

Yariel at the gates of the World Baseball Classic

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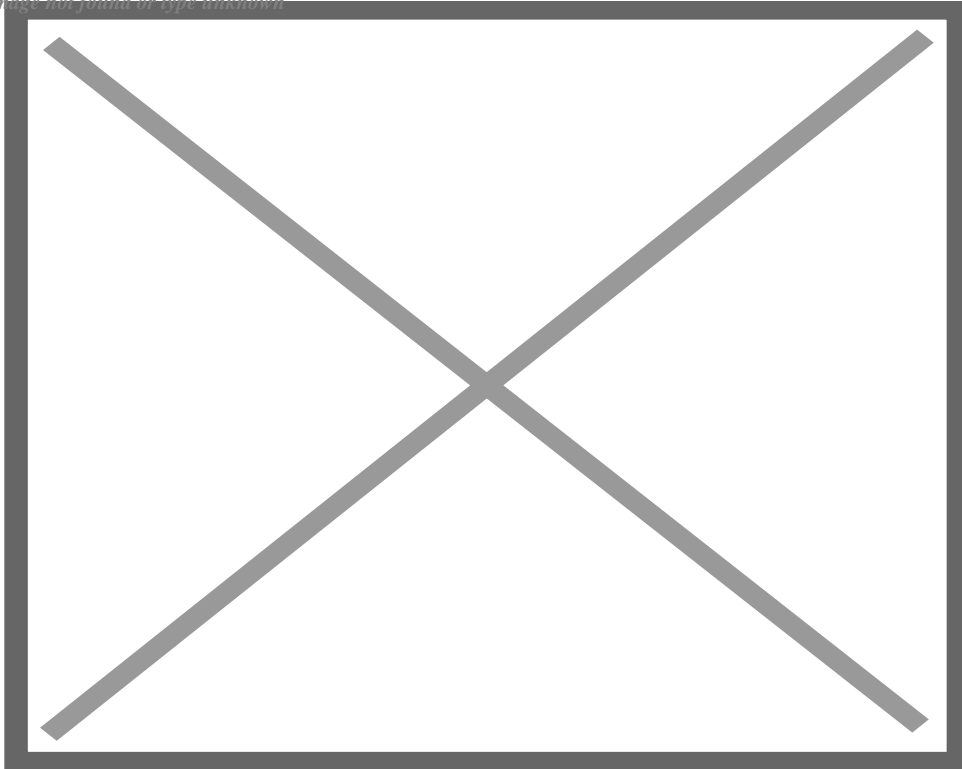


Photo: Yuhki Ohboshi

Havana, March 7 (RHC)-- After several seasons away from that task, right-hander Yariel Rodriguez resumes as starter from the ranks of team Cuba, which has him as the leader of its pitching staff.

He already did it in a couple of confrontational clashes (1 JG, 6 INN, 20 VB, 3 H, 150 AVE, 0.00 PCL), but the biggest challenge will come this Wednesday against the Netherlands, on the opening day of the V World Baseball Classic.

"I feel ready to do it, and that's what I told the director when we talked about it, that I have all the willingness and the spirit, which is important," he emphasized to the island's media who came here to report on the tournament.

"I have always wanted to be the starter", he assured during the last training session of his team in the city where he will try to erase the stigma of costly defeats against the "tulipanes".

However, although he insists that being a starter "is the job that makes me feel more comfortable", Chunichi Dragons has preferred him as a reliever in the Japanese professional league.

"The manager simply made that decision, and I'm actually used to it," said the youngster, who will turn 26 on the 10th.

Asked about the abundance of positive comments generated by his election, Rodriguez was grateful and emphasized that the days prior to the tournament have been of great dedication and commitment to victory.

He said that the work on the field has been complemented with the viewing of videos, to familiarize himself with the characteristics of the opponents, and declared himself satisfied with the progression of his fitness.

"I have completed the cycle well, with the adaptations involved in preparing to open, and I'm looking forward to the moment," said the man who has a record of six wins and two losses in the past Japanese season (1.15 PCL).

"There is a lot of happiness, a lot of harmony, we are all very happy and wanting to do our best," he said just hours before stepping on the mound as part of a team that for the first time welcomes players hired in other leagues without the support of the Cuban Baseball Federation.

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