

Gracial and Despaigne to start with Softbank in 2022

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Havana, January 3 (JIT)-- An article published by the Japanese portal Full Count places Cubans Yurisbel Gracial and Alfredo Despaigne as possible starters for the Softbank Falcons for the 2022 season of Japanese professional baseball.

The website analyzes the club's situation and concludes that Gracial is the main option to cover third base, while his compatriot Despaigne will continue to be the designated hitter. It also believes that the most likely destination for recently signed Venezuelan Freddy Galvis will be second base.

Only three players on the team, the text indicates, are guaranteed to start so far: Yuki Yanagita in right field, Ryoya Kurihara in left and Takuya Kai at catcher.

Full Count also states that the experienced Kenta Imamiya would be the shortstop, veteran Akira Nakamura would cover the initial and Seiji Uebayashi would go to center field.

As for the lineup, the media considers that if Uebayashi, who possesses good speed, manages to establish himself as the first bat, then Galvis could bat second followed by Yanagita, Gracial, Kurihara, Despaigne, Nakamura, Imamiya and Kai.

The team's new manager, Hiroshi Fujimoto, wants to put together a lineup with left-handed and right-handed hitters from start to finish. He hopes to make it as difficult as possible for opposing pitchers.

The Softbank Falcons, after winning the Japan Series for three straight seasons, were out of the postseason in 2021. Gracial and Despaigne saw their continuity in the franchise at risk, but they have received a second chance.

Left-hander Liván Moinelo, one of the team's closers, has kept his job despite a season of few, albeit effective, starts.

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