

Seven teams seek to secure playoff tickets in Cuban baseball

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Havana, June 7 (PL) - With two sub-series remaining plus 29 suspended or sealed games, the standings of the Cuban baseball championship are fractured today into two groups in full dispute to advance to the playoffs.

The last but one sub-series concluded on Tuesday left seven teams in a better position to advance to the post-season, while a great rivalry is expected for the eighth place, the last one that grants a ticket to the discussion of the title.

In one of the most evenly matched of the 62 editions celebrated in the history of the national series, there are 14 teams with real options of advancing beyond the preliminary phase, but half of them currently set their sights on the middle of the order.

Although nothing has been decided yet, the balance of nine wins in their last ten games places the leader of Las Tunas in a privileged situation in order to animate the quarterfinals again.

Their win in the closing match against Pinar del Río combined with two losses by Santiago de Cuba to climb to the top of the tournament on the basis of the best win-loss average.

Despite yesterday's pair of defeats against La Isla, the Wasps also have an advantage that seems irreversible with respect to the group that shares eighth to fourteenth place.

In the leading group are also the teams of Matanzas, Artemisa, Mayabeque, Sancti Spíritus and Industriales, of which the latter has been the most stable in the finals with a balance of 8-2.

Starting with the three-time champion Ciego de Avila, momentarily in eighth place, there are seven teams whose difference between the extremes is only three points.

As in soccer, the strategies are focused on the "midfield" where the hopes of Holguín, Villa Clara, Granma, Pinar del Río, the Island and Camagüey are being decided, since Cienfuegos and Guantánamo have already dropped out of the rest.

It is almost certain that when the dates foreseen for the qualifying calendar are completed, there are still places to be defined, although the matches that will begin tomorrow can contribute to further clarify the panorama, especially those that face direct rivals for the quotas.

The schedule foresees Holguín's visit to Pinar del Río, Villa Clara will travel to Isla de la Juventud, Camagüey will host Artemisa and Industriales will go to Mayabeque.

Completing the fourteenth subseries are the clashes between Las Tunas-Matanzas, Granma-Sancti Spíritus, Santiago de Cuba-Ciego de Ávila and Guantánamo-Cienfuegos, always at the home of the second-ranked teams.

Las Tunas (35-25) leads the standings, followed by Santiago de Cuba (37-27), Matanzas (35-27), Artemisa (33-27), Mayabeque (34-29), Sancti Spíritus (33-29), Industriales (34-30) and Ciego de Ávila (30-29) to close the ranking.

Then come Holguín (31-31), Villa Clara (31-32), Granma (30-32), Pinar del Río (29-31), La Isla (28-31), Camagüey (27-32), Cienfuegos (23-39) and Guantánamo (21-39).

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