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La Paz, November 4 (JIT) -- Cuba will debut this Friday against host Mexico on the opening day of the Baja California del Sur 2022 Pan American Under-18 Baseball Championship.

The news emerged from a technical meeting that made official the absence of the Dominican Republic, regretted by all, and the consequent reduction to four teams in the qualifying group A, completed by Panama and Nicaragua.

For the B group, fortunately free of last-minute changes, the defending champion United States, Venezuela, Canada, Puerto Rico and Peru were confirmed.

In addition to the adjustments imposed by the non-arrival of the Dominicans, another novelty was added: the number of spots for the super round was reduced from six to four (two for each bracket).

This means that the definition of the quartet of World Cup places in dispute will be limited to the duels of the qualifying stage, with the next phase only destined to the distribution of medals.

In the midst of these variations, the Cuban coaching staff announced the left-handed pitcher from Cuba, Miguel Neira, who has done an excellent job in the national youth competition on the island, as the starter against the Aztecs' team.

"He is the pitcher who has been the best in the training sessions, with good work in the preparation stops," said to JIT the coach of that area, Adrian Argüelles, who highlighted the control demonstrated by the chosen one.

He said that this is in addition to his mastery of the breaks, something that is considered important in a category where the straights are usually less effective.

Argüelles acknowledged that the structure that will govern the competition brings greater significance to the initial clash, scheduled for 7:00 p.m. (local time) at the Arturo C. Nahl stadium.

Incidentally, he said that the Villaclarean Darío Sarduy could start in the role of reliever, with his fellow Cuban Erwing Cabrera called to close, and the remaining members of the roster ready for the task assigned to them.

The Cuban team arrived Thursday in La Paz, coming from the Mexican capital, and hours later covered its first training session at the park that will receive them this Friday, equipped with artificial turf and headquarters of Delfines de La Paz, of the Northern League of Mexico.

"Arriving at the venue means that we are already in combat, and in everyone's mind is the goal of fighting for the gold, so that the qualification for the world championship has a better taste," said director Severo Crespo.

On Saturday, the Cubans will travel a little more than 200 kilometers to Ciudad Constitución, scene of their clash with Panama (2:00 p.m.).

Contrary to the previous schedule, they will rest on Sunday, and on Monday they will face Nicaragua (5:00 p.m.), again in La Paz.

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