

Elián Leyva is starter on Thursday against Taiwan's Cooperative Bank

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Cuban Elian Leyva

Havana, March 1 (RHC) - Right-hander Elian Leyva has been announced as the starter for Team Cuba this Thursday (Wednesday night on the island) against Taiwan's Cooperative Bank club, in the team's

ninth practice game in Asia in preparation for the V World Baseball Classic.

Leyva, 33 years old and star of Mexico's Naranjeros de Hermosillo, has already had one start in the Asian tour, when he allowed three runs in two innings against the multi-champion SoftBank Falcons of the Japan Professional League (NPB), which won 5-2, on the 23rd.

The designation of Leyva, signed for the next season in Taiwan, was made by the Cuban Baseball Federation on its official Twitter account.

It was also announced that major leaguers Yoán Moncada and Luis Robert, from the Chicago White Sox and stars of Team Cuba to the Classic, will travel this Thursday, March 2, to Taiwan to join Team Cuba.

After Wednesday's break (Tuesday in Cuba), the team prepares for the last three games in Taiwan, Thursday's game against the Cooperative Bank club, and then two more in Taichung, site of the first round of the Classic.

In its most recent presentation, Team Cuba beat the Wei Chuan Dragons 4-0, with solid pitching led by Yariel Rodríguez, and home runs by Alfredo Despaigne and Erisbel Arruebarrena.

The win went to right-hander Rodríguez, whose deliveries reached 98 miles. Also working were left-handers Onelki García and Yoenni Yera, and right-hander Raidel Martínez, who got a save with four outs on the strength of some very fast pitches.

Team Cuba now has 3 wins and 5 losses in its tour of Asia.

Cuba is in Group A of the Classic along with Panama, Italy, host Taiwan and the Netherlands, its first opponent on March 8.

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