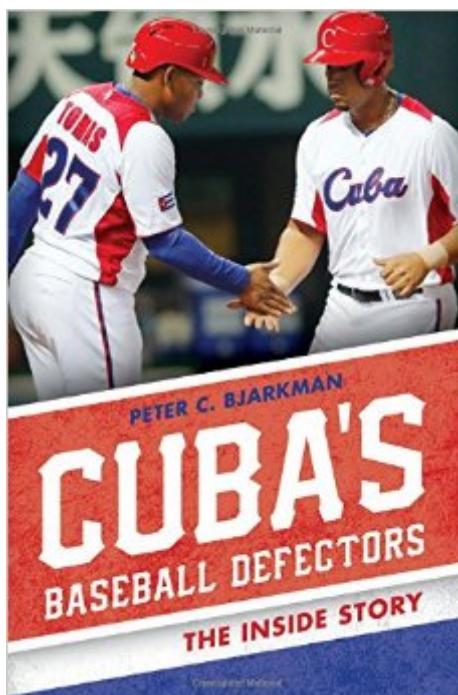


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# Cuba's Baseball Defectors: The Inside Story



## Synopsis

The stellar play and fascinating backstories of exiled Cuban sluggers and hurlers in Major League Baseball (MLB) has become one of the biggest headlines in America's national pastime. On-field exploits by colorful Dodgers outfielder Yasiel Puig, American League rookie-of-the-year Jos Abreu, home run derby champion Yoenis Cspedes, radar-gun busting Cincinnati fast-baller Aroldis Chapman, and a handful of others have been further enhanced by feel-good tales of desperate Cuban superstars risking their lives to escape Fidel Castro's communist realm and chase a celebrated American Dream of financial and athletic success. But a truly ugly underbelly to this story has also slowly emerged, one that involves human smuggling operations financed by Miami crime syndicates, operated by Mexican drug cartels, and conveniently ignored by big league ball clubs endlessly searching for fresh waves of international talent. In *Cuba's Baseball Defectors: The Inside Story*, Cuban baseball expert Peter C. Bjarkman reveals the complete truth behind the wave of Cuban big league talent coming to MLB. Given rare access to Cuba and its ballplayers, Bjarkman has spent over twenty years traveling to all corners of the island getting to know the top Cuban stars and witnessing their baseball struggles and triumphs. In this book, Bjarkman places recent events—including the apparent thaw in US-Cuba relations—in the context of Cuban baseball history and tradition before delving into the stories of the major Cuban stars who have left the island. He reveals the personal histories of these players, explains the events that led them to eventually choose defection from their homeland, and details their harrowing journeys to reach US shores and achieve baseball stardom. Players whose big league dreams failed are also discussed, as are Cuba's recent efforts to stem the defection tide through working agreements with the Japanese and Mexican leagues. Unique in its balanced perspective of Cuban baseball and its star players, *Cuba's Baseball Defectors* not only shares the author's first-hand account of many previously misreported events, it also provides a view of the illegal smuggling of ballplayers from the perspective of Cuban baseball officials whose voices have often not been heard. With a conclusion outlining a likely scenario for future relations between Major League Baseball and the Cuban League, this book will fascinate baseball fans, those interested in the history of US-Cuba relations, and those wanting to learn more about the unsavory story of human trafficking in the name of baseball glory.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An interesting read but not an easy one. There is a lot of information here and you will need several days to get through the book. Is the bad situation the fault of the US? Cuba? MLB? Now you will have a more informed opinion and understanding

Some readers might assume a book about Cuban baseball defectors would take the Hollywood approach, shining a light on Puig and other stars who've risked life and limb for political freedom and major league glory. But Peter C. Bjarkman's new book, *Cuba's Baseball Defectors: The Inside Story*, offers a more skeptical view of that narrative, as well as a scathing critique of the agents who turn a blind eye to the human trafficking that's behind many defections. He's focused less on the star players and their sensational escapes and more on the sum total of those defections, and the impact they have on a community left behind. . . .The 'inside story' promised by the book's title is essentially one of a special vantage point, of an isolated institution looking outward. Bjarkman, an American, gives the impression that he's adopted this 'alternate baseball universe' as his own, in the process renouncing his former allegiances, not in political terms but simply as a fan who's grown in love with a certain brand of baseball. Maybe it's the natural result of someone attending hundreds of Cuban games as the author has, both those on the island and abroad in international competition. It's clear that after visiting the island more than 50 times since 1997 and reporting extensively on Cuban baseball, he brings expertise to the subject. "   
Baseball America

This book could have been written by the Cuban Communist Party propaganda section. They use Useful Idiots to parrot the party's propaganda. There were many books written in the old GDR, the

communist Germany, about its "Glorious Sport Machine". These books ended in the garbage after 1989. This is where this book belongs too.

A very well written book, from an expert's point of view of Cuban baseball. He does not sugar-coat the problems in Cuba or the way MLB and the US press view Cuban players and the country as a whole.

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