
Cuba: Soccer Fans and Where to Find Them

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Let's imagine for a moment, only for a moment that the city is a jungle that there are trees instead of buildings and for the chirping of birds we have the honking of old American cars.

This jungle, of course, has its own animal species: beautiful, exotic, colorful and dangerous. But out of the entire urban biosphere there's a particular specimen, a new one that little by little has earned its place among the noisiest beasts in the environment. In Cuba, where globalization seems to have sunk in like a roof leak, there are already these extraordinary beings who live match after match and feed of goals. Soccer addicts are undeniable part of our social fauna and, although in the world they are called "fans", "hooligans" and "ultra", those here prefer to call themselves fanatics.

Sub-species

Soccer fans in Cuba are not on the brink of extinction at all; they are rather in their peak, although they are far from being a plague yet. Just like there are different species of cats or spiders there are also different classes of soccer fanatics, which usually divide in Barcelona Fans, Real Madrid Fans, followers of the Bayern Múnich and those who support a team from the Premier League or the Italian Calcio. Nevertheless, it's the Barcelona Fans and Real Madrid Fans who proliferate around these days.

The unstoppable growing number of fans of both teams is a limitless phenomenon. In the last years, specialists worldwide have noticed a huge growth in the ranks of these two packs in detriment of others. For many, the origin of this overpopulation is due to the majestic presence of two male alphas: Christian Ronaldo and Lionel Messi. In the jungle, as everyone should know, the male alphas usually impose by the "survival of the strongest". But as soccer must not be of violence (unless the faults committed in the field), we could assure that this law is translated for these born leaders in talent, skill, elegance and omnipresence in the media.

Natural Habitat

At least in Cuba, soccer fanatics are easily identifiable. Their natural habitat is usually corners, parks or any field, may that be grass or pavement, as long as the ball can roll without problems. Certainly there is nothing more appealing for them than a television broadcasting a soccer match.

To better understand these fanatics you must study them in full action, in their ideal ecosystem, where they express their wildest nature. If we talk about an important match, one that defines a tournament or that pits historical rivals. Previous the television broadcast, the Cuban soccer animal bet all kinds of things, review shortly the times his team has won over the other one and, lastly, he uses his premonitory skills to predict the result of the match. During the game they just jump off their chairs to scream, and fruitlessly speak to the TV screen. Once the whistle indicates the end of the match, if he wins, his main duty is humiliating the opposing fanatic. In the event of losing, then there will be the warning of a sure revenge.

Physical characteristics

The physical characteristics of this species are quite variable, to the point that they can sometimes be mistaken with the rest of the human kind. However, there is a small detail that gives them away: the outfit. The fanatics walk around wearing their soccer T-shirt and the crest of the team on their chests. But T-shirt are expensive and, wear out in the end. A few lucky ones ask their relatives or friends to bring them a t-shirt from abroad. Other more radical decide to turn their colors permanent and tattoo their skin. The crest is something sacred for them which they respect and love, as if it were a religious symbol. They pray to it in search of goals and, when the goal is scored, it's mandatory to kiss it feverishly, to thank it, to tighten the muscles and raise his arms to the sky.

Wild Behavior

Warning! in the event of facing a soccer fanatic you should know, first of all he doesn't have a "favorite team". No. The beast in question has "a team", or better, HIS TEAM. In his head he believes that the club (or national team) is his property and he will refer to it as HIS. This behavior leads him to assume an entire bunch of responsibilities: to defend against detractors and enemies, to suffer the defeats, to sing the victories and tell them among friends like epic battles that for their historical accuracy and detail would rival Homer himself.

There are few things in this world compared to a goal, or at least that believes a soccer fanatic. In his mind the goal is like an orgasm, a spasm with heart arrhythmia included, the glorious culmination of comings and goings of fulfilled expectations and disappointments. He celebrates it as if he had scored and with the burning desire of being in the skin of players. So don't be scared if you see some rapture of ecstasy in some specimen, because that could be his less harmless behavior. Of course, if his team scores.

Predators and Preys

Some specialists affirm that soccer fanatics is a specie introduced that has altered the domestic ecosystem, becoming natural predators of baseball followers. However, the Cuban sport biosphere has not suffered any change, or at least none associated to the boost of "soccer". Baseball is and will always be the national sport, the very existence of hot corners, the homelike ritual that brings the family together in front of the television. The recent National Baseball Series has proven that, where soccer fanatics either those of Barcelona or Real Madrid have worn the Industriales, Las Tunas or Granma T-shirt. The scientific community should not be based on groundless fears, since baseball is the Cuban fiber that gives certain qualities to the soccer animal.

Evolution

Soccer fanatics in Cuba which as every being is victim of evolution would gladly mutate his wild nature of television spectator and neighborhood player for that of the regional "fan". He would not hesitate to wear over his T-shirt of European clubs that of the provincial team and cheer from the bleachers with greater enthusiasm than at home. But reality conspires against the Darwinian designs, because both the stadiums and the national tournaments alike are missing the minimal conditions to start a proper competition. Only a few improvements to those forgotten fields and turned into amazonic jungles, and maybe something promotion, to attract that mass of curious characters among which, with pride, I include myself.