

Historic: Cuba convenes major leaguers for the V World Baseball Classic

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Andy Ibañez

Havana, November 14 (RHC)-- Two Major League Baseball players have been called up to participate with the island's national team in the V World Baseball Classic, which would make them the first active players in the best baseball in the world to compete with Team Cuba in an international competition.

"We are pleased to announce that Andy Ibanez (former Texas Rangers and now Detroit Tigers), Yoan Lopez (New York Mets)... will be part of Cuba's pre-selection for the V World Baseball Classic," the Cuban Federation said on Twitter.

It also confirmed the call-up of Elian Leyva, who is currently playing on his own with the Naranjeros de Hermosillo in the Mexican Professional League.

Shortstop Erisbel Arruebarrena participated in the Premier-12 with the Cuban national team, but was no longer active in Major League Baseball (MLB).

In a second tweet, the Cuban baseball entity said that "as we announced a few weeks ago, we continue working on the formation of the group of athletes with a view to the V World Baseball Classic, in which we will have stars of our Elite League and others who play in international circuits".

The FCB denounced in the last few days the harassment, aggressions and false news that have been circulating in the process through which it is forming its roster for the important event, scheduled for March 2023.

These are the first players announced for the Classic, scheduled for March 2023, which should also include Cuban stars signed in Japan such as Alfredo Despaigne, Raidel Martínez, Liván Moinelo, and Yurisbel Gracial, among others.

Ibañez, a 29-year-old infielder, came to MLB in 2021 after excelling in the minor leagues since 2016. He has played the past two seasons with the Texas Rangers and is currently on the Detroit Tigers' staff. He averages for 258, with 96 hits in 116 games, including 19 doubles, two triples and 8 home runs. He played three seasons in Cuba with Isla de la Juventud and at just 19 years old made the Cuba team for the 2013 Classic.

López, also a 29-year-old right-handed pitcher, has played five seasons in the major leagues and in 2022 he did so as a reliever with the New York Mets, a team with which he won an undefeated game, worked eleven innings, struck out 10, although he was hit 14 times, and was given 7 clean runs.

He also played three years with Isla de la Juventud, emigrated in 2014 and signed in 2015 with the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Elián Leyva, a 33-year-old right-handed pitcher, has only reached minor league baseball in the United States, although he has excelled in the leagues of Venezuela, Mexico, Italy and Spain, where he has more than 200 wins in 13 seasons. In the most recent season with the Naranjeros de Hermosillo in the Mexican League, he was the best pitcher, with 7 wins and a 1.54 ERA. In Cuba he played eight seasons with the teams of Havana, Mayabeque and Industriales.

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