
Andy Rodríguez: “The adrenaline of reaching when heat is on motivates me”

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He has become one of the safest firemen of Industriales and the national pre-teams, notwithstanding that in the playoffs of the 59th National Baseball Series his job was not very good at all. We're talking about Andy Rodríguez, a willowy 22-year-old pitcher from the Cuban capital, who's preparing himself to face the U-23 Baseball World Cup in Honduras and Nicaragua.

In the team's headquarters at the Latinoamericano stadium, CubaSí could exchange with the fast blue closer.

We've always talked about pitching specialization, with more force since almost a decade ago, but we haven't raised full awareness here yet. However, if a pitcher has well defined roles in that sense, it's you. How do you prepare yourself for that role?

I've always considered that training is fundamental. The game is similar to it, and if you try your hardest in training, then things work out well in the games; even more when you know how to use your resources and are focused on doing your job.... That has helped me at the time of going out to pitch in those tense times.

There's a lot of difference with regard to last season's Andy. What has Andy incorporated and what does that growth respond to?

I think that perseverance in every practice session has given me that. I strive and have

managed to grow with the help of my teachers and the rest of the staff. Whenever I go out I try to do things better than the previous day. I feel very well physically, with priority in running to constantly improve my warm-up.

As a strong point I have my fastball, over 92 mph. I am trying to add other pitches to my repertoire like the mastery of the changeup and the two-seam or four-seam fastball... They're essential and help me solve situations, dominate hitters and widen my technical-tactical thinking with an eye on the games, although I still have to gain a lot in both distribution and selection of my commands.

Do you only depend on speed? It happens that most closers rely on their fastball.

I think so, although I acknowledge that sometimes I've used it too much, and it is when rivals have batted my pitches better. That's why, the need to incorporate those pitches, which I've been working on.

Above all, for the fact that I'm a pitcher whose launch angle, almost entirely, is above the arm.

I see you've gained lean muscle. Did you prioritize physical work with an eye on the 59th Series?

Yes, I did, physique is important. When you're tall, gaining lean muscle almost always turns into increasing speed by 1 or 2 miles. That's just happened to me. Now, I do not find it very hard to keep my fastball above 92 mph. In addition, I feel better on the mound, just in case my relief prologs for more than one or two innings.

Pitchers who you have watched closely and mostly in your short sports career?

I rely a lot on the mates that I've had in the national pre-team, mainly to develop my technical-tactical thinking based on their experience. Those are the cases of Lázaro Blanco and Freddy Asiel Álvarez. Thanks to that observation and advices I've been able to achieve important things and make Cuba team in a very short time.

The most difficult hitters?

I don't go onto the box thinking about a complicated hitter. I do not watch them that way. We're at the same level on the field. I'm going to try hard to dominate them and they do the same on the batter's box to get a hit. I try to get outs continuously. When the game is hotter motivates me to go out....

What are your expectations from both the U-23 pre-team and the senior pre-team that will face up the Americas Baseball Olympic Qualifier in Arizona?

Expectations are very high. In the U-23 there are many talented boys who are very eager to do everything well for the people, in addition to some who want to strive hard seeking to make up the big team later.

The other pre-team has many stars, baseball players who have played in several levels, with endorsements from many tournaments... I think they're bracing themselves well and will reach the event in good shape. Batting will be essential in that tournament.

We all want to give the people the joy they've deserved so long ago.

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