

*Champion team can't face
indomitable Alazanes at the start
of the 63rd National Baseball
Series*



By Orlando González Cruz

Havana, March 10 (RHC)-- The "battle" for the Cuban baseball crown began today in eight baseball parks. The official inauguration of the competition took place at the Julio Antonio Mella Stadium in Las Tunas, with the duel between the reigning champions Leñadores and the Alazanes de Granma, as the climax.

The team from Granma, owners of one of the most fearsome line-ups of the competition, showed the strength of their line-up on the field and did not stop until they knocked out the national champions (16-3)

with an impressive 19 hits, including four home runs, two by Guillermo García, and one each by Alfredo Despaigne and Roel Santos.

The victory was won by César García, who in five complete innings allowed one run and three hits.

The match marked the last at bat of Danel Castro, one of the most beloved players by his fans, who reached 30 National Series and said goodbye with a cannon shot to left field. La Pantera de Manatí put an end to a successful career and left in his service record several records for the domestic classics.

In the rest of the duels of the initial sub-series of the championship, the Vegueros de Pinar del Río defeated (11-4) the Cazadores de Artemisa with complete-game hits by Alexei Ramírez, in his return to Cuban baseball, and Yaser Julio González, one of the main contenders to take the lead in this department. The success went to right-hander Frank Luis Medina.

In the Latin American, the Leones de Industriales overcame (10-1) the Piratas de la Isla, with credit to Raymond Figueredo.

The blue offense added homers by Ariel Hechevarría and Alberto Calderón.

In a batting duel, the Cocodrilos de Matanzas were better than the Huracanes de Mayabeque (16-10), Henry Moyet supported the Cocodrilos from the pitching mound, José Noroña and Ariel Sánchez blew the fences.

At the José Antonio Huelga in Espiritu, the Gallos painted the Elefantes de Cienfuegos in white (2-0). Alex Guerra was the winner of the game, with Yunier Mendoza (2H) and Adrian Gómez (2H and 1CI).

On the other hand, the Tigres de Ciego de Avila overcame the Toros de Camagüey (10-4). Dachel Duquesne won and Osvaldo Vázquez homered.

The Indios de Guantánamo beat the Avispas santiagueras (9-6). The big man at bat was Luis Cremet (3H, 2HR, 3CI), Roilán Portuondo was victorious.

Finally, the Cachorros de Holguín hung on the arm of Wilson Paredes to defeat the Azucareros de Villa Clara (5-1). Juan Onofre stood out offensively with three hits and a home run.

Tomorrow these teams will meet again in the continuation of the main sporting spectacle in Cuba.

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