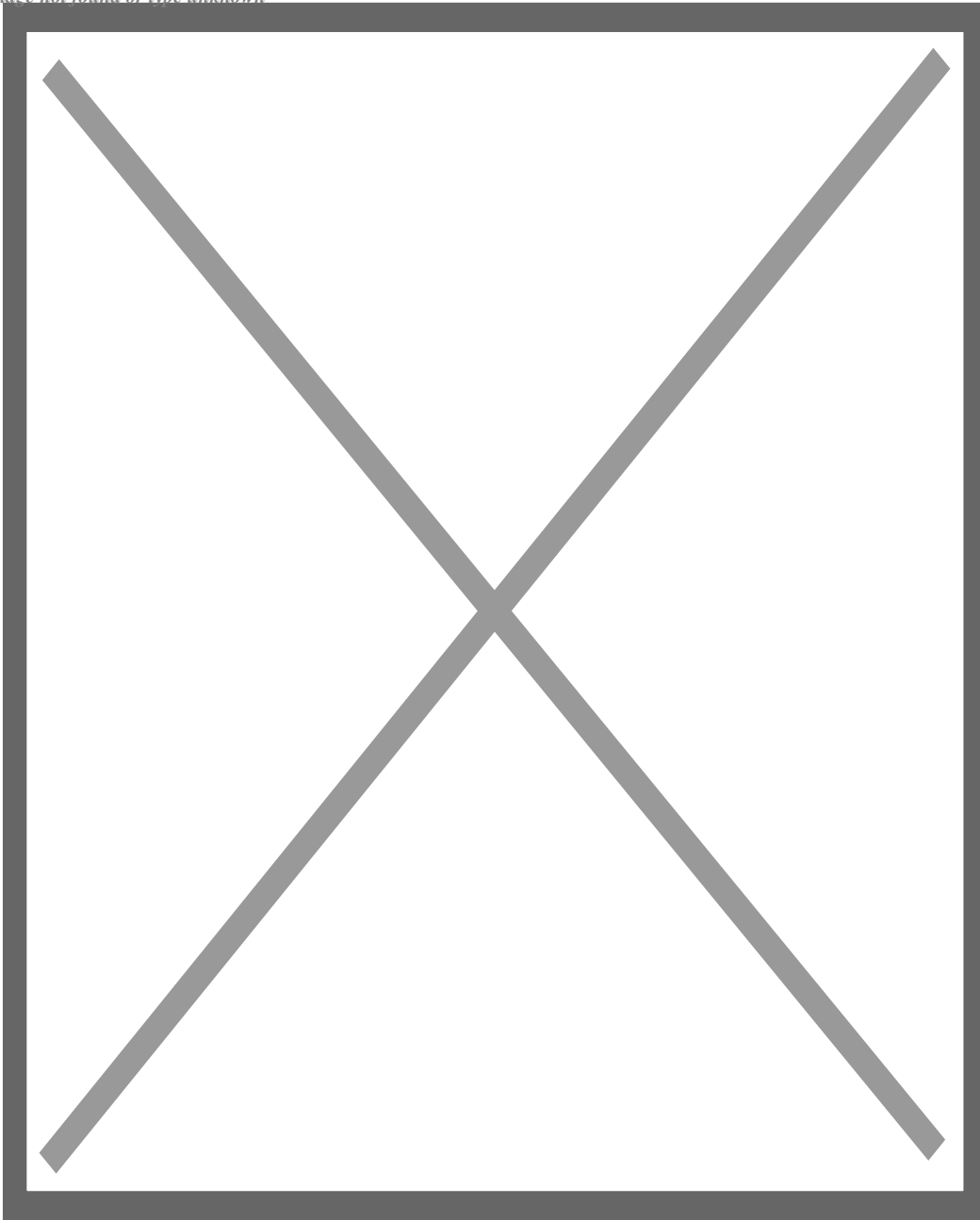


USA qualifies for the World Baseball Classic finals

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Havana, March 19 (RHC)-- The United States, the reigning monarch, defeated Cuba (14-2) on Sunday with a powerful offense of 14 hits, including four homers, to seal its advance to the dispute for the crown of the V World Baseball Classic in the city of Miami.

In an effort to dominate the duel between the two powers, the northerners hit hard against left-handed starter Roenis Elías (0-1, 2.0, 3C, 4H, 1K, 1BB) and right-handed relievers Miguel Romero (0.1, 2C, 2H, 1K, 1BB) and Carlos Juan Viera (1.1, 2C, 1H, 1K, 2BB).

Ronald Bolaños (0.1, 2C, 2H, 1H, 1BB, 0K), Elián Leyva (1.1, 3C, 3H, 1BB, 1K), Frank Abel Álvarez (0.1, 1C, 2H, 1BB, 0K) and José Ramón Rodríguez (2.0, 1C, 1H, 0BB, 1K, 1HR) did not escape the gale before more than 35 thousand souls around the grass of the LoanDepot Park, in this city.

The defending champions celebrated homers by Paul Goldschmidt (5-2, 4CI, 4CA, 2CA, 1HR), Cedric Mullins (1-1, 1CI, 1CA, 1HR) and Trea Turner (4-3, 4CI, 2CA, 2HR) on a couple of occasions, to take a wide lead and decide the first semifinal of the tournament.

The Cubans, meanwhile, opened the scoreboard in the first act, after consecutive hits by Roel Santos, Yoan Moncada and Luis Robert Jr. and a go-ahead run by Alfredo Despaigne, but Adam Wainwright got the extra out to dominate consecutively Erisbel Arruebarruena, Andy Ibañez and Ariel Martínez.

The island scored again in the top of the fifth inning, thanks to a double by Moncada of the Chicago White Sox, a single by Arruebarruena and a towering rocket by Ibanez (Detroit Tigers).

Finally, the success ended in the record of the veteran Wainwright (2-0, 4.0, 1C, 5H, 1K, 1BB) and the setback in the biography of Elías (Chicago Cubs), who could not do justice against one of the favorite teams in the race.

Now, manager Mark De Rosa's squad will wait for the winner of the undefeated clash between Mexico and Japan, which will take place this Monday at 7:00 p.m., local time, at the aforementioned sports facility in Miami.

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