



# NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MLB, MLBPA ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT WITH THE CUBAN BASEBALL FEDERATION**

Major League Baseball (MLB) and the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) jointly announced today an agreement with the Cuban Baseball Federation (FCB) that will provide Cuban baseball players with a safe and legal path to sign with a Major League Club. The objective of the agreement, which is the product of years of negotiations with the FCB, is to end the dangerous trafficking of Cuban players who desire to play professional baseball in the United States, a practice that has been documented in legal proceedings and media reports, and which has caused significant hardship to Cuban players and their families. The FCB becomes the fourth foreign professional baseball league to enter into an agreement of this nature with MLB, joining Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB), the Korea Baseball Organization (KBO), and the Chinese Professional Baseball League (CPBL).

Under this agreement, the FCB must release all players under contract to the FCB who are at least twenty-five (25) years old and have six (6) or more years of playing experience (known as "Foreign Professionals" under MLB rules) to sign with MLB Clubs. The FCB may also release younger players to sign with Major League Clubs. Once a player is released by the FCB, he is free to negotiate and sign with any Major League Club without leaving Cuba, subject to the same collectively bargained rules applicable to all international players. A Major League Club that signs a player released by the FCB pursuant to this agreement will pay the FCB a "release fee," the amount of which is calculated using the same formula contained in MLB's protocol agreements with the NPB, KBO and CPBL. When it is time for the player to report to the United States or Canada for baseball activities, he will do so pursuant to a standard work visa, which will also allow him to travel with his family and to return to Cuba during the off-season if he chooses. A more detailed summary of the key provisions of the agreement is attached.

Commissioner of Baseball Robert D. Manfred, Jr. said: "For years, Major League Baseball has been seeking to end the trafficking of baseball players from Cuba by criminal organizations by creating a safe and legal alternative for those players to sign with Major League Clubs. We believe that this agreement accomplishes that objective and will allow the next generation of Cuban players to pursue their dream without enduring many of the hardships experienced by current and former Cuban players who have played Major League Baseball."

Tony Clark, Executive Director of the MLBPA, said: "Establishing a safe, legal process for entry to our system is the most important step we can take to ending the exploitation and endangerment of Cuban players who pursue careers in Major League Baseball. The safety and wellbeing of these young men remains our primary concern."

Chicago White Sox first baseman José Abreu said: "Words cannot fully express my heartfelt joy and excitement in learning that Rob Manfred and Tony Clark have reached an agreement with the Cuban Baseball Federation. Knowing that the next generation of Cuban baseball players will not endure the unimaginable fate of past Cuban players is the realization of an impossible dream for all of us. Dealing with the exploitation of smugglers and unscrupulous agencies will finally come to an end for the Cuban baseball player. To this date, I am still harassed. The next generation of Cuban baseball players will be able to sign an MLB contract while in Cuba, they will be able to keep their earnings as any other player in the world, they will be able to return to Cuba, they will be able to share with their families, and they will be able to play the sport they love against the best players in the world without fear and trepidation. Great day for Cuban baseball players. Congratulations and thank you to MLB, the MLBPA, and the Cuban Baseball Federation."

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