

Baseball finals return in Cuba and glory is still at stake



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Havana, June 21 (RHC)-- Alazanes from Granma and Cocodrilos of Matanzas return today to the baseball scene to play the third game in the grand final of the 61st National Baseball Series (SNB), considered crucial on their way to the Cuban crown.

After approximately 690 kilometers traveled from the eastern city of Bayamo, almost 12 hours of road trip and one day of rest, both teams will have the opportunity to get a little closer to the title in the Victoria de

Giron stadium that will host 15 thousand people who are ready for the game.

According to recent history, the teams divided honors between Friday and Saturday at the Mártires de Barbados Park, with an initial victory for the hosts from Granma (13-6) and a revenge for the Matanceros (1-4), who will now have the added bonus of home advantage.

Faced with such a situation, the mentors Armando Ferrer (Matanzas) and Carlos Marti (Granma) had time to reduce tensions, project some movements, correct tactics and increase the collective dynamics in pursuit of getting ahead in a final without a clear favorite, according to experts.

As he said in a press conference, Ferrer will rely on the talent of left-hander Dariel Góngora, a man capable of keeping a straight line close to 90 miles per hour and a remarkable control in his deliveries to home plate.

Throughout the current postseason, Góngora has a balance of two hits and one loss, his opponents hit .305 (32 hits in 105 at-bats) and he has an efficiency of 3.54 (10 clean runs -PCL- in 26 innings), with 11 strikeouts and eight tickets, a couple of them intentional.

Unofficially, the Saurios will have a line up based on Yadil Mujica (2B), Jefferson Delgado (3B), Ariel Sánchez (LF), Erisbel Arruebarena (SS), Yariel Duque (1B), Javier Camero (BD), Juan Miguel Vázquez (RF), Roberto Loredó (R) and Yoisnel Camejo (CF).

The locals will miss -again- the presence of outfielder/starter Yadir Drake, who reiterated his interest in continuing in the playoffs, but did not receive authorization from the Leones de Yucatán club and will return to the Mexican League in the morning.

Martí, meanwhile, will place on the mound the right-hander Joel Mojena, owner of an exquisite precision in his pitches and ready to constantly vary the exit angles, although he does not stand out for his speed.

According to the numbers of statistician Arnelio Álvarez, Mojena is 1-0 since the quarterfinals, with a 3.00 ERA (five clean sheets), a .300 opponents' average (60-18), two retirements on strikes and six free passes in 15.0 innings.

Despite losing in the last game, Granma does not foresee changes in the lineup: Yosvani Millán (2B), Osvaldo Abreu (3B), Guillermo Avilés (1B), Carlos Benítez (BD), Iván Prieto (R), Alexquemer Sánchez (RF), Pedro Almeida (LF), Yulián Milián (SS) and Darién Palma (CF).

Matanzas faces its third consecutive final and won in 2020 for the first time under that name, although the territory achieved several trophies under the denominations of Henequeneros (1970, 1990 and 1991) and Citricultores (1977 and 1984) in the 20th century.

Granma, meanwhile, is considered the best team of the last five years in the largest Antillean Island, after being crowned in 2017, 2018 and 2021, becoming the tenth three-time champion of Cuban baseball.

The 61st National Baseball Series kicked off on January 23 with the competition of 16 teams in a regular phase of 75 games and eight tickets to the first round of direct eliminations.

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