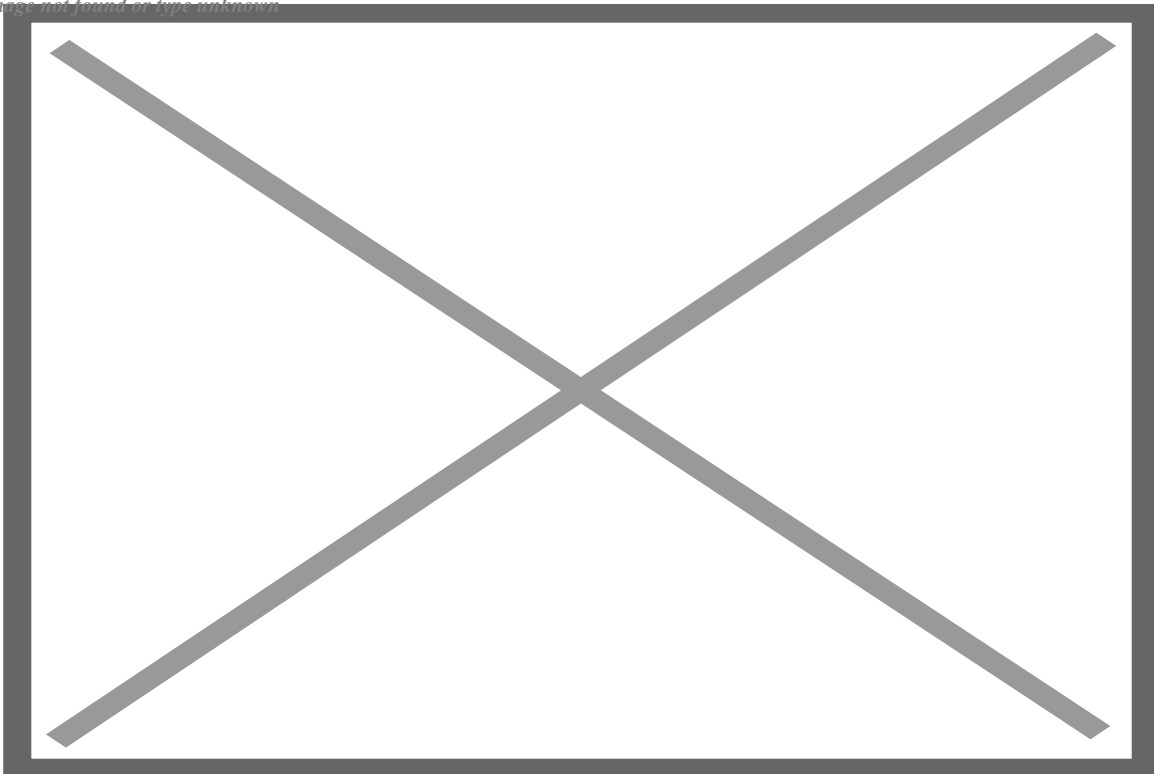


Key victory over Colombia in Pan American Games baseball game

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Havana, October 20 (JIT) -- A very important victory was achieved today by Cuba against Colombia in the beginning of the baseball tournament of the XIX Pan American Games, held in a temporary complex located in the Cerrillos district, very close to the athletes' village.

Although the starting pitcher, Yoennis Yera, from Matanzas, did not show himself to be a tight pitcher, the relievers did and then a strategic victory became possible, according to the words of the Pinochet mentor Armando Johnson.

The Cuban ninth was never behind on the scoreboard, but the Cafeteros tied the score twice and it was necessary to pull out all the stops to win on a cool and cloudy morning.

Cuba scored its first run in the bottom of the first inning, thanks to hits by Roel Santos, Bárbaro Arruebarruena and Dayán García.

However, the tie was not long in coming in the top of the second inning thanks to a huge home run by Colombian catcher Carlos Martínez, who took advantage of an overly tame delivery by Yera. The ball flew high and far over the left field fence.

The Cuban advantage returned in the third act, as Roberto Baldoquin hit a line drive to left field and later Yoelkis Guibert's jit, balls to Arruebarruena and Dayan, plus Luis Gonzalez's pusher.

The Colombian team did not give up the victory and cornered Yera in the fourth chapter, in which Carlos Arroyo hit a homer and Fabián Pertuz disappeared over the fences to even the score.

The left-hander from Matanzas allowed another double and a single before giving the ball to his compatriot Renner Rivero, who quelled the "rebellion" and gave way to Yankiel Mauri, also dominant.

The winning run was scored in the fifth inning, when Luis and Yasniel González both hit hits and positioned themselves at the corners of the diamond. Catcher Andrys Pérez received all the confidence of Johnson and negotiated a ticket, and Yadir Mujica drove in the runner with a ground ball to the box.

Pinar del Río right-hander Frank Abel Álvarez pitched the seventh act without major complications. Rivero got the win and Jorge Martínez the loss.

STATEMENTS

"It was a hard-fought victory for the boys. They are very focused on the games. We had a difficult game, but they knew how to pull out the Cuban thing and come out on top", commented Johnson as soon as the actions were over and with an evident satisfaction.

"We have to prepare ourselves now for the next matches, because we had some inaccuracies that we have to iron out quickly in the championship, which is very short. We will play against Venezuela, which has a good level, even though they lost to Brazil. That does not mean they are weak. They are prepared like everyone else here," he said.

"The team is very well, very motivated. We already got the first victory, it was the most important thing, we started well and now we have to keep on proving it. We are going for the gold," said home run hitter Baldoquín.

"Debuting with a home run is important, it gives me confidence and encouragement to continue working for the team," added the sturdy shortstop.

"We come here to win every game, but the first victory is always important. Starting at the top of the table is key. I felt great since I joined from Japan. We have been doing a great job and the dynamic is excellent. We are all united and with the same objective: to win," commented Frank Abel Álvarez.

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