

Cuba announces its pre-selection for Baseball Classic with several major leaguers

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Havana, January 6 (RHC) -- Cuba announced Friday a pre-selection of 50 baseball players for the V World Baseball Classic (March), which included for the first time players from abroad who stand out in the U.S. Major Leagues or other professional circuits.

At a press conference in the Adolfo Luque Hall of the Latin American Stadium, the head of the Cuban Baseball Federation (FCB), Juan Reynaldo Perez, team manager Armando Johnson and other members of the management team gave details of the pre-selection and the critical route before the tournament,

scheduled for March 8 to 23.

The federator recalled that an exception was made with Cuba to give at this stage 50 names - when the other 19 teams have given 35 - , since last November 18 Cuba did not have a license requested to the U.S. government to be able to count on Major League players.

"This is not a constellation of stars, it is a competitive team," said Perez, while Ricardo Eizmendi, the team's trainer, announced the roster of five catchers, 12 infielders, eight outfielders and 25 pitchers.

Among those called up are the stellar Luis Robert (Chicago White Sox center fielder and 2020 Gold Glove winner, as well as Yoan Moncada (also Chicago White Sox), Andy Ibáñez (Detroit Tigers), and pitchers Ronald Bolaños (Kansas City) and Luis Miguel Romero (Oakland Athletics).

Others who emigrated and are playing without FCB endorsement in foreign leagues are former major leaguers Yoennis Céspedes, pitchers Roennis Elías and Onelkis García (all three from the Dominican Republic's Águilas del Cibao), catcher Lorenzo Quintana (Tigres del Licey, Dominican Republic), outfielder Lázaro Armenteros (Oakland Athletics), and pitchers Yoan López (Yomiuri Giants) and Elián Leyva (Naranjeros de Hermosillos, Mexico).

The pre-selection also includes Cuban baseball signings in Japan: pitchers Raidel Martínez, Liván Moinelo, Yariel Rodríguez and Frank Abel Alvarez, outfielders Alfredo Despaigne, Yurisbel Gracial, and infielders Ariel Martínez, Pedro Pablo Revilla and Guillermo García.

Mentor Armando Johnson revealed that great efforts were made to be able to summon Major League stars Jose Abreu and Yordan Alvarez, but it was impossible. "They never answered our calls to their phones," explained the Cuban team's helmsman.

Cuba was the only country of the 20 that will take part in the Classic (March 8-23) that needed a permit from the U.S. government to participate in the tournament and another one so that Cubans playing in the MLB could join the island's team.

The final selection for the Classic, of 30 players, will be announced on February 7 and then Team Cuba will carry out a training camp in Mexico or the Dominican Republic and finally several training camps in Japan with elite clubs such as the Chunichi Dragons, Yomiuri Giants and the SoftBank Falcons,

The island's squad will play the first phase in Group A, in Taichung, along with host Taiwan, Italy, the Netherlands and Panama, all with top-level players in professional circuits.

In its four previous participations in the Classic, Cuba has 15 wins and 11 defeats and stands out in its trophy cabinet the subtitle of the first edition (2006). Then it has not been able to overcome the second round in the 2009, 2013 and 2017 editions.

Preselection of 50

Catchers (5): Andrys Pérez, Oscar Valdés, Lorenzo Quintana, Yosvany Alarcón and Rafael Ramón Viñales.

Infielders (12): Ariel Martínez, Andy Ibáñez, Bárbaro Erisbel Arruebarruena, Luis Vicente Mateo, Guillermo Avilés, Yurisbel Gracial, Dayán García, Pavel Quesada, Yoan Moncada, Yadiel Mujica, Pedro Pablo Revilla and Guillermo García.

Outfielders (8): Luis Robert, Raico Santos, Yoelkis Guibert, Lázaro Armenteros, Roel Santos, Yadir Drake, Yoennis Céspedes and Alfredo Despaigne.

Pitchers (25): Yoan López, Elián Leyva, Yoennis Yera, Liván Moinelo, Carlos Juan Viera, Raidel Martínez, Yariel Humberto Rodríguez, Frank Abel Álvarez, Naykel Cruz, Marlon Vega, Javier Mirabal, Roenis Elías, Franklyn Quintana, Jonathan Carbó Onelkis García, Alexander Rodríguez, Roberto Enrique Hernández, José Ramón Rodríguez, Yeudis Reyes, Pavel Hernández, Hermes David González, Alberto Pablo Civil, Dariel Góngora, Ronald Bolaños, and Luis Miguel Romero.

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