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Historical notes about sports in Consolación del Sur, Pinar del Río, Cuba

Apuntes históricos del deporte en Consolación del Sur, Pinar del Río, Cuba

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INTRODUCTION

The history of sport in Consolación del Sur constitutes, for present and future generations of that place, a sample of how, before the Revolution triumph sport was totally abandoned by the governments in power, both in colonial and neocolonial times. Very few sports were practiced and there hardly were sports facilities. Thanks to the Revolution, which began on January 1, 1959, a total transformation took place in the sports sphere: sport became a right of the people. The present research offers some notes on the history of sport in the municipality that today has a great work in all sports almost six decades after that January 1st that caused a total transformation in all orders.

DEVELOPMENT

Sport and recreation

The practice of sports in Consolación del Sur was almost non-existent before the 20th century, especially because it was not part of the colonialist plans. The only reference in this respect, which existed in the locality, came from Spain; it was rather a recreational activity: bullfights. According to the notes of the local chroniclers of those times, these events became frequent in the second half of the nineteenth century and were carried out for profit. Authors, C. d. 1999, p. 2)

It is already known that in the countryside they developed horse ridings and other horsemanship expressions that were parts of the exhibitions in determined parties and controversys among country people. Cockfighting also took place in most of the municipality. On the aforementioned days, such as the "February 2nd festivities", traditional games were played, such as "palo encebado", "saco" (sack races), "tiro al blanco" (shooting with balls), "anillo" (rings), etc., among others. Generally speaking, the most popular games were table games: dominoes, cards, silos, etc. On the other hand, in the societies of instruction and recreation, in addition to those already mentioned, cards and others were played, as entertainment.

Sport in the Neocolonial Era

American settlers introduced baseball in Herradura at the beginning of the 20th century. Likewise, it has been possible to determine that in the town of Pilotos, since 1906, there was a ninth in which Capín Hernández Castillo and Faustino Crespo became very well known. In the village of Consolación, in 1911, there was a baseball team known as "El Manguito", a name it acquires because behind home there was a mango bush. The area most frequented by local baseball players was close to the neighborhood, then named May 20.

From studies carried out by different researchers, among them: Cabrera, (2003, 2006); Fernandez, (1989), in 1922, for the first time, a baseball team wears uniform by initiative of Dr. Miguel Henríquez Dueñas. In 1931, the first team of elders, known as "Regalía el Cuño", directed by Enrique Colls, was grouped together. By then, it was played in a field at the end of 64th Street.

Between 1934 and 1935, another baseball team was created in Consolación village, and another piece of land was set up on 68th Street, near the local cemetery. That is to say, all these spaces to play ball were improvised, prepared with the scarce resources of the fans. Around this time, a ninth emerged in the San Pablo neighborhood, directed by Gervasio Díaz. It was a group of peasants who played barefoot and barely without implements. According to the testimony of José Luis Castillo (Echerson) "every time a four corner hit came out, those who were in the fence, got into the field to obtain the ball, which when it was returned, they gave it to the entrance to the field. At that time, the professional baseball was in total bankruptcy; for that reason, many of these baseball players, in some occasions, looked for some money for the support of their family, when they were hired to act in some game". Authors, C. d. 2012, p. 12). *At that time, baseball games were allowed only on Sundays as the police used the pretext that the rest days of the week should be devoted to work. These games, called manigua, almost never reached the ninth inning, as they ended in fights and brawls, because the decisions of the referees were not understood by the players and spectators. Thus, the idea to request the services of a sergeant of the rural guard arose to serve as referee behind the pitcher.*

After 1935, Julio Diaz Alvarez gave a certain possibility to the practice of baseball in the locality: he prepared a team that played in almost the entire province and succeeded in getting several of its players to achieve some recognition. In 1936, the first team formed by youngsters, between 14 and 16 years old, directed by Ariel del Pino, was organized, as well as the previous one, wearing the uniform of the firm Regalía el Cuño.

From 1952 to 1958, there were no substantial changes in the practice of sport in the territory; the attention given to it by the governments in office was very deficient, so that it cannot be expressed that sport was as a right of the people.

