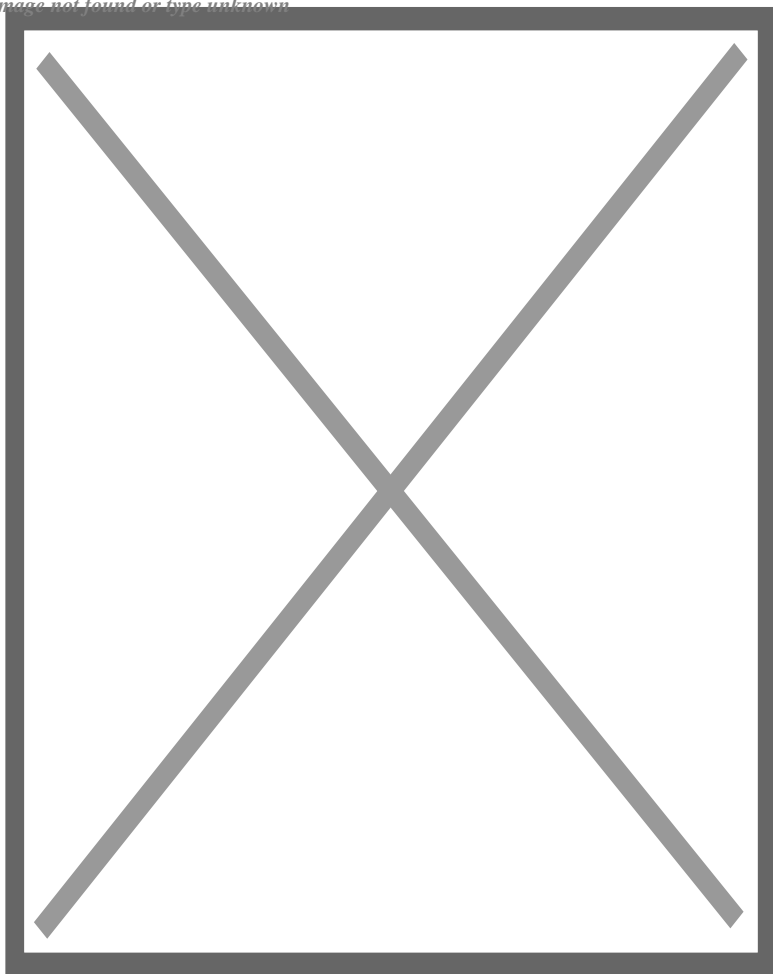


Avispas force seventh game in Cuban baseball semifinals

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Havana, August 1 (PL) -- The Avispas de Santiago de Cuba beat the Leones de Industriales 8-1 on Monday and forced the seventh and final game in the semifinal of the Caribbean island's baseball tournament.

In front of a crowd that packed the Guillermon Moncada stadium, located in the second most important city of the country, the team from Santiago decided the game in the first inning with a five-run package.

After two outs, from the third to the ninth at bat, the team was able to score five runs against starter Silvano Hechavarría (0.2 IP, 5CL, 3H, 2BB) and first baseman Remberto Barreto.

Such an advantage accommodated the work of Olympian Danny Betancourt (5.0 IP, 4H, 3K and 1BB), who signed his second hit in the final to even the playoff at three wins apiece.

Unlike the first two games of the semifinal held in this same city, the host team played without pressure, more tight on defense and very timely with the wood.

The Leones, besides being manhandled by Betancourt, were also unable to decipher the pitching of Osvaldo Acuña (2.0 IP, 1H, 3K) and Yosiel Serrano (2.0 IP, 3H, 1K and 1BB).

At bat, Osday Silva, Erick Serrano and Orelly Ribeaux each towed two runs, while Yoelquis Guibert and Carlos Monier also had a pair of hits.

Today both teams will play at 18:00, local time, the game that will decide the rival of Las Tunas in the grand final of the Cuban baseball championship with a possible duel between Raymond Figueredo (IND) and Alberto Bisset (SCU), announced by their respective mentors.

Santiago de Cuba is inspired after a pair of victories after being on the verge of losing the semifinal and also many remember the history lived in the final of the 1999 tournament when the Avispas reached the sixth game with a 2-3 disadvantage and won both games to leave the silver medal to the Leones.

In favor of the Azules is the statistic that only six times in Cuban playoff tournaments they have come back from 1-3 in best-of-seven games.

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