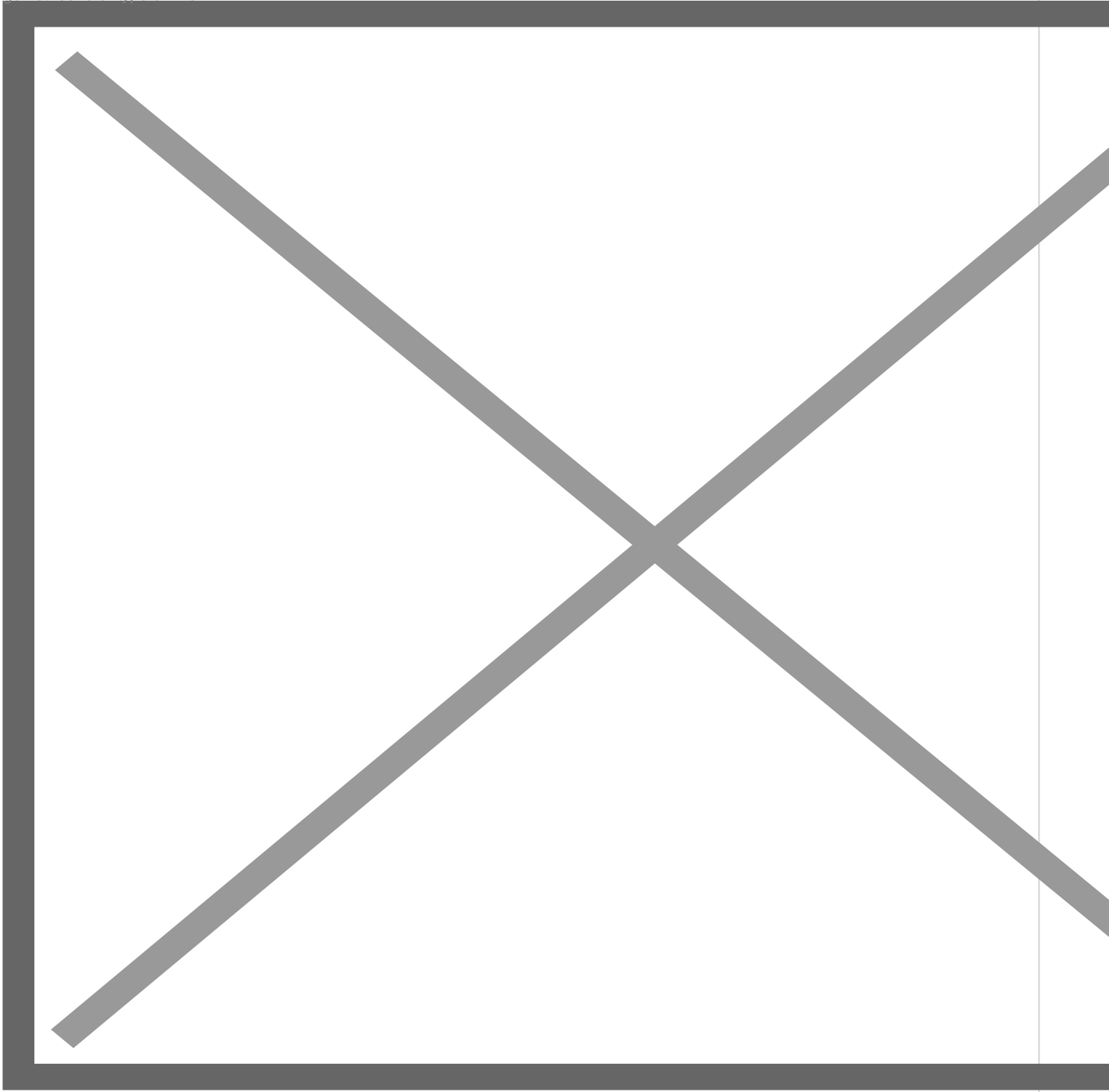


Granma strikes first in Cuban baseball finals

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Sancti Spíritus, March 29 (RHC)--The Alazanes de Granma beat the reigning champions Cocodrilos de Matanzas by a score of 3 to 2 and took the lead in the grand finale of the 60th Cuban National Baseball Series.

Hanging on the right arm of Lázaro Blanco, the team of mentor Carlos Martí chased away the demons of bewilderment after a somewhat hesitant start and exhibited that quality that led them to proclaim themselves in 2017 and 2018 as kings of the island between balls and strikes.

For the umpteenth time, Lazaro Blanco (5-0) looked immense in the box for eight full innings, with just two runs, four hits, three strikeouts and one ticket, to reach his fifth victory in the playoffs of the contest. Reliever Carlos Santana (1.0, 1K) added the save to his record.

With surgical precision against each opponent, the stellar pitcher accumulated 102 pitches and only accepted the homers of shortstop Yadil Mujica (4-1, 1CI, 1CA, 1HR) and second baseman Aníbal Medina (4-1, 1CI, 1CA, 1HR).

The left-handed flamethrower Yoanni Yera (8.0, 3C, 5H, 11K, 1BB) was a worthy opponent, who was stable over 90 miles and had his only slips in the fifth episode, when Alexquemer Sánchez hit a line drive, Roel Santos negotiated a base on balls and Osvaldo Abreu (4-1, 2CI, 1K) hit a three-run triple.

The Alazanes de Marti finished the afternoon with five hits, while the Cocodrilos of champion manager Armando Ferrer had a total of six, in a game without errors and excellent defensive actions.

Both teams will meet again on Monday, starting at 2:00 p.m. local time, at the Jose Antonio Huelga Stadium in the central province of Sancti Spíritus.

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