

Three Cubans start playoffs in Pacific League

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Tokyo, November 13 (RHC)-- Three Cuban baseball players -- Alfredo Despaigne, Yurisbel Gracial and Liván Moinelo -- will see action starting this Saturday at the start of the Pacific League playoffs in Japan Baseball, between the champion SoftBank Falcons and the Lotte Marinos.

Gracial, 35, had a remarkable season, hitting 71 hits in 69 games, including 22 extra-bases (12 doubles and 10 home runs). He also scored 35 runs and averaged 277, to once again help the Falcons lead the Pacific League by a wide margin (73-42).

Left-handed Moinelo, 24, was one of the tournament's best relievers with the Falcons, leading the hold point section with 40. In 48 innings pitched, he struck out 77 opponents and worked for a 1.69 clean run average per game.

For his part, in a season marked by injuries, the star Despaigne (34 years old) only played 25 games, in which he connected 19 hits, including 6 home runs, with 12 runs-batted-in -- his most discreet numbers

since he arrived seven years ago in professional baseball in Japan.

The other Cuban in the series, Leonys Martin, will not be able to play with the Marlins due to an injury, after a great season in which he hit 25 home runs and 15 doubles with 65 driven in 109 games.

Leonys, whose contract is independent from the Cuban Federation, suffers from an ankle injury and traveled to the United States to continue his treatment.

Lotte won 12-11-1 the private series between them during the regular season, but SoftBank won 7 of their last 8 games and arrives at the playoff in much better shape than their rival, who is also suffering from injuries and coronavirus infections.

The series will be a best of 5 games, but only 4 will be played at most because SoftBank will start with a victory advantage for being League champion. It will also have the advantage of playing all the games at home and advancing to the final in case of a draw.

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