

# *Cuban sports concludes a productive year at the close of the Olympic cycle*

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Havana, December 28 (RHC)-- Cuban sports had a very productive year 2021, achieving one of the best performances in recent decades in summer events with seven gold, three silver and five bronze medals at the Tokyo Olympic Games. Another outstanding performance in multisport events was achieved in the

First Pan American Junior Games in Cali - Valle, where the athletic delegation from Cuba came in fifth place by country.

The Olympics were held from July 23 to August 8, in the main Japanese city. The representatives of the Caribbean nation finished in a meritorious fourteenth place in the overall medal table, despite having one of the smallest delegations in its recent history, with a total of 69 athletes, in a year marked by the pandemic that affected the preparation of athletes globally. COVID-19 had already forced the delay of the Games in 2020 and, in the case of Cuban athletes, with the aggravating factor represented by the suffocating blockade of the United States, which has a negative and daily impact on all sectors of the nation.

Overcoming the aforementioned difficulties, the Cuban delegation won 15 metals and remained in the privileged positions in the world. It improved especially in terms of the quality of the medals, surpassing in laurels the editions of Beijing 2008, London 2012 and Rio de Janeiro 2016.

The disciplines that won gold medals were: canoeing, through Serguei Torres and Fernando Dayán Jorge in the 1,000-meter C2, who made history by giving the title for the first time to their country in this modality in Olympic Games; boxing, which continues to honor its pseudonym of "Buque Insignia " and added the golds of Roniel Iglesias, Andy Cruz, Arlen López and Julio César La Cruz; and wrestling, which prolonged its uninterrupted chain of first places in the Olympics, dating back to Barcelona '92, this time thanks to the talented Luis Orta and the extra class Mijaín López. The latter achieved the feat of his fourth crown and became the most successful wrestler on the planet in these tournaments, valid to be selected as the best athlete in his country and at continental level.

#### CUBA'S RECORD IN TOKYO 2020

##### Gold Medalists

Andy Cruz (Boxing - Men's Lightweight)

Arlen Lopez (Boxing - Men's Light Heavyweight)

Julio De la Cruz (Boxing - Men's Heavyweight)

Roniel Iglesias (Boxing - Men's Welterweight)

Félix Jorge and Serguey Torres (Speed Canoeing - Men's C2-100 meters)

Mijaín López (Wrestling - 130 kg Greco-Roman men)

Luis Orta (Wrestling - 60 kg Greco-Roman male)

##### Silver Medalists

Juan Miguel Echeverría (Athletics - Men's Long Jump)

Idalys Ortiz (Judo - +78 kg female)

Leuris Pupo (Sport Shooting - 25 meters male rapid fire pistol)

##### Bronze Medalists

Yaimé Pérez (Athletics - Female Discus Throwing)

Maykel Massó (Athletics - Men's Long Jump)

Lázaro Álvarez (Boxing - Men's Featherweight)

Reineris Salas (Wrestling - 97 kg freestyle male)

Rafael Alba Castillo (Taekwondo - +80 kg male)

At the Paralympic level, the formidable runner Omara Durand experienced a year full of triumphs with a golden triplet in the Land of the Rising Sun in 100, 200 (including a world record) and 400 m flat. These achievements helped her to catapult her country in the medal standings and to be elected as the best Cuban paratriathlete in the year that has just ended.

The First Junior Pan American Games Cali - Valle 2021 were held from November 25 to December 5 in several Colombian cities. Cuba's delegation finished in fifth place by country with a total of 70 medals, divided into 29 golds, 19 silvers and 22 bronzes.

In terms of sports, boxing, wrestling, judo and, especially, athletics, which contributed 18 medals to the medal tally, 9 of them gold, in addition to a close duel with Brazil for the primacy of the Games, once again stood out.

In the individual category, diver Anisley García stood out, reaching the top in the mixed team competition and in the one-meter springboard, adding a bronze medal to her medal haul.

Also noteworthy was the coronation of the 4 x 400 m relay in the World Championship, held in the Polish city of Chorzów, with a winning time of 3:28.41 min. The long relay was made up of Zurian Hechavarría, Rose Mary Almanza, Lisneidy Veitía and Roxana Gómez.

Boxing completed an idyllic year, adding to the Olympic conquest by groups, the same condition in the planetary fight. Three titles were won by the stellar Julio (92 kg) and Andy (63.5 kg), and the debutant Yoennis Feliciano Hernandez (75 kg). Another pair of newcomers, Osvel Caballero (57 kg) and Herich Ruiz (86 kg), won third places.

On the other hand, the outstanding cyclist Arlenis Sierra lived another season to mark, and among her main results were the title of the Giro della Toscana and the Tre Valli Varesine (Italy), third in the Tour of Ardèche (France), runner-up in the Giro dell' Emilia (Italy) and fifth in the World Championship (Belgium). For the next season, she will have a new team and will be one of the key players of the prestigious Movistar Team.

It is impossible to talk about annual summaries without mentioning the national pastime. Baseball was once again far from the avant-garde places of yesteryear, with the bronze metal in Colombia as its best result. The objective of qualifying for the Olympic tournament was not achieved, an event in which the country has three titles in Barcelona '92, Atlanta '96 and Athens 2004, and two silver medals in Sydney 2000 and Beijing 2008.

Neither was it possible to win a tournament of low competitive quality such as the Caribbean Cup, nor was it possible to reach the podium in the U-23 World Cup, although it is worth mentioning that in this tournament the fourth place was more than meritorious, after 50% of the team registered for the event left the team.

At the domestic level, the 60th National Baseball Series came to a happy ending, with the coronation of the Alazanes de Granma. Unfortunately, the physical departure of one of its main managers, National Commissioner Ernesto Reinoso, victim of complications generated by Covid-19, was regretted. Likewise, the President of the Cuban Federation, Higinio Vélez, passed away.

On the other hand, the end of the season was marked by the pleasing performance of volleyball player Miguel Ángel López in the Club World Cup, who not only was crowned with his team Sada Cruzeiro of

Brazil, but was also selected as the best player of the competition.

The Cuban sports movement bids farewell to 2021, in general, with a positive balance, endorsed by the results achieved at the highest competitive level, and awaiting new triumphs in the already close 2022, with several events within the national territory and beyond borders on the horizon.

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