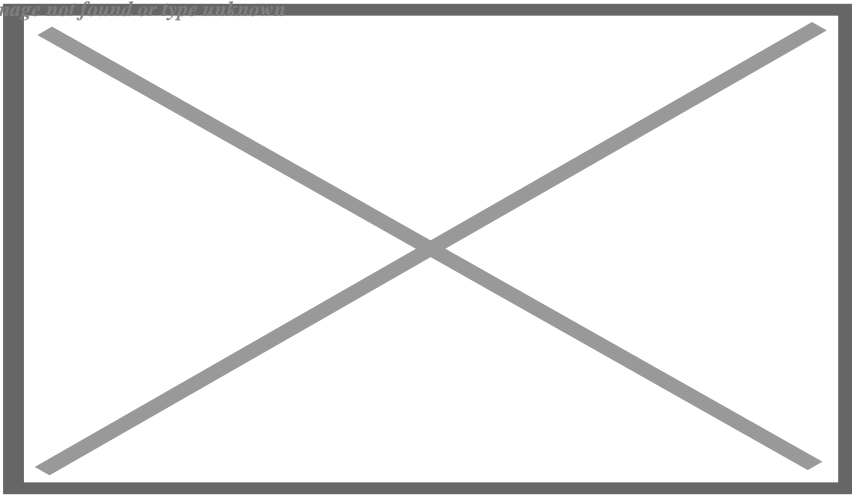


# *Cuba's U-21 for the Pan American Volleyball Cup Title*

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**U-21 volleyball team**

Havana, October 3 (JIT) - The Cuban national team aspires to win the V Men's Under-21 Volleyball Pan American Cup, to be held from Monday at the Sports City Coliseum, and thus obtain one of the two World Cup tickets reserved for the North, Central American and Caribbean Volleyball Confederation (Norceca).

In the opening of the elimination phase of group B they will face Haiti at 4:30 p.m., after the other match of this key between Nicaragua and Canada (12:30 p.m.).

The Dominican Republic and Mexico will open the day's play in Group A (10:30 a.m.). The match between the United States and Chile has been rescheduled for next Thursday, as both delegations had problems with air transportation.

In the preliminary meetings chaired by Ariel Sainz, head of the Cuban Volleyball Federation and of the control committee of the event; and Arateide Cáceres, director of national federations of Norceca, it was confirmed that the two World Cup quotas in dispute correspond to that area, since only Chile will be present from South America and the regulations stipulate that four teams per region must attend.

Jesús Cruz, coach of the Cuban team, said that "we are training to win, in other words, we are not only aiming for the World Cup quota, but also to win the Cup".

He explained that "the preparation has had ups and downs, but we have been able to train and concentrate a group of athletes of the category for six months".

"Some of them went to last year's U-19 World Championship, others have no competitive experience. That's why we took advantage of the friendly games against Canada and the Dominican Republic. That helps, especially at this age group. Training is not the same as playing with the public, with the referee, in the competition hall and in front of other tensions", said the former player.

The Cuban squad is made up of opposites Alejandro Miguel Gonzalez (2.07 meters tall) and Brayan Valle (2.04); auxiliary attackers Yusniel Gonzalez (1.97), Jose Ramon Gomez (1.93), Bryan Camino (1.84) and Yaser Ramirez Boloy (1.93). The center backs are Jakdiel Contreras (2.04), Ángel Suárez (2.13) and Thiago Suárez (2.10); passers Jonathan Mc Kentochi (2.00) and Yonni Iglesias (1.89), and libero Álvaro Luis Ricardo (1.87).

Except Camino and Thiago, all were in 2021 in the world championship of the lower category, held in Iran and where they finished in 15th place shared with Colombia. Alejandro Miguel also attended that year's U-21 world championship in Bulgaria.

Assisting Cruz will be coaches Mario Izquierdo and Manuel Espinosa, and completing the delegation are methodologist Osvaldo Martínez, doctor Ramsés Raymond, physiotherapist Pedro Roche and psychologist Zoila Betanco. Veteran FIVB Instructor Gilberto Idolo Herrera has contributed to the team's preparation with his vast experience.

Ben Josephson, Canada's coach, stated that they only got together a week ago, but they have been preparing hard to qualify for the world championship. "My players are university students, but I follow them and watch them because they participate as a team at their institution. Here we had a match against the Cubans and won 3-2 sets," he said.

Ivan Villarreal, from Chile, emphasized that "the first objective of the grassroots teams in our country is to give an important volume of competition to the athletes, which allows us to take them in their development so that they can access the main squad. This group is a mix of the U-19 team that participated in the Pan American Cup in Guatemala in May and players from the U-21 team.

Dominican José Dante Manon also aspires to win a ticket: "I think we are prepared, we recognize that we will have strong opponents like the United States, Canada and Cuba, which has a tall team with tremendous power. We proved it in a practice game."

Jorge Alberto Romero, Mexican coach, is confident in his team in spite of its youth... "Although it has just been assembled, we have been preparing for three weeks and we are going to fight for qualification. There are players who attended the U-19 World Cup in Egypt with a lot of talent. We have to push hard against all our rivals, we don't consider any of them weak".

The Nicaraguan national team is the Central American U-21 champion and according to its technical director Jorge Mena is preparing to defend the crown this month. "This Cup helps to raise the level a little more. Our main objective is to compete, to do our best. We are working for the future and for them to be the basis of the senior national team".

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