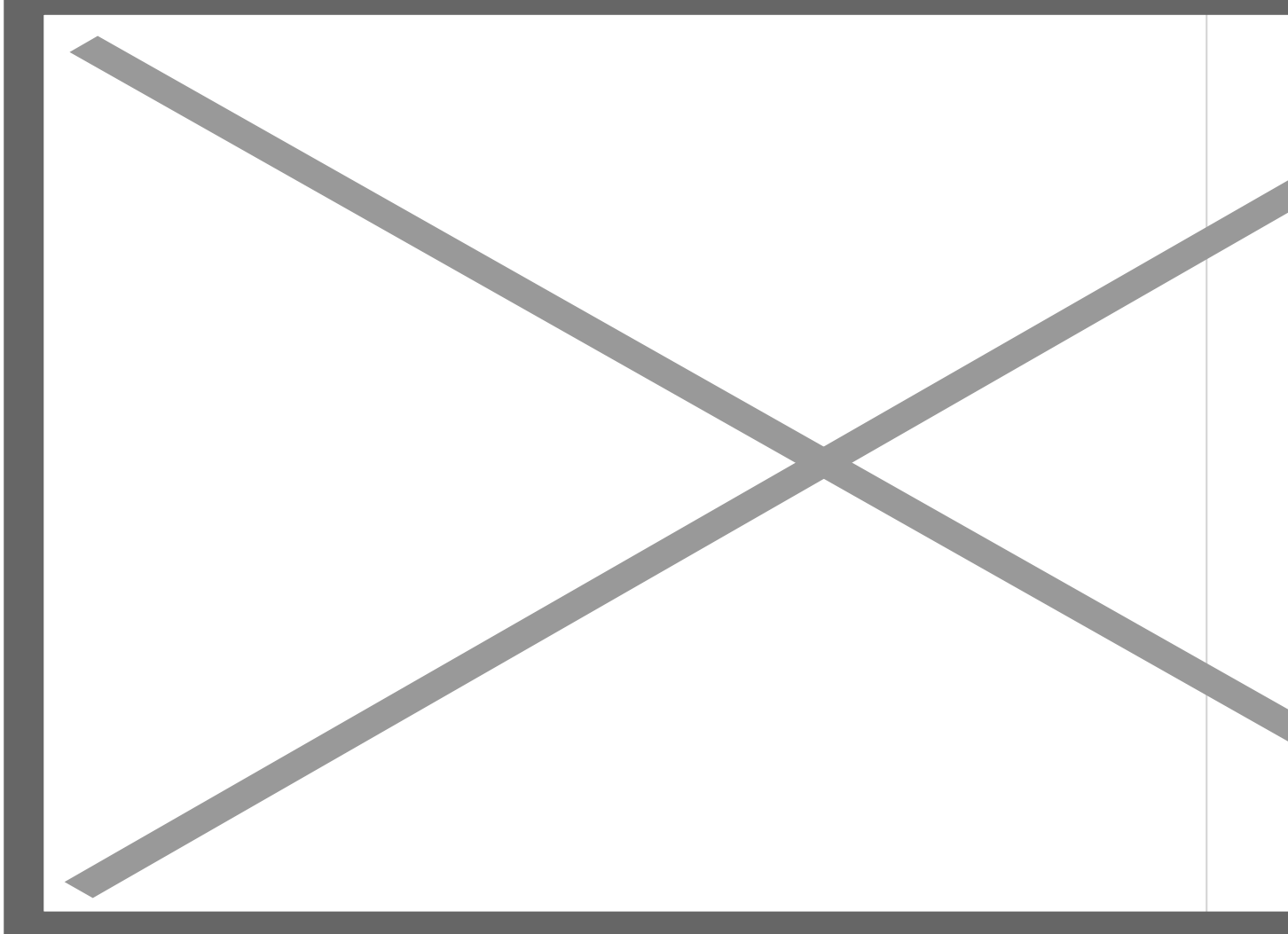


Cuba first semifinalist of the Classic after beating Australia in a great game

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Robert scores Cuba's fourth run

Havana, March 15 (RHC)-- The Cuban baseball team became the first semifinalist of the V World Baseball Classic after defeating Australia 4-3 in a quarterfinal game played at the majestic Tokyo Dome.

It was another tense encounter from start to finish, in which both teams appealed to the best of their pitching and the two mentors to tactical play.

The Australians were the first to score when they scored one against starter Yariel Rodriguez, who was hit by Darryl George with a double, a single and a towering hit by Rixon Wingrove.

In the third, the Cubans equalized the actions with a ticket to Roel Santos, a double by Yoan Moncada and a run through the box by Luis Robert, and took advantage in the fifth with a decisive cluster of three.

The lead-off man Roel Santos opened the inning by receiving a ball, Moncada got a ticket, Luis Robert another ball, Alfredo Despaigne brought in the first with a sacrifice fly, Arrebarrena hit a hit and Yoelkis Guibert brought in two more with a cannonball to right field to make the score 4-1.

Australia pulled two back with Wingrove's home run with one on base in the sixth against left-hander Roennis Elías, but Cuba's pitching managed to dominate the last innings, with a great closing by their Japanese League signings Liván Moinelo and Raidel Martínez.

Also a great reliever was right-hander Miguel Romero, who replaced starter Yariel Rodriguez and got the win.

Romero worked 1.2 innings, allowed no runs, allowed one hit, with two strikeouts.

Moinelo and Raidel worked eighth and ninth to preserve the minimal lead.

"It's a pride for me and for the team to take this step and go ahead and go to Miami. We came to win and although people never thought we would get this far after the two initial losses, we came to give our best," said third baseman Yoan Moncada (Chicago White Sox), one of the stars of Team Cuba.

Mentor Armando Johnson thanked everyone involved in the team's preparation and acknowledged that he was living the happiest moment of his career.

"These guys have brought tears to my eyes. A team that has been questioned all the time, that lost the first two games and recovered and we are already in the last phase in the United States. We all made it together," Johnson told Cuban radio, visibly moved.

This is the third time that Team Cuba has beaten Australia in as many games in the history of the World Classic, always by a one-run margin. In 2009 they won 4-3 with Yosvany Peraza's decisive home run and in 2017 with a 5-4 slate by Alfredo Despaigne's home run.

Now the Cuban ninth team will travel this Wednesday to Miami, United States, where it will play the semifinal round.

Australia 3 5 0

Cuba 4 7 1

G. Miguel Romero

P. Joshua Guyer

JS. Raidel Martinez

HR. Rixon Gingrove

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