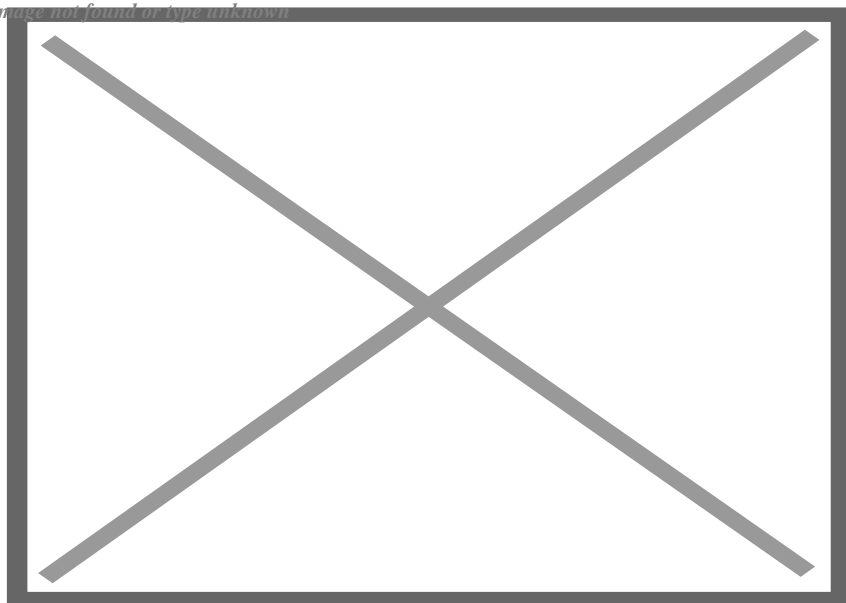


Jose Ramon Rodriguez to open this Tuesday for Cuba del Clasico

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Jose Ramon Rodriguez

Okinawa, February 20 (JIT) - Jose Ramon Rodriguez will make a dream come true when he opens this Tuesday against Golondrinas de Yakult in the third of the games scheduled by Cuba in Okinawa in preparation for the V World Baseball Classic.

The right-hander from Camagüey will take on a challenge that eluded him when a lumbar discomfort in the lumbar region prevented him from doing so against Nippon Ham Fighters, 11x2 defeat of Cuba in a duel played on Friday.

"It was a slight injury, from which I recovered in two days, without stopping training, but the teachers wanted to preserve me," said the boy who totaled 13 hits and five slips between the 61st National Baseball Series (11-3) and the I Elite League of Cuban Baseball (2-2).

"I feel in perfect shape to do the job," emphasized Rodriguez, happy with the way his teammates shook off a setback to take Sunday's 3x2 joy over Chunichi Dragons.

For his part, coach Pedro Luis Lazo explained that the planning for the match against the champion of the Japanese Central League also includes Raidel Martínez, Frank Abel Álvarez, Javier Mirabal and Yeudis Reyes.

Asked about Raidel, a natural closer, the strategist explained that he will be the first reliever taking into account that traditionally games of this type tend to remain level in their opening segment.

"That is the situation in which they will come out during the event, to fulfill the function of preserving advantages or prevent the opponent from opening the scoreboard, and hence the decision not to leave them for the end of these games," he said.

The bid against Golondrinas de Yakult will be the penultimate game of the Caribbean team in Okinawa, where a day later they will play against the Yomiuri Giants.

After that game, the team will travel to Miyazaki, where it will face SoftBank Falcons on the following day, which, according to Lazo, could host performances by Elián Leyva and Onelki García.

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