

Paired awards for Cuba on another night of athletics



Photo: Calixto N. Llanes (JIT)

Havana, July 7 (RHC)-- The women's 4x100-meter relay quartet gave Cuba its sixth title in the athletics competition of the XXIV Central American and Caribbean Games, in a superb display.

When Laura Moreira took her place in the starting block, the National Stadium Jorge "El Mágico" González was still "floating" the unfortunate image of heptathlete Adriana Rodríguez abandoning the event she was comfortably leading, due to a knee injury.

When Enis Perez took the baton to cover the second leg, the momentary advantage triggered expectations.

The adrenaline continued to rise as Yarima García completed the changeover cleanly and gave maximum speed in the curve. With the dream just meters away, no one could stay in their seats. When Yunisleidy

Garcia entered the finish line victorious, in exactly 43.17 seconds, euphoria erupted.

Four girls born in different parts of the Cuban geography, all debutants and none of them over 23 years old, had put their names in the history of athletics in the region, adding a new record for the event.

It is also the third best time for a Cuban relay, only surpassed by those set in the world competition in Stuttgart 1993 (42.89 seconds) and in a meeting in Madrid in 2004 (43.07).

"The challenge was tough, there were other posts with better marks. As a starter I had the biggest responsibility to deliver evenly to my teammate", said Moreira before the press spotlight.

For Enis, the victory was the result of how hard they trained. He also stressed that Cuban athletes are a family. Yurima and Yunisleidy were similarly happy, convinced that the precision in the baton changes was fundamental.

The Cuban ambassador, René Ceballo, arrived at the press area to personally meet and congratulate the girls who made the island vibrate.

Earlier, Marys Patterson had starred in the most unexpected twist in the combined events, when it seemed that on the same stretcher in which Adriana left the track, the possibilities of another reign for Cuba were gone.

Her two laps around the oval, at the pace necessary for the consecration, were extremely thrilling. The accumulated 5,978 points surpassed by 18 those registered by Colombia's Martha Araujo and Puerto Rico's Alysbeth Felix.

"I enjoyed it to the fullest. I dedicate this medal to my partner Adriana. She couldn't win it and that's why this one is for her too," declared Patterson, who confirms the strength of the Cubans in the difficult specialty.

"We could not let the title go to another country. It has always been in Cuba and with us it stays", confessed the also student of Gabino Arzola, who previously led to reigns Adriana and Yorgelis, besides the decathlete Leonel Suárez.

On the other hand, the final of the 1,500 meters was a tense battle to the finish line. The Venezuelan Joselyn Brea ratified that nobody showed better conditions in the middle distance race.

The demonic passage through the last curve cleared the way to her third title, this one in the form of a record for the event. She also sentenced the battle with the Cubans Sahily Diago (4:11.07) and Daily Cooper (4:11.25), who in addition to the silver and bronze medals, in that order, have the consolation of having set their best times of the season.

Roxana Gómez finished equally satisfied, since only a major surprise would put her ahead of the Dominican Marileidy Paulino in the 400 meters. It is not for nothing that she is the reigning world runner-up at this distance.

To scare off any unforeseen events, she covered the distance in 49.95 seconds, something that no one had ever done before in these races. She thus erased from the books the old mark of 50.56 seconds, set in Medellín 1978 by Cuba's Aurelia "Yeya" Penton.

The tightest dispute was then between Roxana (51.23) and the Puerto Rican Gabriela Scott (51.51), who finished with the bronze medal. The other Cuban in that race, Lisneidy Veitía, came in sixth with 53.52 seconds.

The prizes were completed by ballista Laiselys Jiménez with a bronze metal from her 16.79 meters. Another of the Cuban debutants, who admitted that she did not come close to her best throws, but getting on the podium made up for it all.

Rosa Ramirez of the Dominican Republic stood at the top of the podium with 17.89 meters. Jamaica's Daniella Sloley took silver with 16.81 meters.

The island's pole vaulters were left with their work cut out. There were hopes that Eduardo Nápoles would anchor on the podium, but his maximum of 5.20 meters was just enough for fourth place, two ahead of his compatriot Andy Hernández (5.05).

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