
Caribbean Series: Pinar, Yes, and so does Cuba

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The Cuban baseball series will stop for third and last time in a week. There are few changes in the standings and everyone is expecting the list of players Alfonso Urquiola will add to his team. Pinar del Rio baseball team will participate from February 2nd-8th in the Caribbean Series, to be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Lots of buzz has raised the composition of the team, which has two main goals: to play better than Villa Clara did last year, and fight for the win. Are they high-flying goals? Of course, they are. But our baseball and our team cannot pretend less.

Let's be clear about one thing: the rules of the event allow every team to substitute an entire team if necessary. Players eligible to substitute the ones already in the roster must have played in the league this season.

We should put aside the idea that the Caribbean Series is an "incentive journey" to the champion team in Cuba. Our baseball has some handicaps. Finding good, experienced players to play on regular basis are becoming tougher than expected.

However, I strongly believe 13 or 14 baseball Pinar del Rio players can play at that level in Puerto Rico. Some of them can even be part of the starting line-up. I am talking about Yosvany Peraza, William Saavedra, Donal Duarte, Luis Alberto Valdés, David Castillo, Osniel Madera Yosvani Torres, Vladimir Gutiérrez, Erlis Casanova, Vladimir Baños, Giorvis Duvergél, Roel Santos, and Vladimir García.

We should reiterate a confusing idea for fans. Other teams have not the same concept for strengthening the team as we have in Cuba. Several players are substituted because they have contractual duties in other leagues, or personal reasons that impede them to play. That is to say, managers call other players to fill the holes left by those who cannot play for one of those reasons.

In Cuba, we do try to add players to improve our teams in pitching, offense, and defense. Thus, Pinar del Rio could add two catchers: Yosvany Alarcon, Frank Camilo Morejon or Yolexis La Rosa; some infielders like Yulieski and Lourdes Gurriel, Luis Yander La O, Alexander Malleta; power bats like Alfredo Despaigne, Alexei Bell, Yadiel Hernandez, and Cepeda as well as efficient pitchers such as Norge Luis Ruiz, Freddy Asiel Alvarez, Cionel Perez, Yoanni Year, Ismel Jimenez, and Miguel Lahera.

This January 23rd we will know the final roster. Urquiola is a proven winner. He will defend his teammates, but he will also add quality to his roster to play solid baseball in San Juan. We warn that a gold medal is not a sign of good health of Cuban baseball, but the result of an excellent strategy.

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