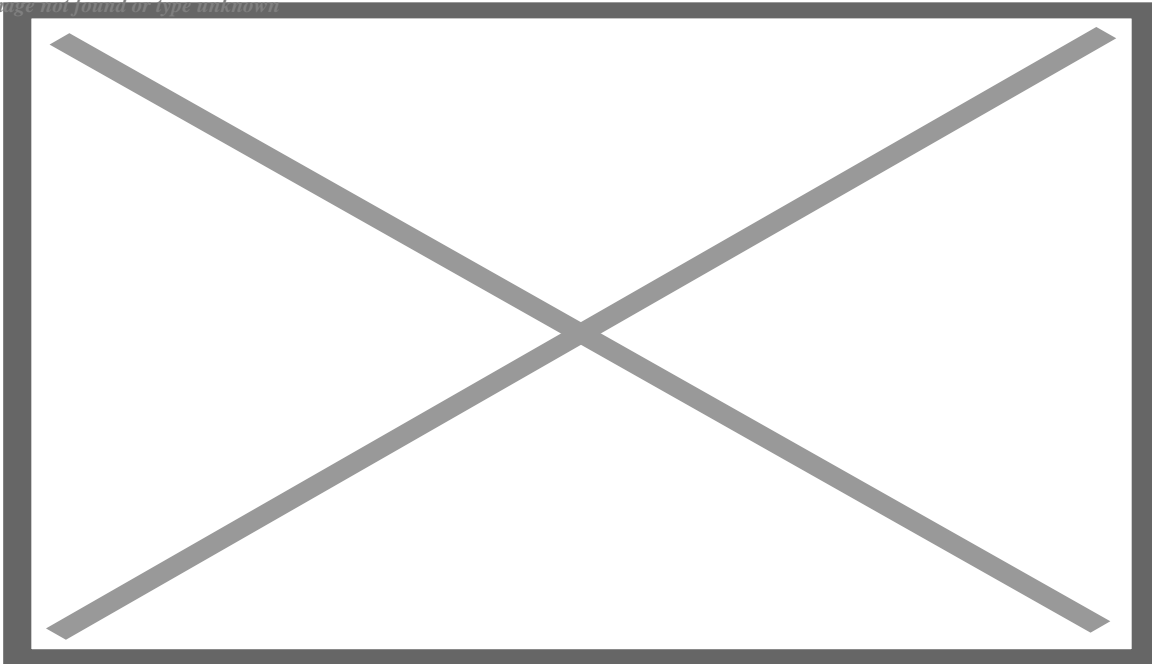


Ariel Martinez returns to excel in Japanese baseball

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Havana, August 26 (RHC) - Cuban Ariel Martinez hit 2 hits in 4 innings and drove in 2 runs on Saturday to contribute to the Nippon Ham Fighters' 7-0 victory over the Seibu Lions in the Japanese Professional Baseball League.

Martinez, who had not seen action in the two previous games, raised his average to .259 and his total of runs batted in to 57, a figure that consolidates him in third place in that category among Latin players.

In another game of the day, the Chunichi Dragons lost 2-0 to the DeNA Stars, in a game in which Cuban Raidel Martínez struck out an opponent and gave up a run. In addition, the giant from Pinar del Río did not give up any hits or runs in one inning of relief to leave his effectiveness at an excellent 0.24.

The Puerto Rican Neftalí Soto had 2 hits in 6 visits to the plate and towed a run to contribute to the triumph of the DeNA Stars.

Meanwhile, Cuban veteran Alfredo Despaigne struck out one inning in the SoftBank Falcons' 2-1 loss to the Rakuten Eagles.

And in Japan's minor league, Cuba's Guillermo Garcia hit two home runs Saturday in a game between his club, the Chunichi Dragons, and the Orix Buffaloes.

Garcia has undergone rigorous training for a year to overcome the challenges, according to Japanese journalists.

His efforts have paid off, and Dragons fans have high expectations for Garcia and expect him to hit several home runs next year.

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