

The Nation's Pride: Baseball

Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- describe the status of baseball as a sport in Nicaragua.
 - explain how baseball in Nicaragua reflects the concept of cultural diffusion.
 - analyze Nicaragua's National Hymn for meaning.
 - identify some of the National baseball teams found in Nicaragua.
 - name and identify at least two Nicaraguan baseball players that have played or currently play in the Major Leagues.
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Materials

Student Handout: **Nicaraguan National Hymn**

Student Handout: **Béisbol**

Activities

1. Begin the lesson by asking students to list the sports they like to play, whether as an organized activity or just for fun. Place their list on the chalkboard.
 - a. Ask students to explain what they like most about playing their particular sport. Why do they enjoy it?
 - b. Survey the class again by asking students to guess what the most popular sport is in Nicaragua, based on their current knowledge.
 - c. After completing the survey, tell the class that the most popular sport in Nicaragua is baseball. Does that surprise them? Why?
 2. Ask students if they have ever played attended a professional or semi-professional baseball game and ask for a show of hands.
 - a. Ask them what the first activity is in any baseball game or professional sporting event. (Playing the National Anthem)
 - b. Distribute the student handout entitled **Nicaraguan National Hymn**.
 - c. Direct students to read the Nicaraguan National Hymn. You may wish to play the anthem if a recording is available. (For Spanish language classes, you may wish to duplicate only the Spanish language version and have the students translate the hymn.)
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- d. Ask students to interpret lines 1-4. What do these lines reveal about Nicaragua's history?
 - e. Ask students to interpret remaining lines. How do they reveal a sense of national pride and hope for the future?
3. Distribute the student handout entitled **Béisbol**.
 - a. Direct students to read the first page of the handout.
 - b. Ask students to explain how the origins of baseball in Nicaragua reflect the concept of cultural diffusion (the spreading of ideas and cultural practices from one culture to another).
 4. Direct students to read the remainder of the handout.
 - a. Based on the handout, ask students to explain why they think baseball can be considered Nicaragua's national pastime.
 - b. Ask students to evaluate the success of Nicaragua's national teams. How competitive do they appear to be?
 5. Concluding Activities (Select those that are most appropriate for your subject matter and grade level.)
 - a. Using available library and/or Internet resources, assign students research one of the Nicaraguan players who has made it to the major leagues and to report their findings to the class.
 - b. Using a map of Nicaragua from a previous lesson in this Resource Guide, direct students to identify and label the five different cities that have baseball teams in Nicaragua.
 - c. Have students create and design a picture of a logo or a mascot for one of the five baseball teams.
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Béisbol



There is really only one sport that arouses people's passions in Nicaragua: baseball. A trip to the national stadium in Managua takes you to the country's best-maintained and most protected grass lawn, the baseball diamond. The rest of Central and South America opted for soccer (fútbol) to be their national sport, but Nicaragua and Panama chose baseball. It was probably brought to Nicaragua by the American Marines, who occupied the country for most of the first half of the twentieth century. Clifford Hamm, collector general of Customs in Nicaragua in the 1920s, stated "Three cheers for the American marine who is teaching baseball and sportsmanship! It is the best step towards order, peace, and stability."



Indios del Boer

Nicaraguan baseball has a long way to go before it can compete with nations such as the U.S. and Cuba but it has advanced since its early days. Two baseball teams, "Southern" and "Four Roses" were created in 1887 along the Atlantic Coast and the first games were played the following years. Baseball has been played on the eastern Atlantic Coast, Misquito Coast, continuously since that time. The first "official" games in Nicaragua were played in the capital city of Managua in July of 1891 between Managua and Granada.

In 1904 the U.S. Consul in Nicaragua, Carter Donaldson, founded the first team in Nicaragua with a continuous history. It was named the "Boer" because it was the custom to name teams after warring factions, and the war in South Africa was much in the news at that time. Later on, the unlikely team names of "Russia" and "Japan" were founded in Masaya in 1904 to honor the war between those two countries. Ironically, the "Boer" team still remains the most popular in the country.



**Roberto
Clemente
Stadium,
Masaya**

The first national tournament was organized in 1914 and the "Managua" team beat the "Boer" and the baseball clubs from Masaya, Leon, Chinandega and Granada to win the Interlocal Championship of 1915.

Players were mainly from the Pacific Coast. A few of the black players from the Atlantic Coast had played with teams of the Pacific Coast. The "Navy" team from the Misquito Coast traveled to the Pacific Coast and had a record of 40-3 for the season. The public was so amazed with their athleticism that the "Navy" team was accused of witchcraft. Many of these players stayed on the Pacific Coast and baseball really began to excel.

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Vincente Padilla

Times have changed baseball in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan National team took second place in 1935 in the Central American Games. The following year, Nicaragua and the U.S. played in the World Championship in Cuba. Nicaragua hosted this event in 1948, 1950, 1972, 1973, and 1994. In the Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996, the national team, *La Selección*, just missed out on a bronze medal after beating the U.S. In 1998, the team came in third in the World Championships held in Italy, behind Cuba and South Korea.

The country has produced five Major Leaguers during the 1970's: Dennis Martinez, Tony Chevez, Albert Williams, David Green, and Porfirio Altamirano. Dennis Martinez, who in August 1998 became the most successful Latin American pitcher in the history of U.S. major league baseball. His fans in Nicaragua call him *El Presidente*, following rumors that he was set to return to his native country in 1996 to enter politics.



Oswaldo Mariena

Currently, three players from Nicaragua are playing in the Major Leagues:

- Marvin Bernard, plays Center Field for the San Francisco Giants, comes from Bluefields.
- Oswaldo Mariena, is a left-handed pitcher for the Florida Marlins. He comes from Chinandega.
- Vincente Padilla, is a right-handed pitcher for the Philadelphia Phillies. He also comes from Chinandega.

Baseball Teams in the Nicaraguan League



- Chinandega
- Estelli
- Leon
- Granada
- Managua (Boer)
- Masaya (San Fernando)



Baseball is not only for the professionals or semi-professionals. Wherever you go in Nicaragua, you will come across young people playing the game, whether in official league play or just in pick-up games in the community.

Nicaragua's National Anthem

¡Salve a ti, Nicaragua! En tu suelo
ya no ruge la voz del cañón
ni se tiñe con sangre de hermanos
tu glorioso pendón bicolor.
Brille hermosa la paz en tu cielo,
nada empañe tu gloria inmortal,
que el trabajo es tu digno laurel
y el honor es tu enseña triunfal.

English Translation

Hail to you Nicaragua!
The cannon's voice no longer roars
nor does the blood of our brothers
stain your glorious bi-colored flag.
Peace shines in beauty in your skies,
nothing dims your immortal glory,
for work is what earns your laurels
and honor is your triumphal ensign.
