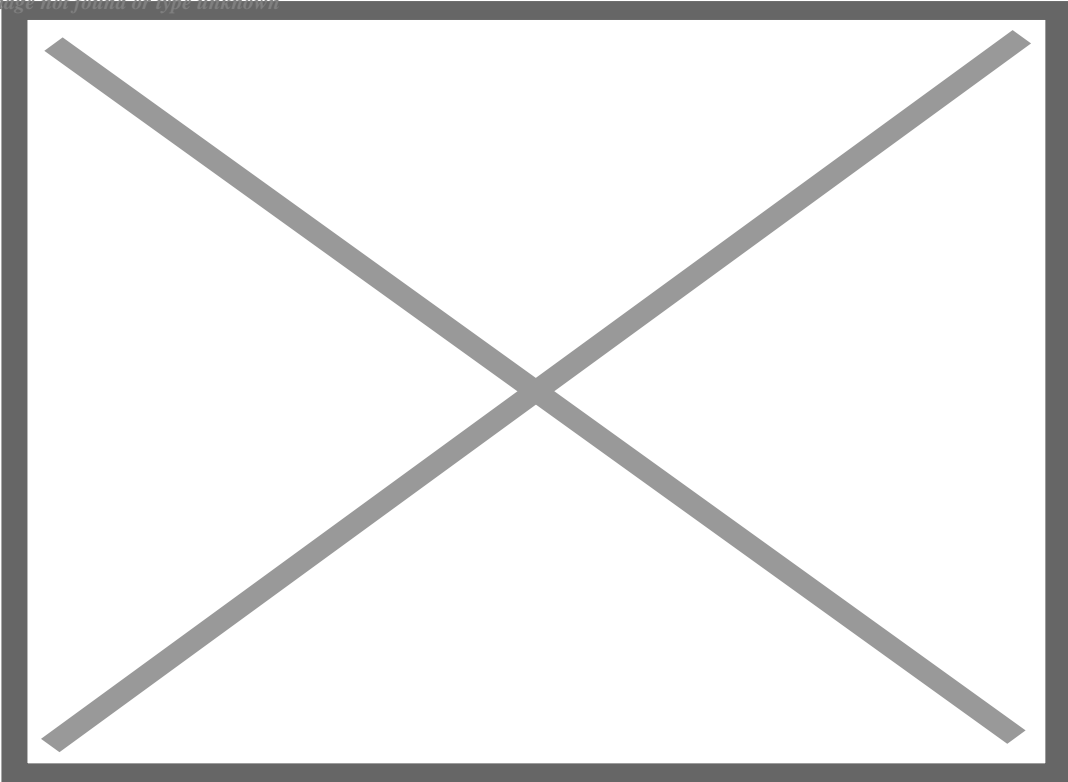


# *Classic Cuba defeats Chunichi Dragons*

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**Photo: Yuhki Ohboshi**

Havana, February 19 (RHC)- Luis Vicente Mateo dressed as a hero when he pushed Dayán García in the top of the ninth inning and Cuba defeated the Chunichi Dragons 3x2 in a challenge included in its preparation for the V World Baseball Classic.

Mateo celebrated his second hit in a duel that also saw the defense shine, and shortly after Franklyn Quintana closed the meritorious performance of his roster with a two-strikeout inning to earn a save.

"It was a hard-fought game, with good pitching on both sides, and we are satisfied with the way the boys responded", said mentor Armando Johnson, although he insisted that "now the objective is not to win at all costs, but to evaluate the process of getting in shape".

He explained that to this responds, for example, the use of pitchers, including the decision to appeal to Moinelo with the challenge leveled and not as a closer, and postpone the debut of Erisbel Arruebarruena after evaluating him until the last moment.

"What the technical staff is demanding is that everyone does their part, as it happened in the construction of our second run," he said.

Contrary to what happened on Friday, when they lost 2 x 11 to the Nippon Ham Fighters, the Antilleans took the lead from the first inning when Yoelkis Guibert hit a double and Alfredo Despaigne drove him in with a single against Hiroshi Suzuki.

Carlos Juan Viera was a good starter, who was successful in three innings. Then, Liván Moinelo did his homework in the fourth and gave way to Marlon Vega, to whose account the two scores of the locals were registered in the sixth, with a pair of hits and a similar number of transfers.

The Cuban equalizer came in the next act. With Hiroto Mori on the mound, Yadir Drake hit a homer, Dayán advanced and Ariel Martínez sent him to the plate with a sacrifice fly.

Naykel Cruz had put out the fire as Marlon's replacement and went through without problems until the mission was left in the hands of Quintana, who hung the last zero after the tiebreaker signed by Mateo at the expense of Kento Fujishima.

"Grateful for the confidence of the management, which gave me the possibility to go out in a difficult situation," commented Naykel, owner of the credit in reward for a work underpinned by the control that allowed him not to give ticket.

"I stayed focused and I am very happy with having contributed to this victory," he emphasized about a clash in which Guibert batted 4-2 and showed his well-known level as a patrolman, and Ariel thwarted two of the three steal attempts faced.

Cuba: 3-9-1

Dragons: 2-6-0

Wins: Naykel Cruz

Lost: Kento Fujishima

Saved: Franklyn Quintana

CUBA AT BAT

Roel Santos (cf) 4-1

Yoelkis Guibert (rf) 4-2. A double

Yurisbel Gracial (3b) 3-0

Alfredo Despaigne (db) 4-1. One RBI

Yadir Drake (1b) 3-1. A double

Dayán García (2b) 4-1

Ariel Martínez (r) 2-0. One RBI

Guillermo García (lf) 3-1.

Luis Vicente Mateo (ss) 4-2. One RBI

Andrys Perez (for Ariel) 1-0

Yadil Mujica (for Guillermo) 1 base on ball

#### CUBA. PITCHERS

Carlos Juan Viera (3.0) 3 H, 2 K

Liván Moinelo (1.0) 1 BB

Marlon Vega (1.1) 2 C, 2 H, 3 BB

Naykel Cruz (2.2) 1 K

Franklyn Quintana (1.0) 1 H, 2 K

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