It has been possible to verify that baseball was practiced in barren plots and in most cases the field did not have the conditions, because the only facility that stood out in the stage was the stadium of this village; sports activities were limited to being practiced and only team sports such as baseball and handball were specific; the most practiced individual sport was boxing, thanks to the very personal effort of coach Mario Cruz Rodríguez and the reception of the villagers. An interesting fact in this regard is that "in that republic", sport also served for the theft of public funds: between 1954-1955 it was approved in Consolación a budget for the construction of a stadium at kilometer 4 ½ of the road to Alonso Rojas, in the so-called Club de Cazadores, for which the local authorities assigned a credit of more than 40 000 pesos. Finally, what was built was a low-cost house, of terrible land, with a wire fence that bounded it. (López, 2005; Silva, 2003)

At the same time, the consolareños were deluded with the project of a Sports City at a cost of 45,000 pesos at Km 6 ½ on the road to Alonso Rojas. But no one can attest to the final destination that was given to that money, because no one ever saw that project consummated. In 1955, the General Director of Sports of Batista's government, Colonel Fernández Miranda, visits Consolación and approves an amount of \$45,000 for the definitive construction of the local stadium; finally, the quality of the work was deficient and most of the money ended up in the hands of unscrupulous people.

Boxing was another expression of great acceptance among the consolareños, but, like so many other sporting disciplines, it was not promoted correctly. However, there were always fans such as Mario Cruz Gálvez (Sunso), who in the decade of the nineteen-fifties, with great dedication and little economic support, encouraged the practice of this sport in Consolation, getting many young people to join him, for which he created a very simple gymnasium. Several fights took place in the ring made by themselves, in 64th Street, which greatly animated the local fans.

At the end of the 1940s, the Higher school began to teach Physical Education; the Society Casino Español, adjacent to the campus, lent its land for sports activities. The idea of practicing volleyball arose, but before it was necessary to make public collections to pave the ground and carry out other constructive actions. The sports equipment to start the practices were assigned to the school by the National Directorate of Physical Education and Sport, although the replacement of the balls was done with funds that could be obtained by the practitioners. The team's costumes were made with sugar sacks, which took on a blue color thanks to the Dalia dyes.

As should be noted, the lack of interest in promoting healthy sports led to the proliferation of for-profit games; among the most popular were rooster fights, for which a colourful fence was built on 57th Street. Likewise, lottery and other games of chance occupied an important component in the Consolareña society of the time.

In a general sense, there was no coherent project aimed at the culture, sport and recreation of the consolareños. Each one of the actions that were done in this sense was the result of the particular management of some altruist or private institution, to which not everyone had access.

The rooster fights

"Before the triumph of the Revolution, the rooster fights was considered a sport, as such was protected by laws and resolutions." (López, 2005, p. 37) That is why we list the main premises or facilities in which this activity was carried out, qualified by many as cruel sports work since these games were great vices of capitalism that only led to enrich more and more the owners who were the ones who managed and dominated this activity. Here were hundreds of victims of the humble layers of society, mainly peasants, who left the sweat of their work in these places.

"It was played in San Diego de los Baños and San Andrés, which at that time belonged to Consolación del Sur. In Entronque de Herradura and in the village, we had the present fence of the town, located on street 57, between 64 and 66". (Silva, 2003, p. 42). In this fence, it was played on Mondays, since on Sunday the activity was carried out in the surrounding neighborhoods and on Tuesday the cockfighters went to the club Galistero, located on the cruise to Viñales, in Pinar del Río.

According to Mateo Rodriguez Martinez, who lives on the old fence and took care of the roosters, the entrance fee was \$5.00 pesos and many people went to hang out because they had no money to play. This place belonged to the Fernandezes, wealthy people who owned large properties and its construction dates back to around the 1920s, when Mr. Andres Paez was mayor in the locality.

The Hunters' Club

One of the great privileges of the rich local landowners is the Hunters' Club. In 1936, there was only a mixed shop in this place through which an almost impassable road passed towards Alonso Rojas. This store and land were passing from one owner to another until, in 1952, José María Prieto becomes the owner, who was also the owner of the tobacco destemming. From then on, in a group of gentlemen the interest in sport hunting aroused, and in 1955 the road was paved and the work was carried out. In 1956, the swimming pool was built in the same placet and the money was collected among the members. Example: José Capó, owner of the hardware store of the same name in Pinar del Río, Ricardo Obeso, owner of the Obeso hardware store, in Consolación del Sur.

In the same year, a sports field was built for baseball, soccer and ring races. There was also a runway in this place with two airplanes, one used as a means of recreation and the other was used to take a spin to the people, it cost three pesos. This club was only a means of recreation and fun for the wealthy.

Volleyball

Something that reached a certain popular support and significance was the volleyball in the 50s, it starts in the Higher School. This was very striking because the girls began wearing shoes, something that many parents did not admit easily because until that time it was almost a sin. Here, some resources were available such as nets, balls and suits, and it was showed a great willingness and desire to practice this sport.

Between 1954-1955, this facility of the Spanish Casino received night after night the consolareña youth that was grouped in two teams: one masculine and another feminine. These teams reached provincial and national competitions.

Basketball

In the 1950s, the first improvised court appeared next to the Spanish colony. Between 1952 and 1957, another improvised court was set up on the land where today The Educational Improvement Polytechnical School is located, behind the police station. This sport had very little development in the territory.

