

EMASS Does Cuba 2009 – Event Summary

The athletes who embarked on the Cuba expedition are returning with memories and experiences that far exceeded everyone's anticipations or expectations. The trip was a multi-layered adventure of athletics, culture, history and togetherness.

The softball competition with Cuban athletes proved to be as heart warming as it was competitive. No one present at the opening ceremonies can deny being emotional or feeling chills as they stood along the foul lines (World Series style) & listened to the playing of BOTH the Cuban *and* American National anthems. At the conclusion of the competition the players exchanged hugs as well as gifts. Many of our guys gave their baseball shoes, sneakers, bats, fielding gloves, batting gloves, socks and even the shirts off their backs to their Cuban counterparts. In return, the Cuban players gave meaningful baseball related souvenirs to the EMASS athletes, and many exchanged team jerseys. This grass roots form of "softball diplomacy" was noted by the media ranging from locally televising one of the EMASS 70's games to Associated Press & CNN coverage that resulted in momentary world wide focus on our adventure.

On the field the EMASS 60's held their own against the younger slicker fielding Cubanos, actually winning their best of seven series 4 games to 2. When the 67's tied their series 3-3 on the last day of play, the two teams chose to throw in their gloves rather than have a playoff game. While the 63's & 70's did not fare quite as well in the win-loss column against their superior opposition, their games were competitive and enjoyed by all, with each group throwing in their gloves and playing their last 2 games together. By the end of each series the American and Cuban teams came to know one another well. Not only did they play on the field but they also lunched once off of the field together.

Our EMASS athletes who participated in the trip did so because of their love of the game as well as the lure and panache of Cuba and were profoundly rewarded with one-of-a-kind memories for their boldness and spirit of adventure.

We hope to someday return and resume the competition.
~ Stu Gray, Commissioner

2009 EMASS-Cuba Competition: links to press releases, photos, & videos:

Cuba 2009 Photos by Dan Smith - posted March 15, 2010
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlehavana/sets/72157622939312614/>

Eye-opening trip to Cuba - Town Crier - Jan. 22.2010 ~ Keith Gross
<http://www.wickedlocal.com/weston/sports/x1301086965/Eye-opening-trip-to-Cuba-for-local-softball-players>

Diamond diplomacy - The Banner - Jan.21, 2010 - @ Michael Mard/Cuba
<http://www.telegram.com/article/20100121/COULTER03/1210541/1189/coulter11>

"Last month, 56 U.S. softball players traveled to Cuba for a series of goodwill games that probably did more for America's public image on the island than any single political effort over the past 50 years."
~ An EMASS Cuba-trip reference in a **Time magazine article** about Nicaragua
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1949785,00.html>

EMASS Softball in Cuba - You Tube - Dec. 7 - 5 films of photos via John Darack
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlkcetECsR8&feature=related>

Senior Leaguer Travels to Cuba - Sentinel - Dec. 2 - Don Smith & 70's (3rd story down)
<http://www.colbsent.com/stories.php>

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EMASS 63's Playing Softball in Cuba - You Tube - Nov 23 - via Mike E.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mo1Rm2UGQbM

Cape Codders play softball in Cuba - Cape Cod Times - Nov. 27, 2009
<http://www.capecodonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091127/NEWS/911270318>

Cuba, Travel, & Human Rights - WBUR radio with Mike E. @ 29 minutes into the broadcast - Nov. 25, 2009
<http://www.onpointradio.org/2009/11/cuba-travel-and-human-rights>

In Cuba, Diamond Diplomacy, Boston Globe, Nov. 24, 2009
http://www.boston.com/yourtown/newton/articles/2009/11/24/in_cuba_diamond_diplomacy/

U.S., Cuba players find friendship in softball, - Reuters Canada, Nov. 20, 2009
<http://ca.reuters.com/article/sportsNews/idCATRE5AJ50720091120?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>

U.S. and Cuba practice softball diplomacy - via CNN - Nov. 19, 2009
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/11/19/cuba.softball.diplomacy/index.html>

US softball players try sports diplomacy in Cuba - Associated Press - Nov. 16, 2009
<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iv0PICS-LAL33p8c91B3Pz4n9S3QD9C0S0400>

U.S. turns to 'baseball diplomacy' with Cuba - Associated Press - Nov. 13, 2009
<http://nbcsports.msnbc.com/id/33912976/ns/sports-baseball/>

Local softball league preps for trip to Cuba - Needham Tab, Oct. 31, 2009
<http://www.wickedlocal.com/needham/fun/x1520368813/Local-softball-league-preps-for-trip-to-Cuba>

Holliston softball player headed to Cuba to play - The MetroWest Daily News - Oct. 19, 2009
<http://www.metrowestdailynews.com/news/x1896656575/Holliston-softball-player-headed-to-Cuba-to-play>

Taking the game far afield - Boston Globe - Oct. 3, 2009
http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2009/10/03/taking_the_game_far_afield/