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Ulacia, a Ballplayer Through and Through

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Among the most complete players ever in our National Baseball Series of Cuba appears without question: Luis Ulacia Álvarez from Camaguey.

The player from Camaguey was able to defend accurately any infield position, including the difficult shortstop, and also the outfields, either in Cuba as abroad.

Born on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1963 in Havana City, very young he moved with his family to Camaguey, where he trained as a baseball player.

He made his debut playing for Camaguey in the national championship in 1980-81 season, when the teams of that central-eastern region were quite far in the final positions.

He quickly earned his position as a first-choice player, and with his contribution Camagüey ended third in the 1982-83 Series, but the best was yet to come.

He started as a shortstop, and together with Sergio Quesada they made, one of the most effective combinations of the 80s around the second base, as well as their 1-2 at batting, the customary weakness of the teams from that area of ??the country, abundant in good level

pitchers. The two of them were key in the conquest the second place in the 1984-1985 season.

He shares with other 15 players the record of more hits in a single game (6), he attained that on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1986, in the XII Selectiva Series in game of 10 innings between Camagüeyanos and Mineros.

At the time, he was the seventh player to do that, and with such performances he was catapulted to the national team, where he remained until his retirement.

He then held the post left by Rodolfo Puente, the captain for more than a decade of the Cuban team, and didn't let down the trust bestowed on him by specialists with excellent performances in the Indianapolis Pan-American Games-1987 and the World Cup in Italy-1988.

going back to the domestic field, he led the Camaguey team in their first time in play offs, in the 1990-1991 season, when he beat Havana in the first round 3-1, and then lost against Henequeneros 2-4 in the final.

The following year, they made it to the play offs again, but they had to play against Industriales, the undisputed champion of that time, who swept them 4-0.

They had to wait until the 1997-1998 season, when Santiago de Cuba left them in third place, and the same position, thanks to the same opponent, they occupied in 2000-2001, precisely Ulacia's last year wearing the uniform.

Since then, the most outstanding performance of the teams from that province has been reaching the play offs, but they lost on the first cross and left without medals. Ulacia's contribution was so great in both the field and outside the field.

We are talking about the player who finished leader of batters in the XXVIII NS (157-67 = 427) and in the XXI (165-62 = 376), in both cases for the Eastern Zone, and in the XXXVI he was the absolute leader (242-102 = 421), besides leading the stolen bases in 1988, with 26.

With the Cuban team he won the gold medals at the Central American and Caribbean Games of Mexico-1990 and Ponce-1993, at the Pan-American Games in Indianapolis-1987, Havana-1991, Mar del Plata-1995 and Winnipeg-1999.

He was also part of the team that won the gold medal at the Olympic Games in Barcelona-1992 and Atlanta-1996, in addition to the silver medal in Sydney-2000.

When the line-up for the Taipei World Cup-2001 was made public, many fans and specialists criticized his inclusion, being a 38-year-old baseball player.

However, with bat in hand he smashed all the criteria and was the MVP, because he hit 600 (30-18), leader, with 10 scored, co-leader and six stolen bases, second.

On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1996 he lived one of his best moments in the international arena, hitting 5-4 against Japan in the final match of the Atlanta Games, with three scored runs, a two-run homer.

After going into retirement, he coached in the Amateur League of Japan, and after passing down his experiences in other Latin American countries, he returned with the difficult mission of putting Camagüey again among the four greats of Cuban baseball, but health problems prevented him from completing his work.

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