MLB Academies in the Dominican Republic: Facilities of Opportunity

Emily Rollo | Latin American and Caribbean Studies Capstone at Washington and Lee University | Winter 2017

The Story of Raymel Flores
Dominican native and Major League Baseball hopeful

Raymel Flores pictured days before he left home permanently to pursue his major league baseball dreams. His home is a three room shack with a tin roof and one mattress for all five members of his family in San Pedro Macorís.

At age sixteen, Flores agreed to a contract with the Red Sox with a signing bonus of $900,000. He moved to their academy in El Toro and immediately started training and taking classes.

After one year in the academy, Flores moved to the United States and made his minor league debut. In July 2014, he was traded to the Arizona Diamondbacks. Today, he plays for their Class-A minor league team, the Kane County Tigers in Geneva, Illinois. He is living the untraditional life of a Latino immigrant in the U.S.

Beyond Baseball

“Baseball has a responsibility to offer these kids something else”

The rise of Latino players in Major League Baseball is in large part due to the success of the baseball academies in the Dominican Republic. These institutions are often overlooked, but they are arguably the most essential key in the transformation a Dominican player’s life in the Caribbean and for a chance at success in the United States. Whether or not the player makes it to the major leagues, the academies are platforms where young Dominican men are offered the tools for development, personally and professionally. Thus, the academies are very valuable to the life of Dominican young men between the white lines of the diamond and beyond.

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