written by notables like S.L. Price, Milton Jamail, and Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria. Bjarkman alternately praises and scolds each of them throughout his book. Since he probably spends more time in Havana than Castro and may know more about Cuban baseball than "El Comandante" himself, Bjarkman's criticism can't be shrugged off. Bjarkman buries once and for all the notion that Fidel was once a pitching prospect (while Castro was a schoolboy athlete in the 1940's, baseball wasn't even his best sport). Bjarkman also puts to rest any notion that Cuba's baseball tradition, like so many Cuban citizens, fled the island after Castro's rise to power. Instead, Bjarkman argues that the sport reached its zenith during the Castro years- a theory that's bound to act as a lightning rod for criticism. But anyone who claims Bjarkman is soft on Castro's regime ultimately has to concede that this book isn't about Cuba's government; it's about Cuban baseball. And while many readers would disagree with what Bjarkman calls America's "blatant imperialistic policies", few would disagree when he acknowledges Havana's

use of baseball as a propaganda tool. (Bjarkman's depiction of Castro's micro-managing of the Cuban national team would have George Steinrenner shaking his head and clucking his tongue). "A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006" explores baseball to its roots. It provides statistics, records, standings and other nuggets previously found only in the official Cuban league guides. And if there's any disparity, it's best to go with whatever Bjarkman says.

I have read Mr. Bjarkman's other books on Cuban baseball and this one is the crowning touch. It not only traces the history of Cuban baseball back to its roots but it also follows the nuances of the game through the years in the evolution of the Cuban game, both pre and post revolution. Bjarkman's objectivity will probably run afoul of the Cuban bureaucracy in some areas, but no one can argue his resolute following of detail in stating the facts of Cuban baseball. It is not easy to eliminate references to the political system of Cuba when it is so closely entwined with baseball, but Bjarkman succeeds in telling history devoid of politics. Anyone's statements to the contrary merely show their lack of knowledge: both of Cuban baseball and Cuban history. This is a must read for those interested in baseball in Latin America and its original, and continuing, hotbed - Cuba.

This book is another Pro-Castro pamphlet. It is the same old misinformation told over and over again by the INDER, the government baseball department. The same old distortion of Cuban history and Cuban present reality, this time about baseball history and told by a pro-Castro American for the American public, as part of an all-out propaganda effort to influence public opinion about the sanctions against the totalitarian government in Cuba. It is an effort to have the sanctions lifted and have the American taxpayers pick up the tab for Cuba's bankrupt economy as the old USSR did from 1961 to 1991 at a price of 4 billions a year. This "comprehensive" history book does not give any of the more than 100 players who have defected the opportunity to tell their side of the story. The reasons behind their defections, how they escape, the repercussions back in Cuba, how they are followed by Cuban security, even to the restroom, when they visit another country. Mr. Bjarkman sweeps under the rug that Cuban players do not have the FREEDOM to choose where they want to play, live and return home, and make as much money as their talent let them, if that is what they want. Just like David Ortiz, Johan Santana, Angel Pujol, Miguel Cabrera, Ichiro Suzuki, and everybody else. It is a fact that Cuban players live in an apartheid society, and like the rest of any other Cuban citizen, they are not allowed to stay in the same hotels nor eat in the same restaurants that foreigners like Mr. Bjarkman himself stay and eat. Does he think they like that? The Castro era baseball will be seen by real historians the same way the achievements of the Soviet era and East

German Olympic athletes are seen today a sad chapter in the history of those nations.

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