

Unprecedented: Hall of Famer invited to pitch first ball in Cuban baseball game

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Havana, January 10 (RHC) - In an unprecedented event, Cooperstown Hall of Famer, Cuban Tony Oliva, has been invited to throw out the first pitch at a Cuban National Series baseball game. The event is scheduled for this Wednesday at Havana's Latin American Stadium, prior to the Artemisa-Industriales clash of the country's II Elite League.

The 85-year-old Oliva has been in Cuba for a few days on a family visit and upon his arrival on the island he was greeted by the president of the Cuban Baseball Federation, Juan Reinaldo Pérez.

A native of Pinar del Rio (Cuba's westernmost province), Oliva was exalted in 2021 to the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame, after a long and unfair wait.

He had a brilliant 17-season career in the Big League with the Minnesota Twins, a team with which he won three batting crowns (1964, '65 and '71). He also participated in eight All-Star Games and was Rookie of the Year in 1964.

A few days ago, Oliva was the guest of honor at the club of writer and journalist Juan Antonio Martínez de Osaba, in his native Pinar del Río and the star delighted those present with anecdotes about his arrival in the Major Leagues, his inclusion in the Hall of Fame and also spoke about Cuban baseball today.

According to the Playoffmagazine website, he was accompanied by other Cuban and Pinar del Rio baseball glories such as his brother Juan Carlos Oliva, Luis Giraldo Casanova and Rogelio García, and pitching coach José Manuel Cortina.

If the event takes place, it would be the first time that a Cuban baseball player who emigrated and later triumphed in the Major Leagues participates in a first pitch ceremony in a Cuban championship game.

In March 2016, Luis Tiant, also a former Major League Baseball star, was the protagonist of a first pitch ceremony, but in an exhibition game between Tampa Bay and Team Cuba, at the Latin American Stadium, which was witnessed by then Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro.

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