

# *Las Tunas-Matanzas in the start of the Cuban baseball semifinals*

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Las Tunas, July 20 (PL) -- With the duel between Matanzas and Las Tunas, two of the most stable teams in recent years, the semifinal of the Cuban baseball championship begins today, considered by many as an early final.

The debutant mentor of the Leñadores, Abeisy Pantoja, ratified the pitcher Alejandro Meneses for the opening, while the high command of the Cocodrilos modified its initial proposal and opted for the left-handed Naykel Cruz.

In a dialogue with Prensa Latina, director Armando Ferrer explained that the coaching staff valued the change of Renner Rivero, initially the candidate to work today, for Naykel considering the adjustments in the calendar for this stage of the tournament.

According to the dates announced by the organizers, after the two games on Tunisian soil, there will be a day's transfer to Matanzas and another one to rest before the third game and the same will happen if

necessary for games six and seven of the playoff.

Naykel, a member of the national team in the last World Classic and the Central American and Caribbean Games in San Salvador, contributed seven hits in the preliminary phase, suffered two losses and registered an efficiency of 3.24, while in the quarterfinals he made two starts against Artemisa, in one he left the mound before the fifth period and in the other he blanked them to finish off the series.

Meneses, who became the ace of the rotation of the Tuneros due to the absence of Carlos Juan Viera due to his contract in Mexico, had a record of six wins and three losses in the qualifying stage and his average of clean runs was 3.94. During the first stage of the playoffs they won a duel against Ciego de Avila.

Las Tunas and Matanzas are facing each other for the fourth time in the playoffs and in the previous ones the Crocodiles always won. In the semifinals of the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 tournaments they won 3-1 and 4-2, respectively, while in the quarterfinals of the last edition the match ended with a 4-1 advantage.

Interestingly, on all three occasions the Tunisian teams won the first game, but were never able to extend the match to a seventh game.

The overall balance of challenges in the post-season largely benefits the team led by Ferrer 11 wins to four.

However, in the current campaign, the Leñadores won four of the five games, which reduced the difference in the historical balance that favors the Cocodrilos by 96 to 81.

This year, the Matanzas matched the record of eleven semifinals in 12 consecutive seasons, a performance only achieved by Pinar del Río, while the Tuneros seek to return to the podium after the fifth place in 2022, which interrupted the chain of four consecutive medals.

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