
Requiem for the slugger from Bejucal

23/12/2017



As Maradona made millions of dwarves play all over the world, convinced that height was not an obstacle to shine in soccer, Romelio Martínez (bridging distances) encouraged hundreds of “fatties” to fight against old schemes to grab a place in Cuban baseball.

Defying any archetype of the ideal ballplayer, the slugger of Bejucal stripped baseballs as if they were oranges and was for me the best natural designated hitter in the history of Cuban baseball. Others, like Kindelan, had assumed that turn, but circumstantially, as Romelio himself covered left field every now and then.

In barely 13 National Series (let’s remember he was another of the victims of the “early collective retirement”) he hit 370 home runs and is fourth in the historical list, alongside the first, who broke the 300 barrier, Antonio Muñoz.

But “Fatty” accomplished it with the best frequency when it comes to sending the ball beyond the limits of the field (one homer every 12.84 official appearances) and also owns the best Power Factor (which measures the total number of bases per hit) with 2.01.

Those stats speak for themselves, but in addition, Romelio is also among the first Cuban ballplayers in walk percentage, clear indicator of the respect he inspired.

His overdimensioned average played dirty tricks on him more than once, affected his slugging and kept him out of Cuban pre-selections. Even, when he made up the Cuba national baseball team, by dint of his long-ball hitting, some wanted him to lose kilograms.

However, numbers alone cannot gather the greatness of a player who was also an example in and out of the fields, even after his retirement, and whose big hits disappeared on the horizon. I remember once at Nelson Fernandez ballpark, when one of his long homers disappeared over the fences, and later some commented that it fell on a table where some people were playing dominoes, tens of meters from the stadium's fence.

That's why; the slugger from Bejucal cannot be out of my ideal team of the National Series.

Translated by Jorge Mesa Benjamin / Cubasi Translation Staff
