

# PODIUM

Journal of Science and Technology in Physical Culture

UNIVERSITY EDITORIAL

Volumen 17  
Issue 2

2022

University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca"

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*Translated from the original in spanish*

**Athletic letter**

## **Juan Carlos Oliva López. A genuine product of the school games**

## **Juan Carlos Oliva López. Un producto genuino de los juegos escolares**

## **Juan Carlos Oliva López. Um produto genuíno dos jogos escolares**

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**Received:** 04/05/2021.

**Approved:** 03/07/2022.

How to cite item: Hernández Martín, J., Reinoso Castillo, I., & Crespo Contreras, R. (2022). Juan Carlos Oliva López. Un producto genuino de los juegos escolares/Juan Carlos Oliva Lopez. A genuine product of the school games. PODIUM - Revista de Ciencia y Tecnología en la Cultura Física, 17(2), 871-875. Recuperado de <https://podium.upr.edu.cu/index.php/podium/article/view/1112>



**Throughout** history it has been concern of sports professionals to record the origins and trajectory of famous athletes in the world , about everything in baseball , a sport that has gone global gradually by its attractive and constant improvement (McGee, 2019; Roehl, 2019; Mandakovic; 2019 Alberto, 2020).

It is a worthy cult of the people, to promote the life and work of an athlete who is a pride for the country; this is the case of Juan Carlos Oliva, a pitcher who, to tell the truth, left deep marks on Cuban baseball. This outstanding athlete has participated in various selective series and international events. Today he is a prominent figure for the town of Consolación del Sur, province of Pinar del Río. This is what is referred to in this paper.

Juan Carlos Oliva was born on the Santa Elena farm, Corralito neighborhood, in the municipality of Consolación del Sur, province of Pinar del Río, on December 6, 1954, the son of Pedro and Petrona, both of peasant origin.

Xenes (1984) pointed:

"He studied primary education at the *Juan Pedro Carbó Serviá rural school* until fourth grade, where he combined sports with studies. He was selected for his sporting conditions to enter the Ormani Arenado Ilonch School of Sports Indication (EIDE in Spanish) in his native province. He is a product of school games, the quarry of the greats of sport in our country." (p.25)

The Oliva family contributed their influences to his love of baseball; natural citizens of the municipality of Consolación del Sur, Juan Carlos, Tony and Reynaldo. A family as special as this one has contributed to the sport of balls and strikes both inside and outside of Cuba. In addition to his affection for the sport, Juan Carlos received the best of his parents' values: responsibility in his shots, driving the luck of his team, perseverance every day finding new ways to beat the opponent, discipline of work, rectitude and above all the sense of identity with his team, his region and his country.

Among other actions at an early age, Juan Carlos participates in the VI School Games in the 13-14 year old category; serves as pitcher for the first time. His previous positions were outfielder and third baseman at the VII and VIII National Games. This promising pitcher also acted as a pitcher, being a decisive factor in the last one for the team to win first place in the 15-16 age category.

It is important to highlight that school games played an important role in the development of figures of the stature of Juan Carlos Oliva, who became an irreplaceable figure inside and outside of Cuba.

Afterwards, he passed to the youth category in which he participated in the National Youth Baseball Championship in 1970, in Camagüey. This contest was directed by René Concepción and there he had the opportunity to perform alongside the athletes Hirán Fuentes, Alfonso Urquiola, Félix Iglesias, Lino Pérez, Maximiliano Gutiérrez, Ladislav Lavastida and others.

In this year, he competed in the National Youth Championship held in the former province of Oriente, contributing three wins for the team, obtaining the province the third place at the national level.



Since that year, he was part of the Cuba Juvenil team, which participated in the quadrangular series in Venezuela, where the Cuban squad won first place.

Xenes (1984) recognizes that:

"In 1973 he joined the first category teams of the province at the national level, where he obtained his first victory on January 18, 1973 in a match against the Granjero team that lasted 15 innings. The final score was 3-2 in favor of the Pinar team. It was on that occasion that he sustained his main performance as a reliever." (p.36)

Oliva had an active participation in national series, from the XIII between the years 1973-1974 to the XXII in the years 1982-1983, he acted as a pitcher in 161 games, winning 57 and losing 37 with 12 shutouts.

