

Cuban baseball league final promises rivalry

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Havana, January 15 (RHC) - The final of the II Elite League of Cuban baseball between Matanzas and Artemisa will begin this Tuesday at the Victoria de Girón stadium in Matanzas.

Both Cocodrilos de Matanzas and Cazadores de Artemisa requested a starting pitcher as reinforcements to round out their rosters.

Armando Ferrer, helmsman of the Matanzas team, called up right-hander Yadián Martínez, while Artemisa's mentor, debutant Yulieski González, requested right-hander Raymond Figueredo from the capital.

The first two clashes of the final will be on Tuesday and Wednesday and then the final will be moved to 26 de Julio Park in Artemisa on July 19, 20 and 21 and will conclude, if necessary, on July 23 and 24 in Matanzas.

The semifinals confirmed the baseball effervescence on the island, especially in Matanzas and Artemisa, with packed stadiums.

The performance of Matanzas in the regular stage and in the dispute for a place in the final gave them the condition of favorites for the title, but Artemisa is the surprise team.

In the current championship, the Matanzas team comfortably led the standings in the regular stage and then beat Las Tunas 4-2 in the semifinals, with 13 home runs in six games.

Between Yurisbel Gracial and Yordanis Samón, third and fourth in the powerful lineup, they fired eight round-trippers, equally divided, and drove in 18 runs (ten by Samón and eight by Gracial).

They will face Artemisa, a team that, without appearing in many people's predictions, managed to reach the post-season and then got rid of Industriales in the semifinals.

Under the leadership of debutant manager Yulieski González, former Cuban team pitcher, the Cazadores finished second in the qualifying round and showed a compact game, with good focus and capitalized most of the opportunities in the duel against the Leones de Industriales.

They were reinforced with players such as Frederich Cepeda, Dennis Laza, Raúl González and Liván Moinelo, the latter a successful player in Japan's main professional league.

Cepeda hit two homers against Industriales and Laza the other, in a good contact formation, as he only struck out 13 times against the Havana pitchers and took 25 tickets.

The Cazadores lineup will include for the final games against Matanzas their traditional captain Dayán García, recently returned from the Nicaraguan professional league, where he posted an offensive line (AVE/OBP/SLU) of .315/.370/.455 with 29 RBIs, six home runs and five doubles.

Great rivalry and dedication on the field are expected from Tuesday onwards to liven up the final show of a winter league destined to continue to improve in future seasons.

With information from Prensa Latina

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