

DBU BASEBALL SERVES IN THE *Dominican Republic*



andrew elkins

Forty-seven members of the Dallas Baptist University baseball program left the comforts and familiarity of home to spend Fall Break in early October sharing the love of Christ with the people of Santo Domingo, Boca Chica, and other areas around the capital city of the Dominican Republic.

During their time in the Dominican Republic, the student athletes conducted three baseball clinics and played four games against professional and local baseball teams. The trip was part of DBU's Global Sports Mission Initiative, which was established in 2007 and allows DBU student athletes the opportunity to travel internationally for missions and athletic competitions.

The players were accompanied by Head Coach Dan Heefner, the DBU baseball coaching staff, members of the DBU athletic department, BSM Director Chris Holloway, and DBU Piper Chair of Missions Professor Dr. Bob Garrett.

"The trip to the Dominican was eye-opening for our players and for our staff," expressed Coach Heefner. "We were able to connect with people who love baseball and use that common language to share about a relationship with Christ. Our players did a fantastic job of opening their hands and

their hearts to serve and communicate the love of Christ."

The team spent the majority of several days in the Dominican Republic working with local children. They organized three different baseball clinics for children at an orphanage in Boca Chica, a rural sugarcane village, and a city-owned baseball field near their hotel. Splitting up into groups, the DBU players ran the children through drills, practiced techniques, and shared their testimonies through the translations of Chris Holloway and Dr. Bob Garrett.

To practice before one of their games, the players and coaches found a city baseball park across the street from their hotel where children were already playing baseball in the outfield. The DBU players picked up their own bats, and by the end of their make-shift batting practice, a crowd of local kids had gathered to play catch, take ground balls, and start up a sandlot game of baseball. What began as a team practice ended with the DBU players seeing how effective a ball, a bat, and a little affection can be in sharing the love of Christ.

The DBU Patriots faced off against the Dominican's professional teams Los Estrellas Orientales and the Lacey Tigers. Many of the players on these teams have Minor League experience, and although the Patriots lost both games against the professional teams,

they were able to defeat two local teams, one sponsored by the Dominican police and another team of young athletes who will soon study at La Academia.

It was the experience, however, of playing in the Dominican Republic that proved to be more memorable than the final scores. The DBU team will probably never forget vendors hawking popcorn out of trash cans, fans blowing horns, neighborhood kids chasing foul balls, and (most importantly) the children from one of the orphanages showing up to watch one of their games.

From the baseball field, their guide—a local pastor named Willie—invited the team to attend his church. The small building reached its capacity with the baseball team in attendance, forcing members to sit out in the alley and listen through open windows as their pastor spoke of the team from America, whose purpose was more than baseball. He concluded telling the team, "...pero espero verlos algún día en el cielo," that he may never see them again on earth, "but he will see them one day in Heaven."

"I really feel like the biggest take away for all the trip participants was to see that God is not just a God of the U.S. He is truly the God of the entire world," reiterated BSM Director Chris Holloway.

Everywhere the DBU players went, they were met with a warm reception. Any cultural or language barriers between Dominican children or players were bridged by their common love for baseball.

"I was reminded that baseball is important," said junior Logan Brumley, "especially for the people of the Dominican. But as important as it is to us and to them, I was also reminded that our only hope is in Christ for joy. In Christ, we have a peace we will never get from baseball."

Coach Heefner often tells his players that discipline is delayed gratification. If they give up something simple now, they will enjoy a greater reward later.

"It is an easy parallel to draw between baseball and faith," said Nate Frieling, assistant director of athletics. "Our prayer is that the discipline these guys showed on this mission trip and the discipline they show in baseball will carry over into every aspect of their life - especially their relationship with God the Father through faith in His Son, Jesus."

Photos by DBU Student Paul Metzgar.



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el equipo de béisbol en la república dominicana