In terms of records at that time, it can be added that in 1973 during the XIII national series, he set a record in a game against Industriales by granting 8 bases per ball. In addition, in the XIV National Series, he reaffirms himself with the record for the most batters retired consecutively in more than one game.

About these registered achievements is the writing of de Barros, (2019) who raises about the province of Pinar del Río:

"It was the Cinderella for a long time, always in the last places, but as of 1979, Pinar del Río was another. They had already given a cry of alarm by finishing second in 1978, and a year later they were champions under the aegis of one of the best team managers in history, José Miguel Pineda from the capital. He directed a group of stars headed by Luis Giraldo Casanova, Juan Castro, Alfonso Urquiola, Rogelio García, Juan Carlos Oliva and Julio Romero, among others. (p.38)

Juan Carlos Oliva from 1972 begins his participation in international events, highlighting the Quadrangular in Venezuela 1972, Central American 1978, Haardem, Holland 1978, World Cup 1978, Pan American 1979, Intercontinental Cup 1979, World Cup 1980, Intercontinental 1981, Triangular 1982 and Professionals 1982, in which pitched 27 games, in relief 19, winning 13 and losing 0.

The distinguished athlete had an extensive participation in national, selective series, Central American, Pan American, and world championships. It is worth mentioning that he pitched 316 games, started 132, completed 68, relieved 185. He won 114 for 36.07 % of the total, lost 57 and gave 18 shutouts.

In this regard, Xenes (1984) points out that Juan Carlos Oliva participated in: 3 school Games; three Junior Games; 11 National Games; nine Selective Series and 15 Intercontinental, and reached 100 victories from 1972 to 1982.

He was given an autographed ball by Jaime Crombet Vaquero, the first Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC in Spanish) in the province, in honor to his 100 victories.

On the contribution of figures of the stature of Juan Carlos Oliva to the sphere of sport in the municipality, Hernández (2019) raises:



"As a result of the work of the workers in this sector, Consolación exhibits outstanding results in sports in terms of coaches, referees and sports activists, some reaching the international category. On the other hand, many of the athletes of this municipality have put the name of their homeland and that of Cuba very high, as it is the case of Juan Carlos Oliva, pitcher for the Cuban baseball team..." (p. 12)

In this regard, **Osaba and Goenaga (2015)** point out: "The pitcher Juan Carlos Oliva, a member of the CUBA teams for several years, contributed decisively to the results of the Pinar del Río teams and in recent years he has done so as a coach. Reynaldo, another of his brothers, also joined teams from Vuelta Bajo..." (p. 12)

For his work, he has received multiple relevant awards, among them: Gold Medal in the School Baseball Tournament in the VI National School Games, Gold Medal in the Youth Baseball World Championship; Cuban Youth Team; Caracas Venezuela, Gold Medal in the XIII Central American and Caribbean Sports Games; as a member of the Cuban National Baseball Team, Colombia: Gold Medal in the XXV Amateur Baseball World Series as a member of the Cuban National Baseball Team, Rome Italy, Gold Medal in the IV Intercontinental Cup Tournament, National Team athlete of Cuban baseball, Gold Medal in the XXV Amateur Baseball World Series as a star athlete of the Cuban National Baseball Team; Tokyo Japan.

In the book *Synthesis of the history of Consolación del Sur*, **Hernández (2019)** states: "Among the sporting glories of the territory are Luis Crespo Capote (baseball), Julio Quintana Martínez (boxing), Félix Iglesias Castro (baseball), Juan Carlos Oliva López (baseball) (...)" (p. 18).

And this glory has not only been earned by his competitive results, which demonstrate his competitiveness. It is also declared by his perseverance, his humility, his permanent improvement even in the most difficult moments that he had to live. Juan Carlos has undoubtedly become an inspiring example for these new generations, who will surely find in this figure, his talent and humanism as a potential to follow.

## CONCLUSIONS

The development of figures of the stature of Juan Carlos Oliva López has been an achievement in the sports sphere since the 70s of the 20th century in Cuba. His imprint on baseball, as part of school and youth games, and his participation in national series and international events, demonstrates once again, how a man is able to developed and shaped at the same time, a man who knew how to win the admiration of the people and today continues to be an example for present and future generations of our national sport.



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### Conflict of interests:

The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

### Authors' contribution:

The authors have participated in the writing of the work and analysis of the documents



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