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## Little Leagues: Lessons

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The way the Cuban team said goodbye to the Little League Baseball World Series was heartbreaking, but that's how this sport is, where anything can happen until the last out.

The two defeats that decreed the return home of the Villa Clara team came after our team was ahead until the end and received home runs.

The most dramatic was the game against Mexico, since Chinese Taipei is considered one of the big favorites for the tournament title. Only just one out left and three runs ahead, the boys received a home run that tied the score, and then another home run that defeated them, with no options to react.

Too innocent in their pitches (the responsibility for which lies mostly with the coaching staff), they were victims of the hits at key moments, and I emphasize this because the opposing team often saw the catcher signaling outside, just to keep batters from hitting the ball hard.

Of course it hurts to see the tears at the end of the match, a sign of sporting shame, but I am left with the joy that was seen at all times on the bench, with everyone cheering each other, as is often missed in the adult Cuba team.



Most parents of these kids were not on the bleachers at the Volunteers Stadium in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, but the recognition must also go to them, because we know how much effort they put into each hit or pitch of their children, in a category that suffers very hard from the country's economic crisis.

Let's remember that the Santa Clara Bombers won the ticket on March 2 against Sancti Spiritus, to become one of the 10 international teams in the competition: Asia-Pacific (Chinese Taipei), Australia, Canada, Caribbean (Aruba), Europe-Africa (Czech Republic), Japan, Latin America (Venezuela), Mexico and Puerto Rico, which compete with another 10 North American teams.

The experiences of Everaldo Pedrosa's disciples go far beyond balls and strikes, because among other things two teams sleep in a dormitory, one American and one visitor, which encourages camaraderie, and as is known, the same equipment is given to everyone so they can compete on equal terms.

Comparing the performance of the Bayamo team last year, I wouldn't know which team was better, since the Cuban team lost narrowly (2-3 against Panama, and 0-1 against the powerful Japan), and won by knockout of 11-1 against Australia, but they weren't as close to that second win as the Villa Clara team, who beat the Czechs in their first match.

For the next version, the work will be harder, since Cuba has already used up its two opportunities to directly qualify for the emblematic competition that has been held uninterrupted in Williamsport since 1947.

After the format expansion from 16 to 20 teams in 2022, Puerto Rico, Panama and Cuba entered, but in a rotation in which each zone receives an automatic ticket in two out of three years, and in the third, as will happen to ours in 2025, they compete in their region, so training with more effort, and with your head held high, because this is only the beginning of a long journey.

**Translated by Amikal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff**