Nyhus Travel Grant Final Report

Nicholas Pisegna, Class of 2011

During my senior year at Bowdoin, I completed an honors thesis in history under the direction of Professor Allen Wells. My project focused on the development of baseball in Cuba and the Dominican Republic and how the sport’s development influenced the growth of the sport in the United States as well as how baseball influenced the political, economic, and cultural relationship among the United States and the two Caribbean islands. I used the Nyhus Travel Grant to fund two separate trips to the A. Bartlett Giamatti Research Center in Cooperstown, New York, the Baseball Hall of Fame’s historical archive. The Grant allowed me to compensate for one of the glaring deficiencies in my project, namely that I do not speak Spanish and, as a result, am not able to examine many of the Cuban and Dominican accounts on baseball history. The archive houses an extensive collection of unique and rare items that document the complete international and domestic history of baseball. Both trips proved to be vital to the completion of my project, as they allowed me to collect the majority of the primary source material—from newspaper clippings to correspondence among American and Caribbean ballplayers and baseball personnel—that I used in the final version of my thesis. During my first trip to the Hall of Fame before Thanksgiving, the information I encountered helped me recognize the few events that shaped the development of baseball in all three countries and, in turn, the development of the relationship among all three countries: integration of Major League Baseball in 1947; the Cuban Revolution in 1959; the advent of free agency in Major League Baseball in 1975; and the Cold War, including its affect on the relationship between Cuba and the United States during the war and the affect of the post-war fallout on Cuba and the relationship among all three countries.

Over the course of my second trip to the Hall of Fame during winter break, I was able to collect critical details about individual ballplayers, American, Cuban, and Dominican, and how those defining events shaped the individual players and the professional leagues in all three countries. My research at the Hall of Fame, thanks entirely to the Nyhus Travel Grant, stands out as one of the most valuable experiences I had at Bowdoin, as it allowed me to conduct unique primary source research and to complete the most challenging assignment I encountered at school, my honors thesis.

Faculty Mentor: Allen Wells
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