

Yariel and Raidel would be relievers, Gracial aims to be fourth hitter



Photo: Chunichi Dragons (taken from JIT)

Havana, February 21 (RHC)-- Cuban pitcher of the Chunichi Dragons, Yariel Rodriguez, could be converted to reliever this season, as revealed on Saturday by the Dora Hot Plus program of the Japanese channel Tokai TV.

According to team manager Kazuyoshi Tatsunami, everything will depend on the progress of rookie Hiroto Takahashi. If he manages to earn a spot in the starting rotation, then the Antillean could be moved to the

bullpen.

The club's pitching coach, Eiji Ochiai, had revealed the idea on a radio show last month, but expressed that it was just an idea and there was no official decision on the matter. However, recent words from manager Tatsunami seem to confirm that the plan is on the table.

Ochiai explained that Rodriguez's strikeout per nine innings average last year (8.90) is a good indicator of the success he could have in the bullpen, which is why his transfer is being considered.

Cuban Yurisbel Gracial is shaping up to be the SoftBank Falcons' fourth starting bat for this season, the team's new manager, Hiroshi Fujimoto, recently told the online version of Tokyo Sports.

The matancero has shown good physical shape and has made contact with the ball so far in the club's workouts, reason why the strategist is confident that he will be able to play well the role of power hitter in the lineup.

His idea is to protect the West Indian with two left-handed hitters. Yuki Yanagita would bat third and Ryoya Kurihara would follow him in the fifth spot. "It would be ideal to be able to maintain that formula throughout the year," he explained.

Gracial was only able to play 37 games last year due to a fractured ring finger on his right hand, which is why he wants to play in full this season and perform at his highest level to thank the team for the trust it is placing in him.

Cuban Raidel Martinez worked this Saturday in the bullpen of the Chunichi Dragons in Yomitan, Okinawa, and showed a physical condition superior to the one he showed in midweek, according to the Chunichi Sports newspaper.

"I think next week I will be at 100 percent of my condition. By that time, spring training will be over and I will be able to start pitching in the preseason games," he explained after practice.

The 25-year-old right-hander will repeat this season as the club's starting closer and will seek to surpass the personal record of 23 saves he set in 2021.

The team's pitching coach, Daisuke Yamai, confirmed the good development of the West Indian so far. "The adjustments are developing well. I will not rush him in his work, but will talk to him and between the two of us we will decide on a plan for the future."

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/deportes/286890-yariel-and-raidel-would-be-relievers-gracial-aims-to-be-fourth-hitter>



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