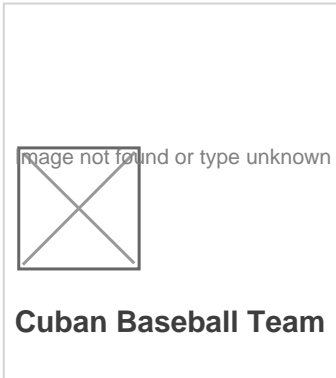


Cuba's mark in Premier 12 tournaments



Havana, Sept 24 (PL) - A part of the 60 players called up for the Cuban pre-selection continues preparing to integrate the team into the third edition of the Premier 12 tournament.

The event, which brings together the top-ranked countries in the world, is the most important sponsored by the World Baseball and Softball Confederation (WBSC), and in the two previous versions, the largest Caribbean island left bittersweet flavors.

With a sixth-place finish in 2015, the Antilleans were not far from expectations and although they did not convince most of their demanding fans, the performance was decent considering the quality of their opponents.

After falling in their debut against Canada with a 1-5 score, the team led by Victor Mesa beat the Netherlands (6-5) and Puerto Rico (8-7) in close matches before succumbing to China Taipei (1-4).

A win against Italy in another hard-fought match that ended 2-1 gave them a ticket to the quarterfinals, where they were eliminated 7-2 by eventual champion South Korea.

The debacle came four years later in the second version (2019) when the Cubans, on that occasion under the orders of Miguel Borroto, finished in tenth place.

There they achieved a win in the group stage against Australia with a score of 3-2, but were defeated again by Canada (3-0) and South Korea (7-0) and could not advance to the super round.

Without scoring runs against those two teams and with an average in the tournament of only .163, without being able to connect even a hit, the Cuban team did not leave a good image in Asian lands.

Starting on November 13, the Cuban team will face the challenge again to improve, especially that last performance, although it was placed in a strong group along with the Dominican Republic, Australia, South Korea, Japan (reigning champion), and the Taiwanese hosts.

Among the extensive pre-selection of 60 players, there are only four who have participated in the two previous editions. They are pitchers Liván Moinelo and Yoanni Yera, outfielder Alfredo Despaigne, and catcher Yosvani Alarcón.

Moinelo, who is now the main starter of the team, accumulated 11 innings pitched as a reliever, where he allowed eight hits and four clean runs, struck out 14, and conceded five bases on balls.

Yera accumulated five innings of work with six hits, two runs scored, four runs batted in, and a pair of tickets. Five years ago he only faced one batter and allowed one hit.

Despaigne, 12-2 in 2019, has an offensive average of .228 with one homer and four RBIs, and Alarcón, 10-1 in the last edition, is batting .290 thanks to his good performance in 2015.

Within the roster, five other players have at least one participation in this tournament, among them Danny Betancourt, who in 2015 worked a couple of episodes with an equal amount of runs accepted.

In 2019, pitcher Raidel Martínez, the leader in games saved this season in the Japanese League with 42, barely pitched an inning, and although he did not score thanks to three strikeouts, he allowed a single and struck out two opponents.

Rounding out the possible relievers are bullpen Erisbel Arruebarrena (12-1), starter William Saavedra (1-0), and outfielder Roel Santos (11-3).

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