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David Sánchez, fastball all over the plate against Covid-19

By: Giusette León García  
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I would have liked to interview him once he became the Ace of the National Baseball Series in Cuba, or right after his “dreamed” call to the national team...or for one of the many successes David Martínez Sánchez is going to enjoy throughout his sporting career.

But this boy is not only brave on the mound, but also in life. He knows how to throw a hard fastball all over the plate when needed. Consequently, he answered “yes” as soon as he was summoned by his university to report as a volunteer worker in an isolation center.



## **Covadonga's Team**

His team, with which he trains no matter the number of miles he needs to travel, is Artemisa. However, his new teammates represent the staff of the Covadonga Hospital in this match Cuba is winning over Covid-19.

“We are a group of students, professors, and recent graduate workers. We are all young men and women from different universities; namely, CUJAE, ISRI, UCCFD, and the Agricultural University of Havana. A Civil Engineering professor at CUJAE was leading the team.”

Even though David has already spent several days in precautionary isolation, to check he is virus-free, he speaks in present tense about the team, as if they would somehow remain connected forever:

“Our relationship is excellent. The first time we saw each other was when we underwent the PCR test procedure, two days before we started our mission in La Covadonga. I did not know any of them, not

even those studying at Fajardo University. Most of us just knew those who were studying the same major. Still, a very nice friendship and comradeship sprouted. We got each other's back. We lived an experience none of us will ever forget.

We knew it was not going to be easy, but we did not think of that. We shared the same ideas and had a common goal...to help. It was our duty, plain and simple. And it made us happy. La Covadonga was a school of life for all. We grew as human beings. But most importantly, it felt good to offer our help and care to those most in need.

“Many of us treasure wonderful stories of patients. They were grateful for the way we treated and cared for them. It was heartwarming our help was really appreciated.”

### **14th inning, play-by-play**

As if every day were a clutch inning of a baseball game, David and his teammates woke up at 6:30am and began to work in the tasks assigned.

Those tasked with the sanitation of the facility were responsible for the ward and rooms cleaning. Personnel tasked with the drugstore worked 24-hours shifts and were responsible for supplying medicines to the different hospital's wards. David's work consisted of delivering — as he was part of the delivery group. Once light trucks arrived, they were responsible for moving the food from the kitchen to the wards.

David — a RHP starter turned into a pantry worker — waited for them at Rubén Martínez Villena. We were responsible for receiving the food supplies (six meals a day for each patient). We served them, and took them to patients in the rooms as well as to nurses and doctors in their workplaces. Afterwards, we washed the food containers, trays, bowls, and cutleries...”



After washing everything — we usually finished off the task around 8:00pm — our team was off duty.



## No balks, no stolen bases

A good pitcher is never too confident. No daring move could jeopardize this match for our own life. The opponent was invisible this time and if the “timing” of its swing was perfect, it could lead to the death of many. Hence, David and his teammates had to follow the rules of the game very carefully:

“The safety protocols were pretty simple but essential. We were never

too confident and we never thought nothing could happen to us. For us, everything dirt was infected with the virus. We had that mindset.

“Every day we changed our sheets. We were given clean pajamas to walk throughout the hospital (from the room to the ward and vice versa). Once we got to the ward, we took off our pajamas and followed the strict dress code to work: green scrubs, a white/green coat over the green scrub, caps, gloves, face masks, plastic boots, and face shields.

“Everything had a strict order, either while putting them on or taking them off. Once we finished off our duties, we threw them away in a biosecurity waste bin and put the pajamas on again. Once we arrived at the dormitories, there were other biosecurity waste bins where we threw our pajamas away and went on and took a shower. Furthermore, we constantly washed our hands. This was the most important precautionary measure of all.”



## Playing the last game

Like a must-win game, confident we needed to overcome this situation to think of future, David did not think about how it would affect his sporting career. So many days with no training at all or just the growing risk to get sick. Something was most important for him:

“I am an athlete. I certainly am, but I am a human being after all. I did not think about sports back then. I believed it was my duty to be there. I could not stay at home when my nation called for my help due to the pandemic. That is the way I was raised and these are the ideas I champion as a Cuban citizen. There will be always time to train again.

“My trainer Ebris Pablo is conscious of everything. When I told him

where I was, he got emotional. He said he felt proud of me and congratulated my action as there was nothing more important than serving my nation. He is an excellent man, clever. I admired him a lot. He is much more than a trainer to me. I have learned a lot with him and not only about sports. He is a great master of life.”

As any coach when his pupil throws a gem, he praises his actions and the boy has promised more commitment:

“I am now making the most of these 14-days in precautionary isolation. I am training and doing some physical exercises. So, I stay in a very good shape.”

The 22 years-old RHP will return home in just few days. He was training with the U23 team when the social distancing measures began and he was also majoring the second school year at UCCFD. He is now back full of energy, anxious to get the final out, anxious to hug and kiss his family and friends — who have supported play-by-play David’s toughest game ever.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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