

Japan makes historic run to Baseball Classic finals

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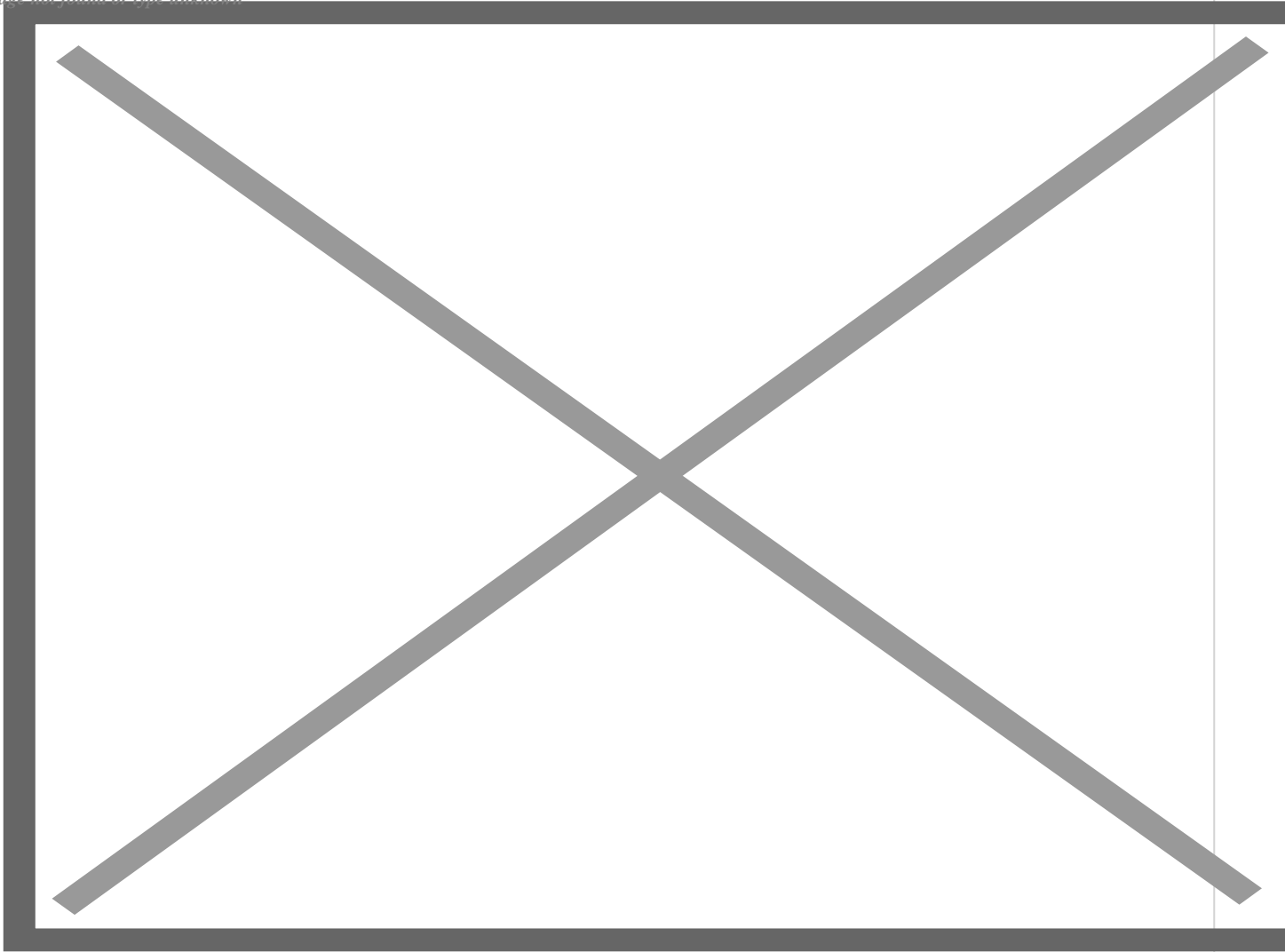


Photo: Prensa Latina.

Havana, March 21 (RHC)--With a decisive hit in the ninth inning by Munetaka Murakami, Japan left Mexico (6-5) on the field on Monday to qualify for the third time to the final of the World Baseball Classic.

Murakami (5-1, 2CI), who holds the record of home runs for a local player in the professional circuit of his country, with a total of 56, managed to give the pass to the Japanese by driving in the tying run and walk-off with a swing and connection in a no-man's field on a pitch from closer Giovanni Gallegos (0.0, 2C, 2H, 1BB).

In a duel fought from start to finish, the Aztecs took the lead in the fourth inning when Luis Urias hit a three-run homer against the stellar starter Roki Sasaki to the delight of the fans in the so-called "Capital of the Sun".

The pitching took control of the actions in the middle innings, but in the seventh inning, the Samurai took a deep breath thanks to the power of the bat of outfielder Masataka Yoshida, one of their best exponents in this edition of the tournament.

The Japanese evened the scoreboard with a three-run homer by Yoshida, who reached 13 hits in the WBC 2023, to give life to the two-time kings of the competition.

However, the Americans were not intimidated in the top of the eighth inning, and scored two more to put their opponents against the wall, just three outs away from victory.

But the Asians came back and the rest is history, with Murakami dressed as a hero and manager Hideki Kuriyama's team ready to face the United States on Tuesday for the title of world champion.

The win ended up in the biography of reliever Taisei Ota (1-0, 1.0, 0C, 0H, 0BB, 1K), while the setback went to Gallegos of the St. Louis Cardinals in the Major Leagues. Neither team committed an error defensively.

Result:

Mexico 5 9 0 0.

Japan 6 10 0.

Wins: Taisei Ota (1-0)

Lost: Giovanni Gallegos (0-1).

Home runs: Luis Urías, Masataka Yoshida.

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