

Leaders Clash in Cuban Winter Baseball League

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Havana, November 17 (PL) - The clash between leaders Sancti Spíritus and Industriales at the Latin American Park in Havana marks the start of the third sub-series of the Elite League of Cuban Baseball (LEBC) this Friday.

The Gallos (5-2) lead the overall standings of the competition, half a game ahead of the Leones (5-3), after the former sealed their last game against Matanzas on Wednesday and the Azules split honors with Santiago de Cuba.

Sancti Spíritus had two wins against the Cocodrilos (3-4) before a short circuit in the electrical system of the José Antonio Huelga stadium prevented the fourth bilateral challenge, rescheduled for when they meet again in Matanzas.

Industriales did complete its sub-series against Santiago de Cuba (4-4), a clash considered by the press as the classic of Cuban baseball classics due to the historical rivalry between the two teams.

That matchup ended with two wins on each side, as did the one between Las Tunas and Artemisa (both 3-5), which ratifies the projection of a tournament of high parity among the six contenders.

The Avispas signed their successes with comebacks against the Leones, who look like a very balanced team in all orders of play and whose bench and bullpen offer guarantees to the management to design and execute different tactical variants.

Leñadores and Cazadores went to bat in their four games, all of which ended with open scores, including a pair of knockouts, one for each team.

At the end of the first fifth of the regular calendar, the defense maintains its discreet performance (.961) and also alarms the low production of home runs, only 18, none of them hit by the Matanzas team.

The offensive line (AVE/OBP/SLU) of the league registers values of .283/.365/.377, below the trend of the last Cuban championships, characterized by abundant batting averages.

The pitching, in general, allows 4.21 clean runs per game and 1.57 runners per innings, data that are not flattering either.

According to several technicians consulted by Prensa Latina, the night games allow for adjustments in the daily training schedules, which should result in visible improvements as the league progresses.

Individually, shortstop Juan Carlos Arencibia stands out, leader in batting (.538), hits (14) and runs batted in (13) with the Gallos.

Among the pitchers, starter Dariel Góngora (LTU) has 11 scoreless innings and reliever Yankiel Mauris (SSP) has already saved three games.

The LEBC foresees two rounds with four-game subseries totaling 40 challenges per team in the preliminary phase, from which the four semifinalist teams will emerge.

In January, the postseason (semifinal and final) will be played and the champion will represent Cuba in an invitational tournament to be organized by Puerto Rico in February.

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