

Puerto Rico surprises Cuba in Norceca Volleyball Tournament



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Durango, August 23 (RHC/JIT)-- The team of Puerto Rico surprised Cuba to score a 3-1 win (25-16, 19-25, 26-24, 31-29) and advance to the discussion of the crown against Canada in the Norceca Continental Championship (M), which ends this Monday in Durango, Mexico.

The defending champions fell despite outscoring their combative rivals in attack (55-47), blocking (12-7) and aces (6-3), but gave away 44 points due to unforced errors. The Puerto Ricans committed 21.

Norceca's website reports that the winners came out in front with a strong first set and after the Cubans imposed their power on the net, they came back to finally seal the match in a dramatic way but not before overcoming a four-point deficit (20-24) and taking three match points to win.

Left-handed opposite Jesus Herrera was the top scorer of the duel with 24 points, escorted by corner player Miguel Angel Lopez (18) and center Jose Israel Massó (10).

For the neighboring island, opposite Gabriel Garcia led his team's offense with 18 units (15 attacks, 2 blocks and 1 ace), while auxiliary attackers Pedro Molina and Pelegrin Vargas added 11 and 10 units, respectively.

Cuban coach Yosvani Muñoz pointed out that "Puerto Rico knew how to take good advantage, we made too many mistakes during the whole match and lost many serves. Tomorrow we will go out looking for the podium".

"The direct qualification to the World Championship of Russia 2022 escaped us, but we hope that our ranking will allow us to be there," he said.

For his part, rival technical director Oswald Antonetti expressed that "Cuba has been one of the powers in Norceca volleyball because of its great capacity to recruit players, its biotype and its physical preparation."

He added that "on our side we have good volleyball, which needs these experiences for good growth and for our identity. We are happy with the project.

Puerto Rican captain Arturo Iglesias said that "it was a difficult game, overcoming Cuba's strength was complicated, we came from behind on several occasions, but our patience paid off, we hope to score one point at a time trusting in our skills".

Canada will be Puerto Rico's opponent this Monday for the gold medal, both teams having already secured their respective tickets to the world championship. Before that, Cuba will play Mexico for the bronze medal.

The northerners advanced to the grand final by defeating the hosts 3-0 (25-22, 25-17, 25-18) and will seek to conquer their second title in the history of the event, the first they won in 2015, while the Puerto Ricans have never climbed to the top of that pedestal.

Middle blocker Danny Demyanenko led Canada with 11 points and corner attacker Brandon Koppers followed with 10. Mathias Elser led the serving with six aces. And opposite Diego Gonzalez with nine was the top scorer for the hosts.

Dominican Republic and the United States will play for fifth place, and Trinidad and Tobago and Guatemala, their victims in this penultimate date, will play for seventh place.

The young Americans defeated the Central Americans 3-1 (23-25, 25-22, 25-19, 33-31) and the Dominicans defeated Trinidad and Tobago 3-0 (25-19, 25-20 and 25-20).

This championship also awards points for the ranking with a view to qualifying for the 2023 Pan American Games in Chile.

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