
Applause for the Leñadores

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We've been waiting for success from Cuban teams in international tournaments for some time, and the truth is that they elude us, but sometimes we can't ask for much more.

This was the case for the Leñadores in the second Baseball Champions League in the Americas, held in Mexico, where they put in a very decent performance despite not returning home with the title.

They beat all the teams at their level, but to be fair, the home team Diablos Rojos had by far the best roster in the competition, and they proved it by finishing undefeated.

Despite the obvious disparity, manager Abeicy Pantoja's team fought toe-to-toe with the hosts and left a good impression on the turf of Mexico City's impressive Alfredo Harp Helù Stadium.

In fact, allowing only six runs in that duel, in a competition largely dominated by batting, is also another important achievement, as the Diablos Rojos won the rest of their matches by a landslide and never scored fewer than that number of times.

Las Tunas had previously defeated the Curaçao-based Piratas de Santa María, the Puerto Rican team Titanes de Florida, and had their revenge in the semifinals against the American Kane County Cougars, who had defeated them in the preliminary round.

The team suffered a great deal and from the mound (48 runs allowed in five games, including 11 home runs), but they displayed a robust offense that only the home team managed to control in the final match.

Closer Alberto Pablo Civil was at his best here, immaculate in 2.2 innings, including a pair of strikeouts. Rubén Rodríguez was also perfect in 1.1 innings. However, the credit goes to Yankiel Mauri, the hardest-working of our relievers, closing with a 1.59 ERA in 5.2 innings, allowing just one earned run and six strikeouts. Special mention goes to starter Andy Vargas, who suffered the setback on the final match but was never beaten despite facing a

formidable line-up.

Yosvany Alarcón was the best offensive player (.500 average, eight runs scored, four doubles, two home runs, and 13 RBIs), followed by Roel Santos (.500, 7 RBIs, 2 2Bs, 1 HR, and 16 RBIs), Rafael Viñales (.440, 9 RBIs, 1 2Bs, 4 HRs, and 11 RBIs), Yoelkis Guibert (.429, 10 RBIs, 3 HRs, and 11 RBIs), and Andrys Pérez (.500, 7 RBIs, 1 2Bs, 1 HR, and 4 RBIs).

With a collective .438, they were the best at bat, leading in runs, doubles, and home runs, in a tournament that produced several scores more seen in handball than in baseball.

That's why I'm satisfied with their performance, because that fighting spirit is what we sometimes miss in our national teams. The international title still eludes us, but in this case it would have been a great surprise.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
