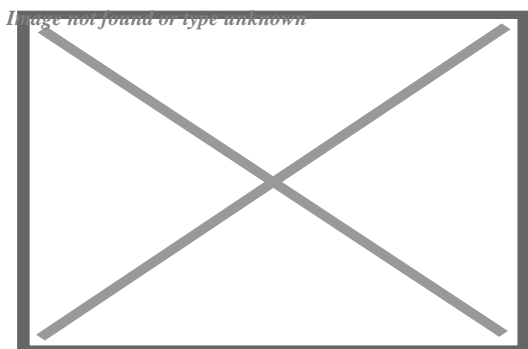


Cuba leaves without medals in Premier 12 baseball tournament



Cuba vs Japan

Taipei, Nov 17 (PL) Cuba lost today 6-7 to undefeated Japan at the Tianmu Baseball Stadium in Taipei and was left without medal options in the III Premier 12 baseball tournament, attended by the best-ranked countries in the world.

The team led by Armando Johnson could not prevail against the reigning champions and number one in the world ranking and, with one win and three losses, lost all hope of a place in the next round, with one game left in the group stage.

The samurai from the Land of the Rising Sun hit a total of eight hits to impose their favoritism, achieve their fourth success in as many outings and secure a place in the super round to be played in their country from the 20th to the 24th of this month, where Venezuela and the United States, qualified for the American group, await them.

From the second inning, when starter Raymond Figueroa struck out an opponent, hit another and allowed an infield single by designated player Keita Sano, Hirokazu Ibatana's team took the lead.

Two hits and a ticket decreed the explosion of the capital right-hander in the second act and if the Asians only scored one run it was due to the great rescue of Geonel Gutiérrez, who gave a couple of strikeouts to his opponents.

The left-hander conceded one in the fourth when he was hit by two rockets and another in the fifth on a hit by Shugo Maki on a delivery by his substitute Frank Luis Medina.

With Dario Sarduy on the mound the Japanese connected their third sacrifice fly of the game to bring home their fifth run and take a lead that seemed unreachable, but the Cubans staged a riot closing the second third of the game.

A three-run package, all on starter Takahita Hayakawa's account, produced the Antilleans thanks to a double by Yadir Drake (went 5-3 with a pair of runs) and back-to-back homers by Erisbel Arruebarrena and pinch-hitter Yoan Moncada.

The team's management put their ace Liván Moinelo (suffering from health problems) on the mound and he allowed an unarguable, hit a ball and gave away a couple of tickets, one of them with the angles congested, so that his opponents could take off again on the scoreboard.

In the so-called lucky chapter, a throwing error by reliever and winner Tatsuya Shimizu caused the doors to the plate to open twice and the Cuban troop equalized the actions, but the Samurai scored the definitive advantage in the eighth inning, dirty to the account of the defeated Moinelo due to a blunder by Arruebarrena and another sacrifice fly, this one by Ryoya Kurihara.

When it was time to pick up the bats, Cuba continued to fight and filled the pads with balls and singles by Alfredo Despaigne and Ariel Martinez, but closer Shoma Fujijira struck out Moncada and Andy Cosme to end the story.

The team from the largest Caribbean island will bid farewell to the tournament tomorrow with a game against the local Chinese Taipei, scheduled for 6:30 p.m. local time (5:30 a.m. in Cuba) at the Taipei Dome.

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