

A Woman Among Men

Aniuska Sánchez holds her own at the Yankees Baseball Academy

By Ken Derry

If there is solidarity in numbers, Aniuska Sánchez is an army of one at the Yankees Baseball Academy in Boca Chica, Dominican Republic. She is the operations manager there and second in command behind Joel Lithgow, the director of the academy.

But while she has the support of Lithgow and the organization, there is no getting around the daily obstacles Sánchez faces in being the only full-time female Yankees employee at the complex.

At different points in the year, the academy is home to more than 100 athletes from Latin America. The age range of these athletes is 17 to 23.

“You never know what to expect,” Sánchez said. “You have to keep in mind that they are young, and the fact that they are away from their families may influence their behavior. Sometimes, they require patience, and you need to level with them. There are rules they need to follow, and everything we do is for their own good.”

The male-dominated environment of professional baseball presented Sánchez with other challenges.

“In the beginning, it was hard,” said Sánchez, who was hired in 2006.

Along with Lithgow, Sánchez, who oversees 26 employees, manages many of the day-to-day operations, including the educational services dedicated to the athletes.

Sánchez was born in Santo Domingo in 1980, and she lives there now with her husband. She studied at New Horizons Bilingual School and received her master’s in advertising from *Universidad Iberoamericana*.

Still, she has had to endure stereotypes and hardships, among them the idea of the glass ceiling.

“Some people had a hard time imagining that I was the operations manager,” Sánchez said. “But I made it through, and I did my job. I thank the Yankees for giving me the opportunity at such a young age to prove that, in this industry, it doesn’t matter if you’re male or female, you just have to be disciplined and honest and have pride in what you do.”



SANCHÉZ [L] AND LITHGOW

In their time working together, Lithgow has seen that discipline in Sánchez.

“Ani is great, and it’s really interesting to see her handle herself in an environment of men,” Lithgow said. “The players aren’t always used to being around women, so it’s important for them to learn.”

For Sánchez, the most fascinating aspect of her work is the making of a professional athlete.

“Crafting raw talent mixed with passion and dedication in order to attain a final product is an honor and what makes sports perfect,” she said.

The most challenging part of the job is attaining the trust of others.

“I have to prove myself every day, and I thank the organization for the opportunity to do it,” she said.

For any female aspiring to work in sports, Sánchez had simple advice.

“The main thing is to have confidence in yourself,” she said. “Enjoy what you do and don’t feel intimidated by men.” ❧