
Javier Méndez: The Exception to the Rule

By: Lemay Padrón Oliveros / Special for CubaSi
30/04/2020



What are the odds for someone born in a fishing village, with no sports background in his family, to end up being one of the best centerfielders of Cuban baseball?

The exception to the rule, in this case, is Javier Méndez, who on April 22nd turned 56 years old, surely on an atypical birthday due to the pandemic.

But the exceptional nature of the player goes further, since his greatest display of coolness and going against rules was his peculiar way of fielding. All drills show that it must be done with both hands to avoid mistakes, but Javier not only did it with one, but even swung his glove, with accuracy of where the ball would be at the right time to catch it with his glove.

He doesn't know how to rig a hook, a major sin for someone born in Santa Fe, but he persisted until he wore the uniform of the Youth Cuba team despite not going through the sports academy (he was not accepted when he tried). And we are not speaking about any national team: but probably the best team of that age ever gathered in Cuba. If you don't believe it, take a look at these names: Omar Linares, Antonio Pacheco, Orestes Kindelán, Lázaro Vargas, Jorge García, René Arocha, Pablo Miguel Abréu, Osvaldo Fernández, Osvaldo Duvergel, Faustino Corrales and of course Javier Mendez.

With the Cuba senior team he wasn't that lucky, mainly because of injuries and the quality of the starter players at the time, and partly also because some unfairness, those that left him with the sour taste of not being an Olympic champion.

He joined his beloved Industriales team when they were at their best: that homer of Marquetti, although he also had a blasting year in his retirement back in 2003, one of his best seasons both individually and with the team.

About that, there's another moment that marks his exceptionality, and it was the fact of not accepting that massive retirement that took place in the late 90's. Luckily for Cuba and for the baseball of the Cuban capital.

He came back to coach Industriales ten without much luck, but it seems to us that this is not a closed chapter.

Amilkal Labañino / Cubasi Translation Staff
