

Team Cuba trains in Tokyo ahead of do-or-die clash in World Classic

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Team Cuba baseball team

Havana, March 14 (RHC) - The Cuban national team trained on Tuesday at the majestic Tokyo Dome ahead of Wednesday's do-or-die game against Australia in the quarterfinals of the 5th World Baseball Classic.

The Cubans arrived on Tuesday from Taipei, where they made a historic comeback to reach the second round after leading Group A with a 2-2 record.

Pitching coach Pedro Luis Lazo announced that behind starter Yariel Rodriguez, announced the day before, he will have the entire staff ready.

"Cuba is going all out, we are not going to think about the Miami game, first we have to win tomorrow's game," said Lazo in statements to Prensa Latina in Tokyo.

"Yariel is one of the best pitchers we have, we always decided that he would be the starter and we are going to keep him that way," he added.

Lazo, one of the heroes of Cuba's runner-up in the First Classic (2006), said he was "very satisfied" with the pitching performance and said that behind Yariel will be ready to work left-handers Roenis Elías, Onelkis García and Liván Moinelo, as well as right-handers Miguel Romero and Raidel Martínez.

After arriving in the Japanese capital, it was learned that major leaguer Andy Ibáñez, injured in one of his fingers, will travel this Wednesday to the United States, as determined by the Detroit Tigers, to undergo a medical evaluation. It is not discarded that the infielder could be incorporated in the final phase in Miami, if the Cuban team qualifies.

The Cuba-Australia quarterfinal will be a rematch. It will be the third time that both teams face each other in the world's top baseball tournament.

The Cuban team has won the two previous occasions in hard-fought battles defined by a one-run margin.

In the second edition (2009), at Mexico's Foro Sol, Team Cuba won 5-4, with home runs by Yoenis Céspedes and the decisive one by Yosvani Peraza.

The second time they met was in the fourth edition (2017) and Cuba again took the win 4-3 at the Tokyo Dome, with key home run by Alfredo Despaigne, the current captain of the team in this fifth edition.

In Monday's games, Puerto Rico knocked out Israel 10-0 with a perfect game, the first in the history of the classics, the reigning champion United States defeated Canada 12-1 by KO in seven innings, Dominican Republic overcame Nicaragua 6-1, Great Britain defeated Colombia 6-5, and Korea defeated China 22-2.

On Tuesday, Venezuela-Nicaragua, Colombia-Canada, Dominican Republic-Israel and Mexico-Great Britain will play.

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