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Havana, January 11 (RHC)-- Cubans Julio Cesar La Cruz and Arlen Lopez, two-time Olympic and multiple world champions, are included for the first time in the recently updated World Boxing Council (WBC) rankings.

La Cruz, 33, is ranked 20th in the cruiserweight division, whose champion is Ilunga Makabu (Congo) and first in the rankings is Armenian-German Noel Mikaelyan.

"We are expecting around February to be discussing the first world crown for a Cuban boxer from here on the island. We are in focus mode for what is coming this year," La Cruz, Olympic king in Rio-2016 and

Tokyo-2020, said in statements to Radio Habana Cuba La Cruz, Olympic king in Rio-2016 and Tokyo-2020.

He stressed that the inclusion for the first time in the WBC ranking, the also five-time world champion stressed that it means "a lot" to him, since from Cuba "we are making history."

"This had never happened with any of the other Cuban boxers and now we have the opportunity to discuss and obtain professional world titles from Cuba," he apostilled.

He considered that for him and in general for Cuban boxing it has had a "positive balance" to venture into professional boxing. "We have done well. When things are done right and the trainers' guidelines are complied with, things turn out well."

"We are preparing in that sense, waiting for the opportunity and when it is given we will go to defend what we are and bring all the world crowns for us and for the country," he remarked.

The Cuban boxing star pointed out that he will have a "loaded" 2023, because it will be a year of several commitments for Cuban sport, with Central American Games, Pan American Games and the World Championship.

"It will be a serious year, but we are focused on what we have to do, which is to represent the country with dignity and bring medals. I will be looking for my sixth world crown, my fourth title in the Pan American Games and third in the Central American Games, which implies a lot of concentration and dedication," he said.

Meanwhile, the semi-complete Arlen Lopez, also two-time Olympic champion, occupies the 27th place in a list whose champion is the Canadian Artur Berteyev and the first in the ranking is the Englishman Callum Smith.

Both Cuban boxing stars won the two fights they held last year in professional circuits as part of the Domadores de Cuba franchise.

Alberto Puig de la Barca, president of the Cuban Boxing Federation, stressed that these first appearances in the WBC ranking contribute to the purpose of concretizing higher ranking duels in the current season.

"It makes them more attractive to promoters," said Puig, before assuring that this is a step that can be joined by other established fighters such as Roniel Iglesias (super welter), Yoennis Hernandez (medium) and Lazaro Alvarez (super lightweight).

In a similar vein, Gerardo Saldivar, head of the Golden Ring company, which manages the Domadores de Cuba's incursions, said.

"Usually, it can take a professional boxer years or many fights to reach that ranking," said Salvídar, convinced that this is "a recognition of the quality of Cuban boxing."

The World Boxing Council is one of the four main professional boxing organizations, created in 1963 and headquartered in Mexico. Its current president is Mauricio Sulaimán.

Among its champions are the well-known Canelo Alvarez, Errol Spence and Tyson Fury.

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