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Groups announced for Under-15 Baseball World Cup

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The World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) has announced the line-up for the group stages of this year's Under-15 Baseball World Cup in Mexico, which sees defending champions Venezuela drawn together with the team they beat in the final last time, Cuba.

The Venezuelans overcame Cuba in the gold medal match at the inaugural Under-15 Baseball World Cup held in Chihuahua, Mexico, in 2012 and will face the number three ranked side again in Group C along with Australia, Argentina, Hong Kong and Lithuania.

Hosts Mexico are in Group A and will face 2012 bronze medallists Chinese Taipei, Brazil, Czech Republic and the lowest ranked side in the competition, Tunisia.

Group B brings together old rivals and top seeds Japan and the United States, where they will be joined by Germany, Panama, New Zealand and South Africa.

The tournament, due to take place between July 31 and August 3, will see a total of 83 matches taking place across three locations in Baja California Sur.

This will include main host city La Paz - which will stage the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, main Championship final and awards presentations - while nearby Los Cabos and Constitucion will also hold matches.

Each team will play five round-robin matches in their respective groups before the top two from each group advance to a four-match second round-robin in La Paz, with head-to-head competitions from the first round carrying over into the next round.

The top two teams from the second round-robin stage will contest the gold medal match with the third and fourth placed sides playing for bronze.

Prior to the medal matches on the final day, Los Cabos and Constitucion will stage a series of consolation games to determine the classification of the seventh to eighteenth-place countries.

With 18 countries taking part, these World Championships will represent the largest geographical spread of nations for a tournament since the 2009 Men's Baseball World Cup, according to the WBSC.

Oceania will be represented for the first time by Australia and New Zealand while South Africa and Tunisia will be the African nations to take part in the tournament.

"World Baseball Softball Confederation is proud to be at the forefront of youth sport with attractive, successfully established and globally marketable youth engagement platforms like our youth Baseball World Cups and the youth Softball World Championships," said WBSC President Riccardo Fraccari.

"The relatively new U-15 Cup is an integral part of our growth strategy to drive future stars, fans, sponsors, media, broadcasters, and attractive host cities to the Baseball World Cups.

"The global spread and strength of the countries in the 2014 Under-15 Baseball World Cup will create a truly unique atmosphere and generate great excitement for the athletes, as they come from all around the world to share their talents and admire each other on the international stage and shine on it."

The Under-15 Baseball World Cup takes place from July 31 to August 3.

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