



Inter-American League: A Dream Comes True

The Miami Amigos form the United States entry in this inaugural season of the Inter-American League.

The league, born out of one man's dreams and the efforts of countless others, provides an element that has been missing in baseball— an independent, high-calibre, truly international roster of teams. Puerto Rico can take pride in its native-born "Boricuas," while Panama has its Banqueros and the Dominican Republic has the "Tiburones." The league is rounded out by two teams from Venezuela, the Caracas Metropolitanos and the Maracaibo Petroleros.

The dreams that brought the league into existence were those of Bobby Maduro, a Cuban baseball executive, founder, owner and promoter who for the past decade was Coordinator of Caribbean Baseball for Major League Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn. While concentrating his talents on winter baseball and developing young prospects for the American and National Leagues, Maduro envisioned the Caribbean as the home of top-notch summer baseball. The Caribbean has been the spawning grounds of major league stars, Maduro reasoned, and would be the ideal setting for an independent league.

Relying on his experience as the founder of the winter Cuban Professional Baseball League, in which he owned the Cienfuegos team, and as owner of the Triple-A Cuban Sugar Kings of the old

International League, Maduro set out to face the multitude of tasks involved in the formation of a league, aided by Joe Ryan, president of the Triple-A American Association.

The cornerstone was set last year with the signing of the Miami Amigos. The Miami team quickly set to work building an organization and designated Dave Johnson as manager and Orlando Pena as pitching coach. In short order, the other cities signed up and built their teams.

In September, all the squads were in place and Maduro joined Alejandro Orfila, secretary general of the Organization of American States, in Washington to announce the creation of the league. Three months later, Bobby Bragan, president of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, gave the Inter-American League the final designation it needed, formally assigning it as a Triple-A league.

Now came four months of signing players, organizing staffs and spring training, leading up to the day Maduro's dream was finally realized. On April 11, the Amigos and the Banqueros squared off before more than 10,000 fans in Panama City's Arosemena Stadium. The record shows the Banqueros won that game 6-5, coming back with two outs and no one on base in the bottom of the ninth.

The Inter-American League was no longer just a dream.

Caracas • Maracaibo • Miami • Panama • San Juan • Santo Domingo

The Miami Amigos will play 65 home games this season at Miami Stadium 2301 N.W. 10th Avenue. Season tickets for the Amigos games, which cost \$200, may be purchased at the Stadium or by calling 635-5395. Combination Amigos/Miami Orioles season tickets, covering 130 games, cost \$250. Tickets for all future Amigos home games will be on sale at the stadium during the games. Tickets for the individual games run from \$2.50 to \$4.50.