Boxing

An enthusiast of this sport was Luis Mario Cruz Valdés. There was a wooden rustic court, located on General Peraza road, between 55 and 57, near the current PNR (Revolutionary Police Station), which was inaugurated on April 24, 1955. This sport received almost no support. Only one black shoeshine boy, born in Matanzas, stood out in the municipality, and one lucky day he met Belén del Pino, a person with material and economic resources. This boxer, along with others, made several fights in Herradura. This athlete is Hurtiminio Ramos who won the professional boxing and was world champion in 1956, in Mexico.

Sports and recreation

From the very beginning, the Revolution gave great importance to the practice of sport; however, as was the case on other fronts, the challenges were great; Consolation not only lacked areas destined for sport, but also a coherent structure to organise the practice of sport; so the first task was the creation of sports facilities to which all the people could have access. In this context, areas were built for the practice of basketball, volleyball and athletics; some water sports began to be practiced in the pool of the former " The Hunters' Club", now available to the people. And on February 3, 1967, one of the most demanded works by the Consolareños was inaugurated: Juan Casanueva Rodríguez Baseball Stadium, with a capacity for more than 2000 people, which was inaugurated with a game between Occidentales and Centrales, winning the latter 7x4. Later, the 28 de enero Sports complex was built in Consolareña village; a similar facility was opened in each of the towns of the territory.

This is how the base teams were organized, where figures such as Domingo Pérez, Raúl Santos, Arturo Echevarría and the Chamizos brothers stood out. One of the areas that has contributed most to the sport is Puerta de Golpe, where Arturo Echevarría stands out who has participated in international events in the direction of the national team.

A relevant figure who has represented Cuba in international events is Juan Carlos Oliva.

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 international status. 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 of the Cuba baseball team; Eddy Abad Blanco, Francisco Rodríguez Herrera, Luis Crespo, Félix Iglesias Castro, José Ramos Martínez, Luis Alberto Guerra Perdomo and Domingo Pérez Morera, outstanding baseball players. Julio Quintana Martínez, Urtiminio Ramos García and Michel López Núñez, Boxing players. Sergia Felicia Martínez Ravelo, José Isabel González Leal and Diosmelis Peña Contreras of athletics. Odeisi Pelegrín Quiñones, Juan Antonio Hernández Hernández and Pedroso Leal of weightlifting. Juan Antonio González García, of Rowing. Ivis Dueñas Alfonso, of Judo. Anisleydi Galindo Martínez, of Basketball. Raisal Almora Ordaz, of Wrestling. Yeriel Pozo Bayona, of Soccer. As well as Juan M. Ramos Sanjudo, (ACLIFIM of Athletics), who was national champion in javelin throwing, discus and shot put.

The wrestler Mijáin López Núñez, Cuban sportsman of Greco-Roman wrestling, glory of Cuban sport, Pan American champion, world champion and triple Olympic champion deserves special mention. Considered an example for Cuban youth, he participated as delegate of the Island in the World Festival of Youth and Students in South Africa in 2010. He was selected in 2011 to integrate the Athletes Commission of the Pan American Sports Organization (PASO). He has been the standard-bearer of the Cuban delegation to the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 and the Olympic Games in London in 2012. Member of the National Assembly of People's Power.

As an athlete, he has participated in different national and international sports events: 8 national championships, one Central American, 4 Pan American, 5 world championships and 3 Olympics. He was Champion in other tournaments in Europe, organized by the International Wrestling Federation.

He has obtained significant recognitions: three times Olympic champion, three times Pan American Champion, four times World Champion, two World Cups, general Titan Champion in the United States and four times Day Tournament Champion in Germany.

Consolation del Sur in the school and social sport has maintained for several years the second place in the province, sample of the tenacious work of the workers of this sector, in all the municipality.

CONCLUSION

59 years after the Revolution, the massive practice of sport has been a real incentive Consolareños who today have 9 sports complexes; a total of 26 sports are practiced in 11 sports facilities with 60 areas, there are 125 athletes who are sports talents, 18 sports glories are attended, there are 18 athletes in the provincial academy, 84 student athletes in the Initial Sport School (EIDE) and 10 in high performance centers, it is the second municipality in integral results of the province in contributions to national school games and high performance centers, both provincial and national. Sport as a right of the people has become for everyone one of the main achievements of the Revolution and its great creative work.

With the triumph of the Revolution, a total transformation took place in the sports sphere. In the work, it is reflected how, before the revolution, sport and recreation were never taken care of by the previous and the sport practice was scarce. Insufficient sports facilities remained in total neglect. Only after the Revolution the situation changed and with the constitution of INDER, this became a right of the people.

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